



Developing Specialised Infant Mental Health Services in Wales

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Wales Development Lead

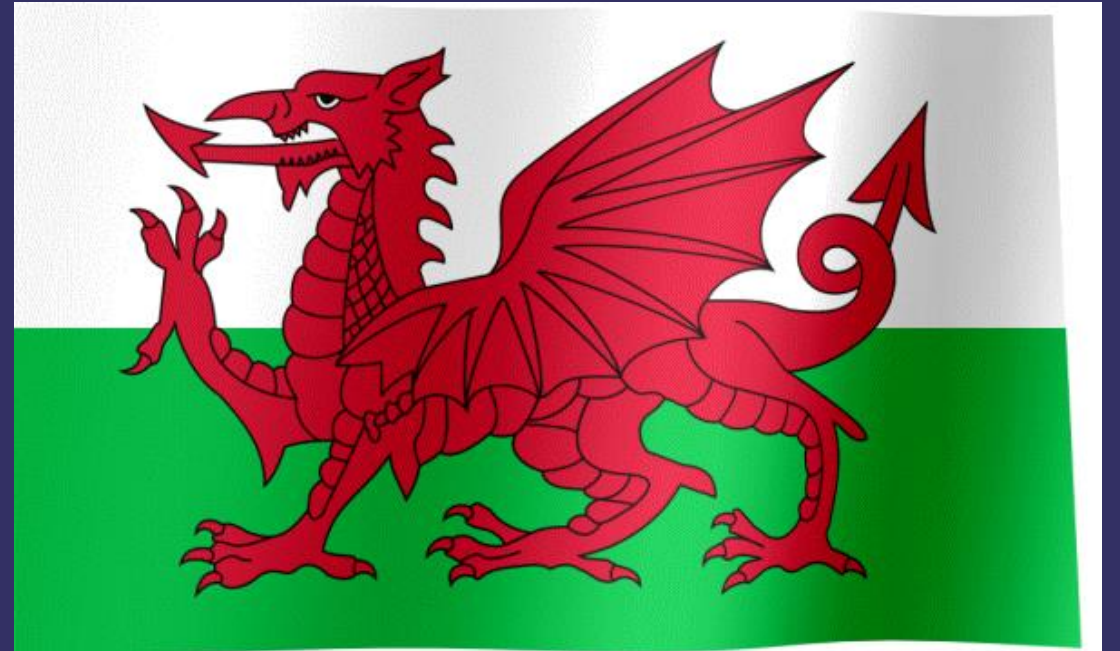
Parent Infant Foundation

November 2025

A bit about Welsh Context (Scotland's little sister)

- Smaller country - > 3 million
- Geographically, socially and economically diverse
- Devolved Parliament - Children's Rights and Partnership Working
- National SG investment in Perinatal Mental Health Services

Wales Development Lead – 3 year funding





The golden thread

A Case for Developing Specialist
Parent-Infant Services in Wales

Dr. Lir Gregory
Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes
and Sharon Fernandez

Supported by:
Parent Infant Network Cymru



Long Read



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Our plans for mental health and wellbeing
in Wales

2025 to 2035



This document was written by the Welsh Government. It is an easy-read
version of Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

April 2025



PLANT YNG NGHYMRU
CHILDREN IN WALES



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

Here I am!

A pledge for babies in Wales

This pledge has been developed to highlight the perspective of the baby, focusing on their rights and needs within the first 1000 days. It is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and has been co-produced with parents, their babies and professionals across Wales.

Babies have unique needs and are more vulnerable than others because they can't advocate for their rights, so this pledge ensures their needs are considered.

This pledge acknowledges that all babies and their grown-ups (parents, carers or guardians) are different, and some will need more support than others.

This pledge is written from the voice of the baby. It sets out what a baby needs from their grown-ups, what their grown-ups need to support and care for their baby and what babies and their grown-ups need from communities.

I am my own person, and I depend on you to love me and help me understand this big wide world. This is my voice.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

The Best Start in Life: An Early Years Framework for Action



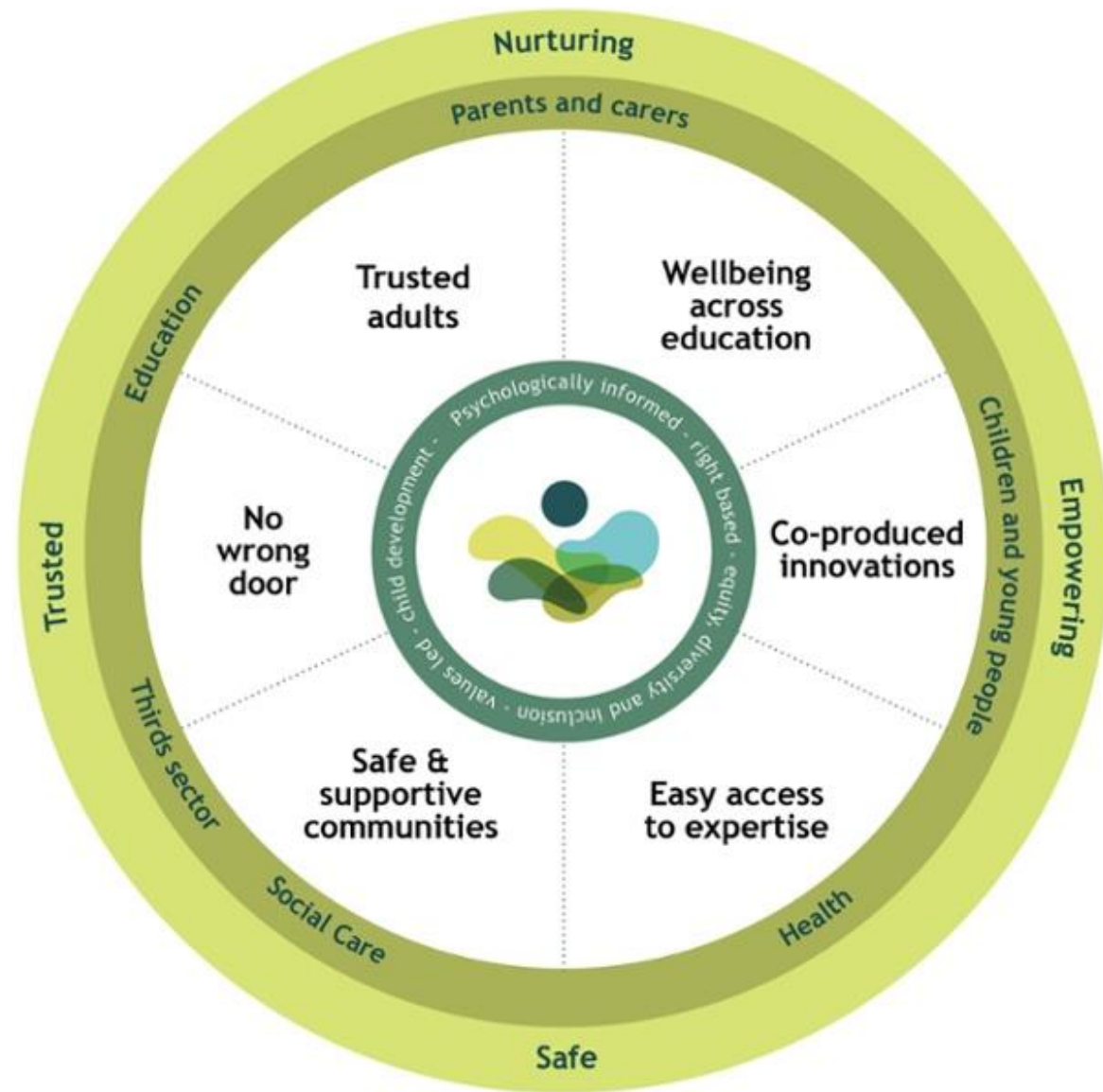
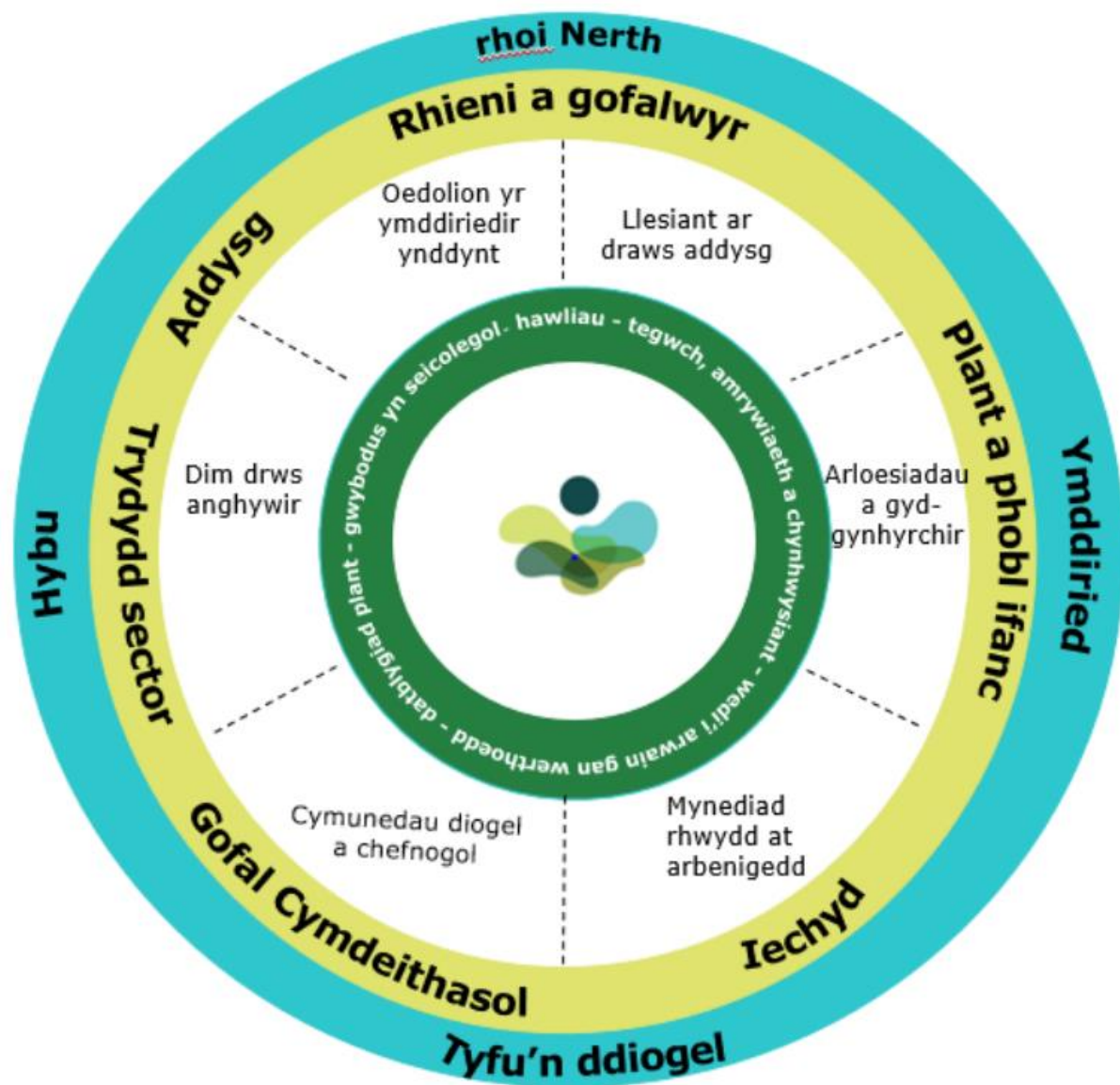
WALES

Regional Partnership Boards



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Cartography: Welsh Government
May 2016

OGL



Terms of Reference

PARENT INFANT NETWORK CYMRU



Purpose

A network for colleagues with a special interest, skills and/or knowledge in parent-infant relationships, to come together to share learning, good practice, and to support the development and delivery of specialist parent-infant relationships teams across Wales.

Functions

- Networking and peer support group to support clinical practice and the development of services.
- Influencing policy and practice around supporting parent-infant relationships in Wales.
- Promoting and raising awareness of the importance of specialised parent-infant relationship support at a local, national, and strategic level.
- Feeding into the Perinatal Mental Health Board to ensure PMH and IMH are closely aligned, and to share any key issues/challenges the sector or families are facing, with Welsh Government
- Contributing to development of workforce training in supporting parent-infant relationships.

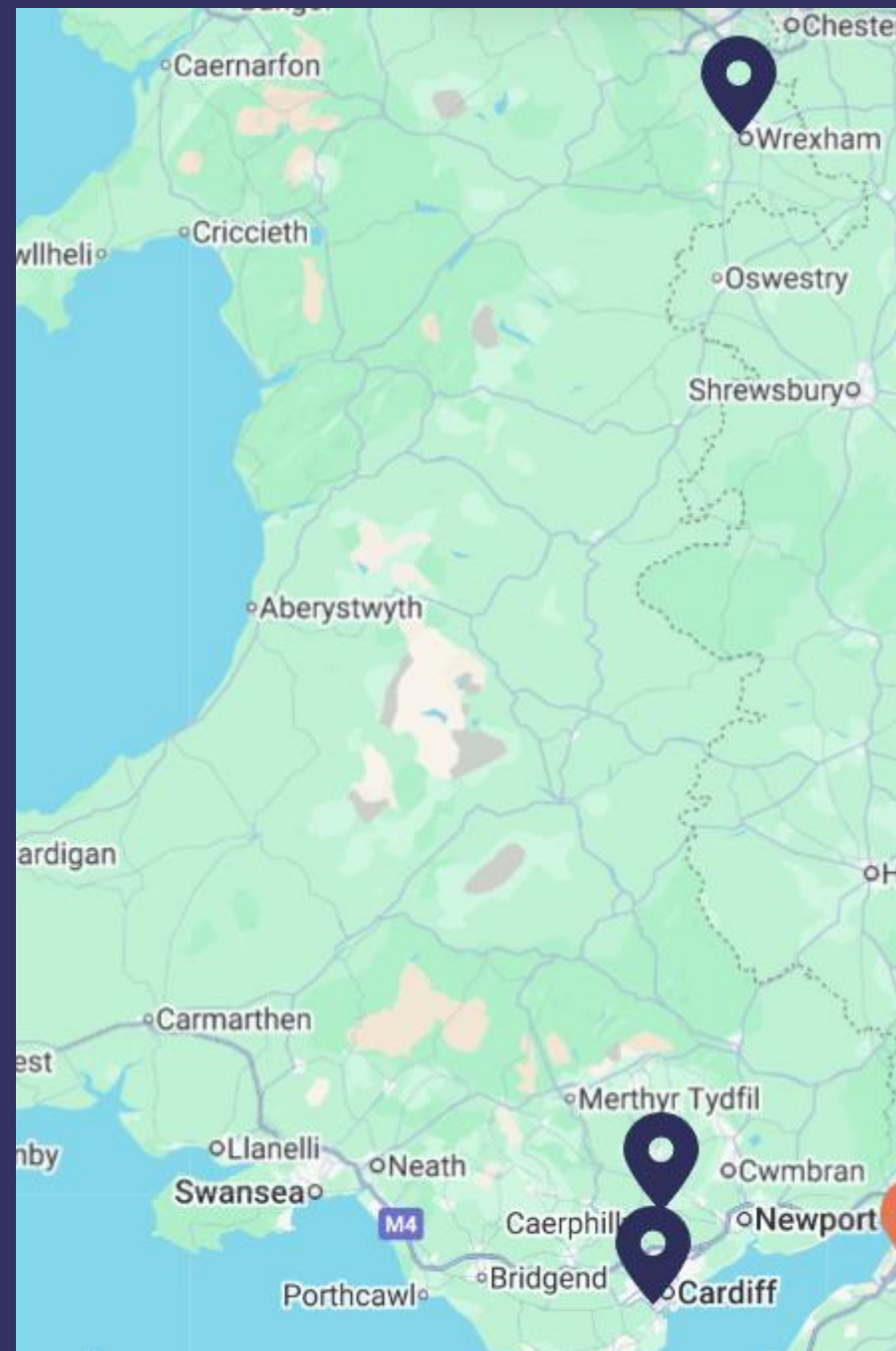


Sicrhau bywydau iach Securing Healthy Lives

An extended summary of research
about parent-infant relationship
help and support across
Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Dr Karen Bateson, Martha Sercombe
and Wook Hamilton

1 December 2021



PIF role to Support Development of Specialised Services through :

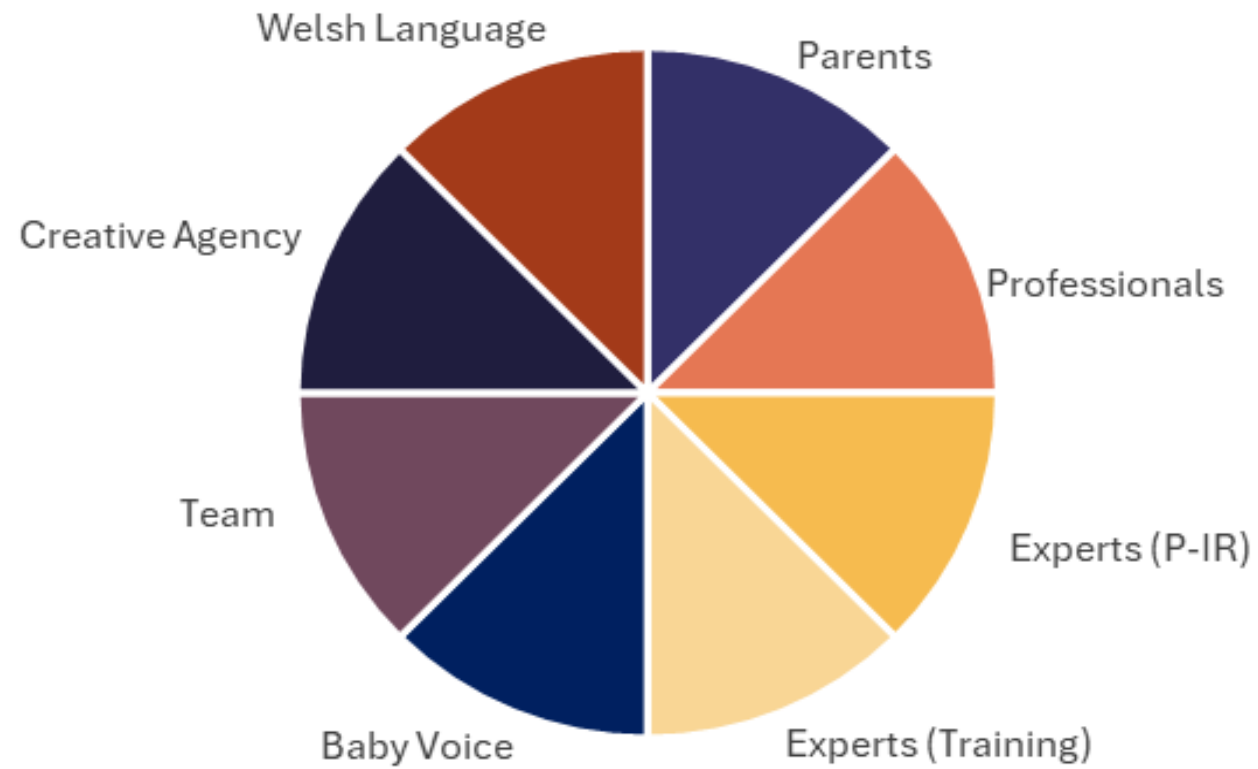
- Building cross sector relationships
- Supporting PINC
- Bespoke consultation to Partnership Boards
- Bringing a range of expertise and wider UK connections

Introducing...



Co-production

Elements of BEAR Co-Production



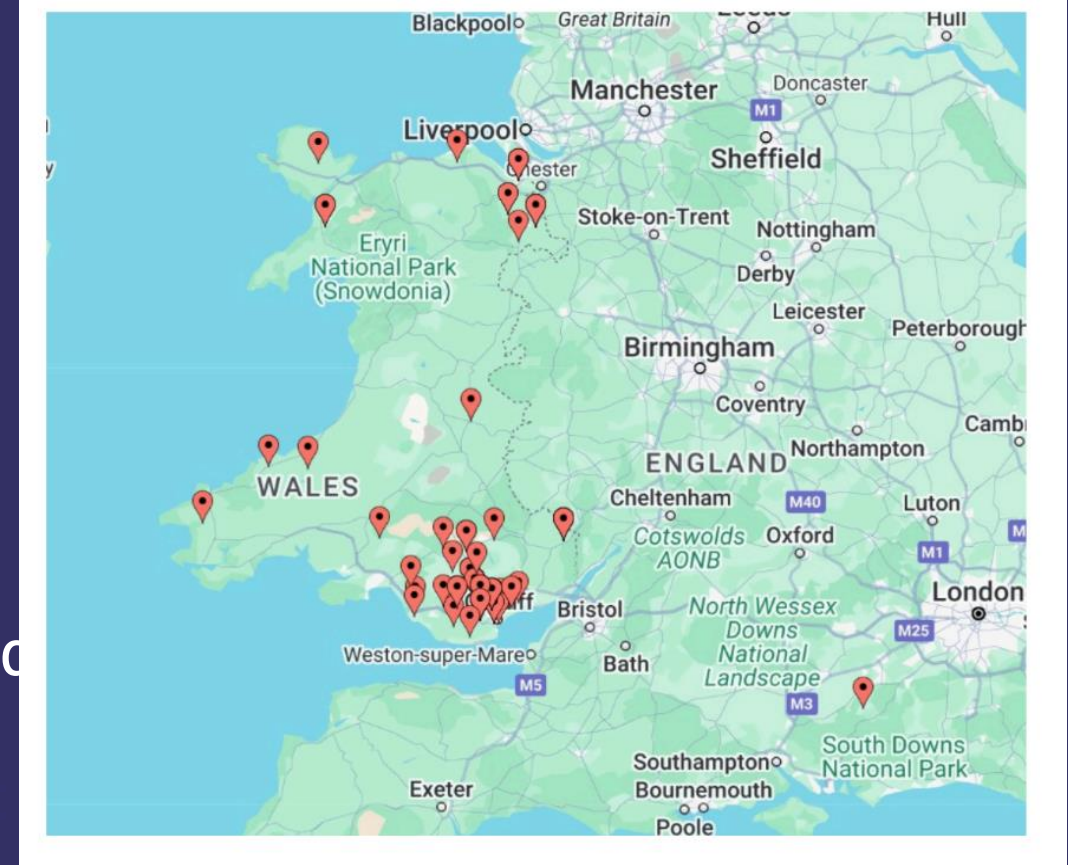
Baby Voice

- NBO training
- Pledge for babies
- Baby friendly assets
- Interactive asset (lullaby)
- Using baby voice where possible



Parent Voice

- x79 responses from across Wales (91% mothers)
- More in depth interviews with parents to generate themes and quotes bringing parent voice into the training
- Lots of examples of positive interactions and the little things that made the biggest difference to parents.



Relational Training Expertise

What works best in Training?

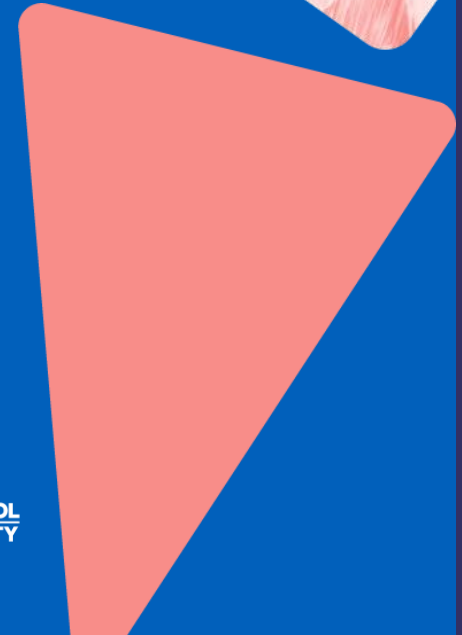
- Create safety giving permission to be vulnerable
- Need both factual and experiential material
- How you leave people feeling counts for the most

What did the children with developmental trauma miss out on as babies?

- Someone who was there for them, containing and reflecting their feelings back to them

Building **E**arly **A**ttuned **R**elationships

Building Early Attuned Relationships
Dr Liz Gregory & Dr Nicola Canale



Training PowerPoint slides

Building Early Attuned Relationships

Building Early Attuned Relationships

Structure of the Session

- Learning Objectives
- Day 1 - only babies are important to babies
- Day 2 - only babies are important to families
- Day 3 - how babies can help us to know if there is a baby

The creation of this session

- The role of the parent
- The role of the baby
- The role of the family
- The role of the community
- The role of the culture
- The role of the environment
- The role of the individual
- The role of the system
- The role of the whole

A few things to 'bear' in mind before

The Rhythm of Play

The Rhythm of Interactions and Relationships

These things are not just fun but are fundamental in supporting children's early development and wellbeing.

Rhythms and Relationships Exist in a Context

Why a 'Whole System' approach

Welsh Government: NPTW/NEST Framework

'Not Enough'

- ...emphasis on the emotional aspects of becoming a parent.
- ...asking about bond and developing relationship with baby.
- ...practical advice on how to interact and play with baby.
- ...vision of mixed feelings towards baby.
- ...support for lonely/isolated parents – no village
- ...support for parental mental health

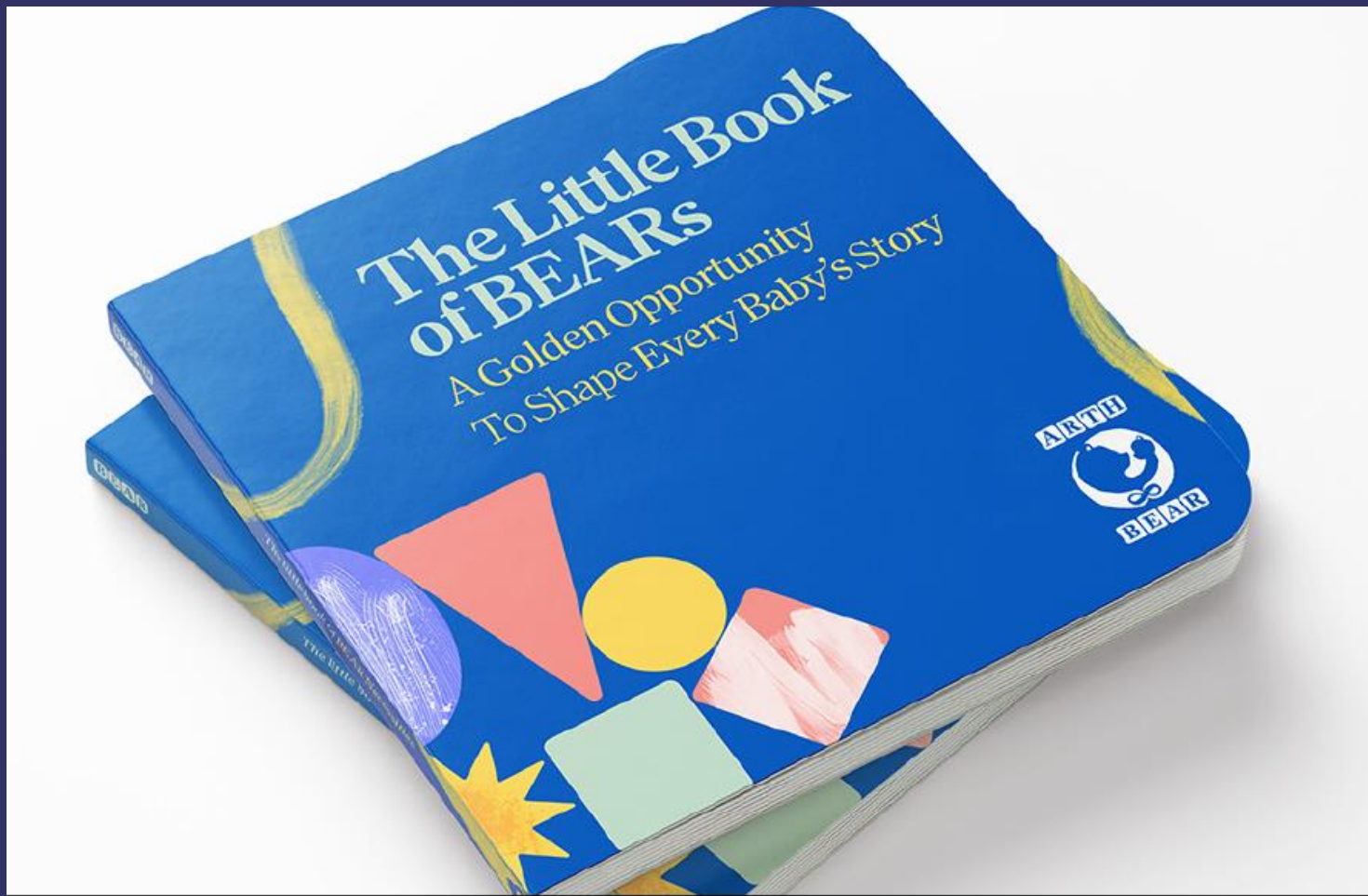
'Too Much'

- ...emphasis on physical nature of birth and pregnancy rather than emotional journey.
- ...of an assumption about what certain families 'are like'.
- ...one off advice giving – babies develop quickly!
- ...emphasis on breastfeeding, golden hour, etc. without asking views/permission of family.

'Just Right'

- Seeing people for who they truly are
- Support through an ongoing relationship
- The right support at the right time
- Building a Village – connecting families to the community stay and play, peer support etc.

The Little Book of Bears



Little Bear Key Ring



Postcard



Thank you for taking
the time to become
BEAR AWARE



Here's a reminder of the **Five BEAR Essentials:**

1. From conception to two years old (the First 1000 days) a baby's brain is growing faster than at any other time in their life. It is a golden opportunity.
2. Building Early Attuned Relationships, (or BEARs), is an important way in which we can all help shape a baby's brain now and for the future.
3. Attunement means taking the time to notice what babies are experiencing and letting them know that you understand. Happy? Sad? Overwhelmed? Scared? Even the tiniest babies can show us what they feel.
4. This 'call' and 'respond' between babies and their trusted grown-ups builds the foundations for lifelong learning, positive mental health and wellbeing and future life chances.
5. Relationships that support families with BEARs really matter. They are the golden thread that weave through and connect communities to help every baby thrive.



Play your part in shaping every baby's story.

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Crib Sheet



BEARs and A BOW

BEAR
ART H

Principles of Attunement

Guiding & Supporting	Attuned Together	Receiving	Encouraging	Being Alternative
Listening	Observing	Wondering	Asking	Being with a family

Image credit of illustration, courtesy of Connected Moments, Visual Information Guidance

Play your part in shaping every baby's story.

www.parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/bear



Parent-Infant Foundation
A not-for-profit charity

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A not-for-profit charity

Image credit of illustration, courtesy of Connected Moments, Visual Information Guidance

BEARs are important because they remind us of the **profound impact** that early relationships have on the developing child. They stand for:

- B**uilding - being part of a community of support for babies and families to thrive
- E**arly - the importance of the First 1000 Days
- A**ttuned - being in tune with others
- R**elationships - the golden thread that runs through all our work



A BOW is important because it reminds us to **pay attention** to the interaction, or early relationship, between babies and caregivers.



To help us stay focused on this we can think of the acronym **A B.O.W**:

- Asking** about the parent-infant relationship
- Being** with a family
- Observing** the interaction. Think Goldilocks - is it 'too much', 'too little' or 'good enough'?
- Wondering**, offering support and signposting (with parents in the moment and with colleagues after)



Lullaby



BEARs help our babies to
feel like they are **important**,
feel **understood** and feel
like they belong.

