



# How to Use the Parent-Infant Relationships (PAIR) Pathway Template

## Background

### What is the PAIR Pathway Template?

- This template is a tool to help local areas to create and present a parent-infant relationships care pathway. It is a great way to summarise:
  - **practice guidance** such as underpinning values and principles, how to gather information, making decisions and matching families' needs to the right support at the right time.
  - **what is available locally** to support infant mental health/emotional wellbeing and parent-infant relationships.
- The template provides an overarching care pathway structure but is editable so that you can collate, map and organise information about local activities and services.
- Completing this template is a helpful process which facilitates inter-agency dialogue, integrated working, gap-analysis and system transformation.
- Once completed, your pathway will help frontline practitioners, service managers, commissioners and local partnership boards to better co-ordinate and provide PAIR guidance, support and treatment. A pathway is a central component of a parent-infant relationships strategy.

## What does the template do?

### The template helps to:



**Identify** local activities and services which support parent-infant relationships, from promotion and prevention to more complex levels of need.



**Guide** practitioners in how to identify, assess and signpost families through the local 'ecosystem' of services and activities which support parent-infant relationships.



**Promote** best practice and integrated working.



**Identify** sources of information, advice and support for practitioners who want to learn and reflect about parent-infant relationships with the families they work with.



**"Join-up"** the local system of support for parent-infant relationships in the first 1001 days, identify duplication and understand gaps in service provision.



**Distil** complex information into an easy-to-use visual guide.



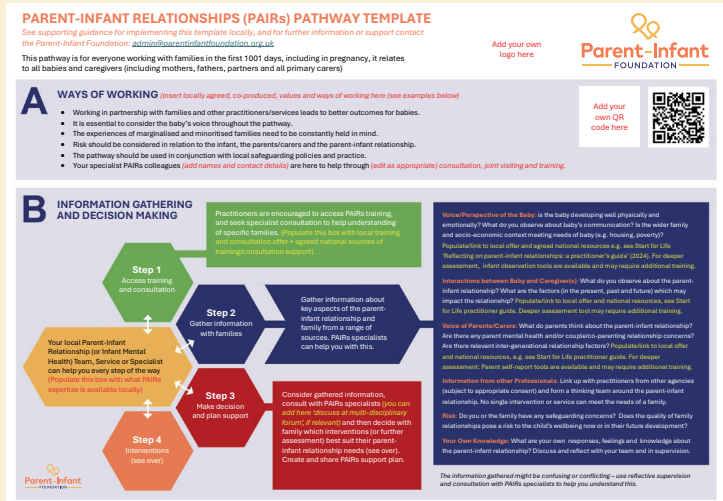
**Gather** information that can be used as a basis for providing information to families about where to seek support.



# How to use the Pathway Template

The template comes in the form of a Microsoft Word document, which is:

- 1 Editable** – so that you can add or change information, weblinks and QR codes about local activities and services, best practice and local guidance, and update it easily.
- 2 Adaptable** – it can be mapped onto whichever language or model you use locally to describe levels of need.
- 3 Concise** – it distils lots of complex information into a deceptively simple format.



The template is a flexible tool which can be 'localised' in a variety of ways. Here are some recommendations for this process:

## 1. Bring multi-agency colleagues together to populate different sections

The conversations you have between local health, social care, voluntary sector, early years education and childcare colleagues, commissioners and families, about how to populate this template will be as valuable as the finished pathway.

You could bring multi-agency colleagues together to discuss which activities and services to include, what they each do and how families can best access them. This always brings up helpful conversations about gaps in service provision, interfaces between services, referral pathways, step up, step down and step out arrangements. Using short case studies of families can be helpful for practitioners to see how the template works in real life.

Many local areas find that a service mapping exercise for parent-infant relationships is a helpful first step in the process. The Parent-Infant Foundation has a [freely available online mapping tool to support you](#).

## 2. Involve families

Involving people with 'lived' and 'learned' experiences will ensure the pathway better meets the needs of families and practitioners locally.

There are many ways that families can shape the pathway from consultation through to co-production. Parents/carers could inform the language used in the pathway, the ways of working and how families navigate the system in more joined-up ways. Remember to consider the voice and perspective of the baby as the pathway takes shape.

## 3. Create additional local resources

Local areas are using the Pathway Template as a springboard to create more detailed practice guidance for practitioners.

Some areas are looking to develop family facing-versions of the pathway or a 'journey map' for families, using accessible, jargon-free language and QR codes to develop a fantastic PAIR information resource for families.

## Sections of the Pathway Template

The template has three sections which reflect typical practice with families:

### Section A – Ways of Working

This section invites the early years system to come together to agree values and principles which underpin work with babies, young children and families in the first 1001 days. We have included some suggestions from the local areas we have worked with, but you can develop your own. These can be co-produced by families and practitioners.

### Section B – Information Gathering and Decision Making

This section advises practitioners how to gather information about infant mental health/emotional wellbeing and parent-infant relationships, and how to access expertise and guidance when synthesising that information and making decisions. Local areas told us they wanted this kind of a 'mini-assessment' framework which can be populated with local tools, resources and processes before getting to a list of services and interventions.

#### Section B is broken down into 4 steps:

1. The first step is always for practitioners to access PAIR training and consultation. A practitioner cannot use a pathway effectively without some training on what parent-infant relationships are, how to support them, what to look out for and what to do if you suspect there is a problem developing.
2. The second step is a space for practice guidance. The right hand box distils expert clinical knowledge into prompts which encourage consideration of multiple perspectives, including the baby's, and of any risks in the family. There is space in this box to add information about various assessment/screening tools or outcome measures.
3. The third step is synthesising this information and creating a support plan.
4. The last step is deciding what support would best match the families' needs.

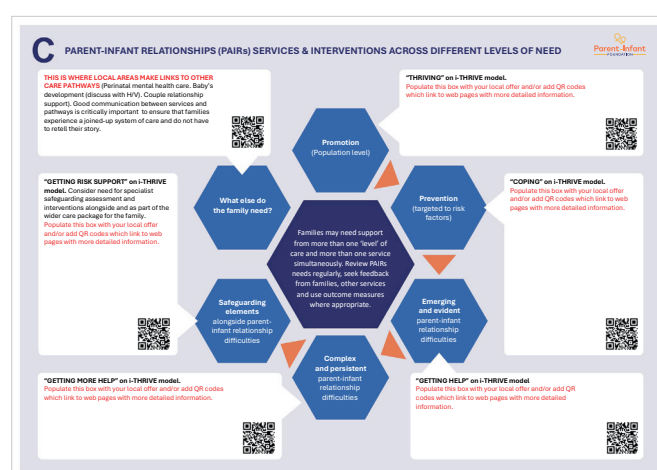
Central to all four steps in this section is easy access to specialists. These differ between areas, but ideally include a specialised parent-infant relationship team, specialist infant mental health Health Visitors, and/or other infant mental health specialists. If you do not have any of these resources available locally, flag this gap with commissioners.

Access to consultation with infant mental health/PAIR specialists is especially important where the information gathered from different sources may be confusing or conflicting.

### Section C – Parent-Infant Relationship Services and Interventions

This is a place to list and organise all of the different services and interventions which support infant mental health/emotional wellbeing and parent-infant relationships. The Parent-Infant Foundation has a freely available [online mapping tool](#) to support you in this process.

Some local activities will not fit neatly into one level of need and families always have needs at different levels simultaneously (e.g. families who need a safeguarding social worker still need a health visitor and may simultaneously access other universal and targeted level interventions). You can edit the template to describe levels of need in your locally-agreed language.





While we have focused on the need in parent-infant relationships, local areas are using other frameworks, for example:

- iThrive model (this is the example we have used in the Pathway Template)
- Healthy Child Programme
- Early Help Framework
- 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (Scotland)
- NEST framework (Wales)

Supporting parent-infant relationships is closely connected to parental mental health, family support and other topics about which you may have separate pathways. There is space in Section C, in the "What else do families need?" box to reference and link to other pathways.

Feedback from local areas we collaborated with was that the ideal length of the template was two sides of A4, but you may want to have a separate page, document or weblink if your service offer is very comprehensive.

## How was it developed?

This PAIR Pathway Template was developed by experienced PAIR practitioners at the Parent-Infant Foundation in collaboration with several Start for Life partnerships across England.<sup>1</sup> Many local areas were developing their own PAIR pathway, but running into similar challenges about how to lay out the page, how much information to include, how to explain levels of need and what to do at each level, and how to make core topics like safeguarding more visible.

Several different iterations were tested and refined to get to the template presented here. This template is now being implemented in new areas and we would welcome hearing from you about how it is being used and adapted locally. Please get in touch with us at: [admin@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk](mailto:admin@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk).

1. We would particularly like to thank practitioners in the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall & Wolverhampton), North East Lincolnshire, Dr Karen Bateson and Ben Yeo.

## Top tips

### Ensure everybody who interacts with the template understands how it works

Launching it without the opportunity for explanation and discussion will limit its effectiveness. Some areas are introducing their completed pathway through short training sessions, which provides a good opportunity to raise awareness about your local PAIR training offer at the same time.

### Adapt language to local context

Use language which best reflects existing approaches. For example, Dudley uses the term Parent-Infant Emotional Wellbeing (PIEW) rather than Parent-Infant Relationships (PAIR). Scotland uses the term 'Infant Mental Health' services as well as PAIR Services.

### Establish who 'owns' the pathway

You will need to work out who "owns" the pathway? Who is responsible for ensuring its content is high-quality, safe and up-to-date? Where can people find it – online or as a paper-based tool?

### Consider creating additional resources to expand the pathway

Some local areas are using the template to create additional resources such as detailed practice guidance for Section B – gathering information and making decisions.

### Use QR codes to provide quick links to online information

This can be easier to keep up-to-date, especially if your pathway is going to be printed out on paper.

### Join the Parent-Infant Foundation Network

We invite anyone developing parent-infant relationship services to join the [Parent-Infant Foundation Network](#) where you can access more free resources and learning events.