



The National Parent-Infant Relationship (PAIR) Framework Project Description

1. Introduction

Babies depend on sensitive, responsive relationships to grow and develop healthily. But many do not get the nurturing care they need¹.

Parent-infant teams and services support and strengthen relationships between babies and their parents or carers. They also join up the wider system to support parent-infant relationships.

But parent-infant teams and services are not available everywhere and there is currently no national pathway or guidance.

The National PAIR Framework will address these challenges by developing best practice guidance to support implementation of parent-infant relationship pathways and improved provision. It will draw on best practice from parent-infant teams and services across the UK, and bring together people with lived and learned experience, research, evidence from practice and professional guidance.

Led by the [Parent-Infant Foundation](#) with delivery partners [Ideas Alliance](#) (co-production) and [Anna Freud](#) (research), the National PAIR Framework is a four-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund for England.

This new initiative has extensive support from key stakeholders across the system who work with and advocate for babies. We are grateful for the time stakeholders invested in shaping the project during its development. In particular to the Royal College of Midwives, the Institute of Health Visiting, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Local Government Association. The National PAIR Framework will focus on the antenatal period up to age two, and link with relevant pathways and guidance for young children and expectant parents.

¹ The government's approach to assessing need uses 'disorganised attachment' as a proxy measure. Start for Life puts prevalence of disorganised attachment at 10% of the population. Academic research suggests the level of disorganised attachment at a population level could be as high as 15%. It should be noted that while this group represents the most vulnerable babies, professionals also recommend supporting babies at risk of developing other types of 'insecure attachment', as they too experience distress that can negatively impact their development

2. Aims of the project

The National PAIR Framework will support the implementation of parent-infant relationship pathways and improve provision across the whole system². It will develop best practice guidance in two areas:

a) Supporting babies and parent-infant relationships facing the greatest challenges, with a focus on:

- babies from families engaged with social care
- babies in neonatal care
- families with mental health difficulties
- the antenatal period³.

b) Supporting the journey of care for families across the whole system, with a focus on:

- reaching those facing the greatest health inequalities⁴
- early identification of need
- connections between community, universal, targeted and specialist services
- clear service offers for different levels of need.

² Whole system refers to the wider system in both health and social care that works with babies and their families from before birth to the age of two.

³ The National PAIR Framework will also focus on marginalised groups within, and beyond, these specific cohorts.

⁴ Groups set out by NHS England's Core 20 Plus 5 Framework

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/core20plus5-cyp/>

3. How will this be achieved?

The National PAIR Framework will address the following questions:

- What does ‘good’ service delivery to support parent-infant relationships look and feel like:
 - For babies and families facing the most challenges?
 - Across the whole system?
- What can be learnt about how to improve parent-infant relationship service provision:
 - For babies and families facing the most challenges?
 - Across the whole system?

The National PAIR Framework will answer these questions by drawing on five evidence sources:

‘Lived’ experiences	‘Learned’ experiences	Scientific peer-reviewed evidence	Practice-based evidence	Resources and guidance
Families who have accessed parent-infant relationship teams and services and those who have not. Incorporating the ‘voice’ of the baby ⁵ .	Parent-infant practitioners and associated professionals; organisations and professional bodies in the sector.	Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of implementation and systems literature.	From Specialised Parent-Infant Relationship Teams and services	Publications and guidance developed by the Parent-Infant Foundation and partners in the sector.

⁵ Giving due consideration to the perspective and experience of the baby and what their ‘voice’ would be if they could describe their experience. Many parent-infant teams consider the baby’s voice in clinical assessments, consultations, decision-making forums and to inform service development.

4. Key deliverables of project

The National PAIR Framework will:

- Provide overarching principles and guidance for parent-infant services throughout the journey of care.⁶
- Include core guidance for practitioners working with families facing the most challenges.
- Cross-reference to guidance from other professional bodies working in the 0-2 field.
- Include examples of good practice to enable flexible delivery that is sensitive to local commissioning contexts.
- Have the voice of parents and babies at its heart.
- Develop resources to enable the implementation of parent-infant pathways and provision in local areas.

A suite of resources will include:

- A microsite (website) with downloadable assets and resources for system leaders⁷, professionals and practitioners
- Resources which support local areas in how they communicate with families.

The National Framework will draw on practice from across the UK but it will be England specific in its final reach. However, we aim to work closely with the other devolved nations to ensure that it is a resource that can be adapted and used in these contexts.

⁶ The will build on the existing Definition of a Parent-Infant Team and form the foundations for a set of national standards.

⁷ System leaders include anyone leading on the development and commissioning of services, including, commissioners, service planners, local authorities and ICBs as well as service managers and clinical leads.

5. Project Delivery

- The National PAIR Framework will be led by the Parent-Infant Foundation with delivery partners Ideas Alliance (co-production) and research partner (Anna Freud). The governance structures are:

Parent-Infant Foundation (PIF) Project Team

- Strategic Clinical Lead – oversight/leadership of the project, bringing the evidence together
- Project Manager – operational lead and coordinating all operational aspects
- PIF Head of Development
- PIF Clinical Advisor

Wider Project Team

- Parent-Infant Foundation Project Team (as above), and communications team
- Ideas Alliance - leading on co-production with those with lived and learned experiences.
- Anna Freud – leading on the research outputs within the project.

Project teams will be accountable to PIF Head of Development.

National Advisory Group

- The project will report to a National Advisory Group of key professional stakeholders. This will have representation from key workforce groups, professional bodies, clinical leads from parent-infant teams and other specialists in the sector.

National Co-Production Panel

A national panel of families, practitioners and professionals will:

- offer advice and consultation to the development of the National Framework.
- consider the evidence on whole system pathways and shape guidance on this.
- oversee the development of resources which support local areas in communicating with families.

**Task and finish working groups
(Edge of care, Neonatal care, Mental health, Antenatal)**

- National groups of professionals and practitioners with expertise in these four areas will focus on developing best practice guidance for reaching families facing the greatest challenges ⁸.
- Ideas Alliance will bring together people with 'learned' and 'lived' experiences to shape the guidance.

6. Project stages and timeline

Years 1 & 2 – Gathering Evidence and Insight

- Collecting evidence
- Developing a theory of change
- Co-production – babies and families facing the most challenges
- Co-production – national panel

Year 3 Development of the National PAIR Framework

Year 4 Dissemination and Implementation

Local areas and Integrated Care Boards will be invited to implement the National PAIRS Framework with support from the Parent-Infant Foundation.

⁸ Further working groups may be added during the project.