



Parent-Infant Foundation Network Day

Workshop 23rd April 2024

Parent-Infant Therapy with High-Risk Dyads

Social Emotional Under 5's Screening and Intervention
(S.U.S.I.)

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Aims of workshop

- Introduce background to clinical service and research with at-risk 0-4s (SUSI assessment and intervention model)
- Scale of the need and interagency service transformation
- Case material on assessment of high-risk dyads with a focus on disorganised attachment
- A parent-infant therapeutic intervention within CP/PLO context (a tailored approach)
- Interagency network 'blind spots' and holding the 'baby' and relationship in mind



Services' response to at-risk babies/toddlers and under-served families


“The difference between “need” and “demand” is the number of babies we miss” ...

- “those babies who are not identified by services may nevertheless be in significant need and may likely include the most marginalised, vulnerable and at-risk babies”
- “...how to improve outreach to these families, particularly those most at risk of later referral to children’s social care. Attrition between need and demand represents at least in part a systems failure to identify all babies in need.”
- “Disorganised attachment, can particularly undermine children’s mental health, social behaviour and educational prospects and is therefore a high-priority target for effective prevention and intervention.”

(PAIRs Commissioning Toolkit, Jan 2023)



Background to SUSI model and Under 5s CAMH service

- Clinical approach developed over 25+ years in community CAMHS 
- Pilot screening study for LAC (2010 -11)
- SUSI study: 3 high-risk groups of 0–4-year-olds
 - (CP; PMH; LAC)
- Partnership model with Children’s Social Care, AMH, Child Health, Primary Care and Education



Beginning to notice and think together...

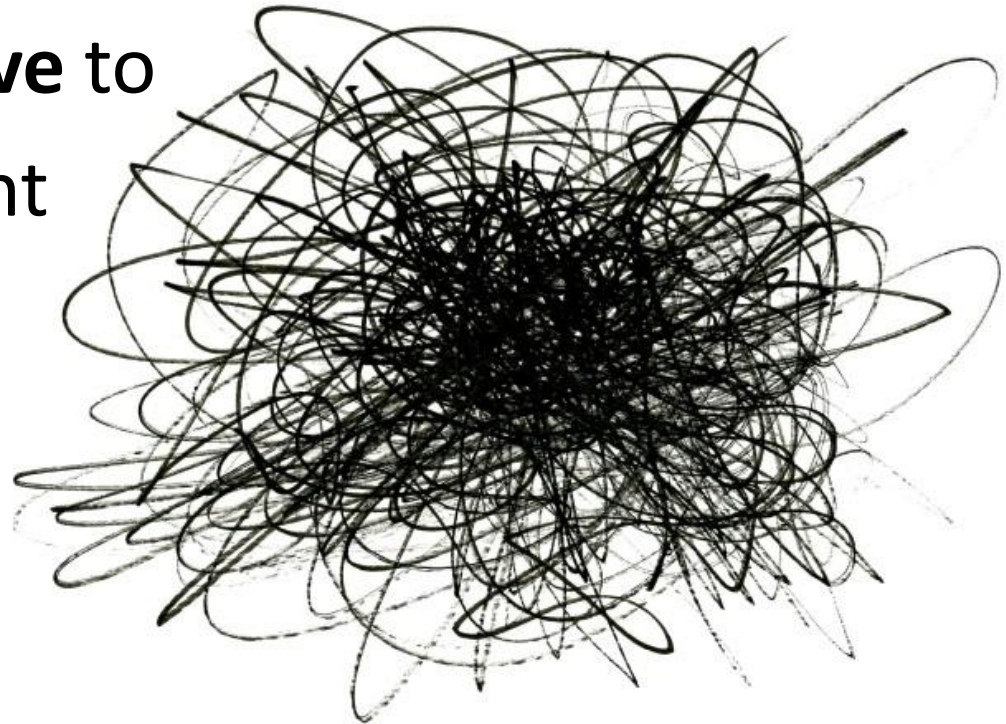
- Risks, capacity for change and strengths...
- A focus from 'symptoms' to a relational context?
- Assessment using a range of approaches and different sources of information (transparency with the family and engagement across services)
- The child's development as a barometer for change
- Formulation based report – a narrative style to speak to the parent and child's experience of themselves and of each other. Link message of action/hope while highlighting current/future risks if no change
- Articulates needs to inform and influence network (inc statutory agencies)



Signs of Stress

What do signs of social-emotional difficulty look like in babies and young children?

They are often **adaptive** to the child's environment



SUSI Signs

Emotional

Freezing/dissociation

Anxiety

Solemn/sad affect

Anger

Persistent or frequent mood changes

Poor emotional regulation with physical changes

Emotional Withdrawal

Being hyper-vigilant

Behavioural

Prolonged tantrums

Inconsolable crying

Persistent or frequent mood changes

Overly independent

Irritability

Controlling

Physical dysregulation

Oppositional

Impulsive behaviour

Blank or flat expression

Aggressive

Sexualised behaviour

Excitability, over-activity and distractibility

Functional

Sleeping problems/
frequent nightmares

Under-developed play –
mechanical/without
imagination/repetitive

Inflexible transitions

Not initiating interaction

Inconsistent physical
co-ordination/ability

Poor concentration

Communication and
language

Social withdrawal
from peers

Feeding problems

Toileting problems

Physical

Skin problems

Failure to thrive

Overweight

Poor weight gain/growth

Not registering pain

Lack of movement/still

Stiffness and tension
in body

Child-parent interaction

Checking on
parent's state

Pleasing/ placatory

Disorganised responses/
difficult to read

Over compliance

Overfamiliarity/
Indiscriminate behaviour

Avoidance/looking away

Not signaling needs

Clinging behaviours

Fear of separation

Over-absorbed with
physical objects



SUSI Intervention

parent–child relationship ‘live’ work:

- using spontaneous interactions in play-based sessions (structured and/or non-directive)
- focusing on specific communications and interactions that are adaptive and promote the parent–child relationship
- promoting parental thoughtfulness through exploration of the child’s specific responses and behaviours that signal the child’s underlying mental and emotional states
- addressing maladaptive patterns of interaction

reflective discussion with parents to:

- discuss current experiences of parenting and their relationship with their child
- explore the links between past and present experiences linked to the relationship and the child’s needs

liaison and joint work with other networks to:

- share an understanding of the child’s needs with the wider family and/or network
- develop multi-agency care plans as needed



Thoughts and discussion

- Reflections on work with disorganised babies/toddlers:
- thoughts/comments on the case
- developing a framework within existing or for new services
- building a skills base within a parent-infant (0-4s) team
- how to reach and engage families – and networks
- support and sustainability





References

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Thank You!

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