

CASE STUDY 1 | Oxfordshire | Early years

Therapy helps parents to make loving bonds with their babies

PROJECT
Oxford Parent Infant Project (Oxpip)

PURPOSE
To give babies a positive start in life by helping parents develop loving and secure relationships with them

FUNDING
Last year's income totalled around £500,000, made up of around £110,000 from Oxfordshire children's centres, a £100,000 Department for Education grant and funding from others including Impetus PEF, Henry Smith Charity and Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

BACKGROUND
There is mounting scientific evidence of the critical role parental love, or attachment, plays in babies' brain development and children's ongoing confidence, emotional wellbeing and ability to form positive relationships.

Psychotherapist Sue Gerhardt witnessed the success of a Canadian project called Watch, Wait and Wonder, which encouraged parents to tune into their babies and respond to their cues, and was keen to replicate it in Oxfordshire.

Together with a counsellor she

started to deliver parent-baby psychotherapy sessions at a GP practice in the deprived Oxford estate of Blackbird Leys, going on to form the Oxford Parent Infant Project (Oxpip) in 1998. The project gained Big Lottery funding and now has a national profile.

ACTION
Referrals come from professionals including health visitors, midwives, children's centre staff, GPs and social workers, who identify issues such as depression or previous trauma, which may affect a parent's ability to bond with a new baby. Parents who are struggling with issues such as feeding their baby or getting them to sleep may also refer themselves.

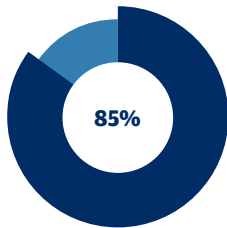
The service has a team of 12 therapists, with psychotherapy and clinical psychology backgrounds. They are based part-time in 10 Oxfordshire children's centres and three centres in Reading, as well as in outreach projects in west Oxfordshire and Oxford city centre.

Oxpip works with parents before birth up to their child's second birthday. After an initial assessment, therapists meet regularly with them, usually for

IMPROVED PARENT-BABY BONDS

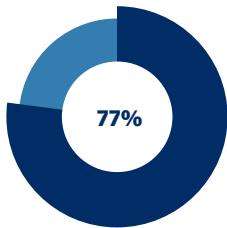
Results for parents attending Oxpip sessions

Parent-infant psychotherapy



Improved relationship with baby

Parent-infant groups



Improved relationship with baby

Source: Oxford Parent Infant Project

SHUTTERSTOCK



Parents who have had children taken into care make changes to break the cycle

CASE STUDY 2 | Suffolk | Social care

Support stops children from going into care

PROJECT
Ormiston M Power

PURPOSE
To break the cycle of children being taken into care

FUNDING
A grant of £36,000 a year over three years from the Henry Smith Charity

BACKGROUND
Around one in three care applications involve parents who have had children taken into care before. Suffolk County Council was keen to improve support for vulnerable parents who have had children removed and in 2011 sought help from local professionals and organisations.



Anxious parents benefit from a range of therapeutic techniques to build up confidence in interactions with their children

between eight and 10 weekly sessions.

Alongside Watch, Wait and Wonder, therapists use a range of techniques including filming the parent and baby interacting, before playing it back. Oxpip executive director Adrian Sell says this can be “transformative” for anxious parents. “You show them the moments where there’s eye contact and the baby is smiling

and they can see what they were doing to make that happen,” he says. “It’s about building their confidence and understanding of what they’re doing right and helping them do more of that.”

Therapists also explore the influence of clients’ own parents and parenting. “One dad was asked to play with his baby and simply didn’t know what to do, as he’d never been played with as a

child,” says Sell. “If clients’ own parents weren’t positive role models, they can think about another relative who was, and how they can be more like that.”

Oxpip engages around 400 parents a year, offering group work in some children’s centres. The project also trains professionals on parent-baby attachment and early relationships and trained 204 early years

practitioners through courses in Oxford and Lambeth between April 2014 and March this year.

OUTCOME

Provisional figures show 334 parents attending individual parent-infant psychotherapy sessions between April 2014 and March this year.

Before and after scores were recorded for 144 on the Parent-Infant Relationship Global Assessment Scale (Pirgas), which awards scores out of 100 for relationship quality. Eighty five per cent of them showed an improved relationship with their baby by an average of 12.5 points.

Before and after Pirgas scores were also collected from 71 of the 97 parents who participated in parent-infant groups. Seventy seven per cent showed an improved relationship, by an average of 11 points.

An evaluation by Impetus-PEF in 2013 showed the project aided the recovery of two thirds of clients initially suffering from depression or anxiety.

If you think your project is worthy of inclusion, email supporting data to derren.hayes@markallengroup.com

One was family support charity Ormiston Families, which funded a year-long pilot project in Ipswich from November 2012.

ACTION

M Power provides one-to-one support and guidance to parents who have had one or more children removed and risk having another child taken into care. It also supports women who are pregnant again to make changes that might allow their new baby to remain at home.

Referrals mainly come from social workers or mental health staff through a joint application system shared with Suffolk Council’s Positive Choices, a

similar project serving the rest of the county.

After consultation with the referrer, a project worker meets the client at a neutral location, often a coffee shop. The worker undertakes a detailed assessment of the parent’s health, background and lifestyle, before discussing key goals such as resolving housing, money or drug and alcohol issues. Helping clients get contraception in place is an important first step.

The project worker meets parents regularly, focusing on up to three outcomes at a time, for up to a year. “We try to help them understand why their children have been removed,” says service manager Alison Gillies.

“This is really important to help them move on.”

Gillies says the project is about building trust and self-worth, as many clients “just don’t feel they’re worth anything”. Clients may be referred to an Ormiston self-esteem course or domestic abuse programme. The charity also provides counsellors, with help from a small grant from the Suffolk Community Foundation and refers clients to support groups such as Ipswich-based Survivors in Transition, for adult survivors of childhood sex abuse.

OUTCOME

Twenty seven women and six men have been helped by the project

since November 2012, and 75 per cent have achieved all their chosen outcomes.

Around half have contact with their children. One client, who had previously had two children removed, had a planned pregnancy after M Power’s involvement, and kept her baby. Another was referred to the project while pregnant, after the removal of two previous children, and is on track to keep her baby under a one-year supervision order. Seven clients have progressed into volunteering or work. There has been just one unplanned pregnancy, resulting in a termination.