



# Healthy Little Minds

Newsletter  
December Edition 2022



We are really pleased to be bringing you this first edition of the Healthy Little Minds newsletter, which will be released quarterly to the workforce across Nottingham City. In this edition, we bring you an overview of the importance of our work, and the difference it will make for baby's and families in our city. We introduce you to the team, and some of the specialist interventions we are delivering, offering more context to the work we do to support our mission in raising awareness of the first critical 1001 days from conception to birth.

We invite you to look at our upcoming events section, where you will find details of how to book onto our bite sized workshops. We are also very excited to be launching our Journal Club, a quarterly reflective space for professionals to come together and engage with the team, discuss emerging evidence and share examples of best practice. Our first read 'Rare Jewels' illustrates some of the great work and challenges happening nationally.

Currently the team are regularly visiting communities and professionals across the city—if you would like us to attend your next team meeting to talk more about our service, please do drop us an email at [hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Finally, we actively encourage you to contact the team with any queries or to discuss referrals, and you will find our contact details and referral criteria on the final page of the newsletter. We are looking forward to working with you.

P2 MEET THE TEAM

P3 MELLOW BUMPS AND BABY GROUPS, FOSTERING NURTURING AND LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

P4 BABY MASSAGE  
POSITIVE TOUCH AND EARLY PLAY

P5 CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

P5 WORKING WITH PARENTS

P6 NEWBORN BEHAVIOUR  
OBSERVATIONS  
OBSERVING TOGETHER

P7 UPCOMING EVENTS AND JOURNAL CLUB

P8 CONSULTATIONS  
THINKING TOGETHER

# 1001 CRITICAL DAYS

Elayne Walker and Natasha Beer  
Service Lead and Team Manager

The first 1001 days in a baby's life, from conception until the age of 2, are critical; the baby brain grows and develops at an astonishing rate during this time. The baby brain is more open to, and dependent on, outside influence than it ever will be again. Whilst this is a period of great vulnerability, it is also a period of great opportunity, where the foundations for healthy cognitive, emotional and physical development are laid.

Research tells us that brain development is dictated by the interactions between genetics and the environment. For baby's, the environment is experienced through relationships with others, highlighting the unique importance of a responsive, sensitive, and nurturing relationship with their parent or caregiver.

The evidence consistently demonstrates, that having at least one positive and secure

relationship with a caregiver supports healthy brain development, securing future positive outcomes. However, many new babies will experience complex relationship difficulties with their primary carers. It is estimated that at least 1 in 3 children in Nottingham City will experience attachment difficulties with their parent or caregiver; highlighting the need for a service locally to provide support for these families.

Science and policy have now united, making way for this specialised support to be offered to families. There are now over 40 parent infant relationship teams nationally. Healthy Little Minds are dedicated to raising the profile of this important work both at a local and national level, contributing to the growing body of evidence and ensuring that parent-infant relationship support is embedded into systems. Furthermore, this initiative supports Nottingham City's work toward becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City, by ensuring the best possible start for our children with Healthy Little Minds.

## MEET THE TEAM



Elayne Walker  
Service Lead



Natasha Beer  
Team Manager



Debra Lievesley  
Specialist Practitioner



Tessa Pye  
Specialist Practitioner



Vickie Humble  
Family Support Worker



Chloe Hutchins  
Maternity Support Worker

# MELLOW BUMPS AND BABY GROUPS

FOSTERING NURTURING AND LOVING  
RELATIONSHIPS

Chloe Hutchins,  
Maternity Support Worker

Mellow groups are attachment based group interventions for both mums and dads, and can be offered antenatally or once the baby has arrived. Mellow groups are designed to reduce stress levels for families who are particularly vulnerable, pre or post birth, to support them to build a strong loving relationship with their baby.

There is a focus on the relationship between the group facilitators and parents, where trust is developed to ensure a safe space for parents to explore their hopes, wishes and worries for the new member of their family. Each week is themed, and supports parents to develop a unique connection with their baby. This also allows for the facilitator to develop a meaningful therapeutic relationship with the family, having a positive impact on any future support offered.

The group increases parents understanding that their baby is a social being, born ready to interact, and how this positively impacts brain, social and emotional development. For families where the baby has already arrived, there is a video element to the sessions where parents receive strengths based feedback.

There has been a growing body of evidence from lockdown, highlighting the positive outcomes for parents who attended Going Mellow online, and as a result of this the team are pleased to be able to offer this intervention to parents within their own home. This can be particularly useful for families where travelling to groups is a barrier to attendance.

Healthy Little Minds are offering Mellow Bumps both online and face to face, and Going Mellow online. We invite you to refer families into our service for our upcoming Mellow Groups for mums. Mums and dads groups are run separately and dates for dads to attend will be added in the future.

## Mellow Bumps

7 week programme  
For parents expecting a child

Referrals for parents to be, between 20 and 30 weeks of pregnancy where vulnerabilities and bonding difficulties have been identified.

Delivered face to face  
Thursdays from 19th Jan  
Hyson Green Childrens Centre  
10-11.30am

## Going Mellow

8 week programme  
For parents

Referrals for vulnerable families where bonding and attachment difficulties have been identified.

Delivered virtually on MS Teams, starting on 7th February, 2023.  
The group will meet on Tuesdays online using MS Teams.





# BABY MASSAGE

POSITIVE TOUCH AND EARLY PLAY

Debra Lievesley  
Specialist Practitioner

Baby massage is a tradition in many cultures dating back for centuries, and over the last 15 years or so baby massage has become very popular in the UK. It is an excellent way of bringing new and positive experiences into a baby's life, offering the opportunity for positive touch and early play. It has many benefits for babies and their parents, from helping babies to feel loved, soothed and secure alongside benefits to physiological health.

Parents report feeling more confident about handling their baby and have an increased understanding of the signs and signals their baby uses to communicate. By providing an opportunity to relax and have fun with their baby, baby massage increases opportunity for bonding experiences, enhancing feelings of closeness with their baby, so that their relationship may strengthen and grow.

Healthy Little Minds are offering baby massage as a group-based intervention and on a one-one basis in the home.

Our qualified massage teachers work together with parents to help develop confidence and understanding of:

- The best time to massage their baby, through awareness of the six sleep/awake states
- Contra-indications to massage
- Recognising their baby's non-verbal cues
- Their baby's emotional states, to provide a nurturing and sensitive response
- How to perform massage strokes correctly and safely

We know that the first two years of a baby's life is a crucial period for brain development. Baby's brains are receiving information all of the time, from how they are being cared for and what they hear, see, smell, feel and taste. Lots of connections are being made and during baby massage we share with parents the important role they have in helping their baby's brain grow.



# CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Vickie Humble,  
Family Support Worker

Over the last few months Healthy Little Minds have attended various events, groups and activities within the SSBC wards with the aim to promote Healthy Little Minds and embed our service within the local community. It has been an opportunity to meet families and professionals in person and we have valued this time to be able to explain in more detail about our service - who we are, what we do, how we support the parent infant relationship, and how families and professionals can refer into the service. This has given families a chance to ask any questions, gain a better understanding of what a parent infant relationship team is, and to promote our service via word of mouth. We want to play an active part within the SSBC wards, building strong links to ensure we have a collaborative approach with professionals, parents and caregivers.

Over the last few weeks, we have cascaded our parent leaflets out to GP practices, Health Visiting teams, Midwives, Children's Centres, SSBC Family Mentors, and various community settings within the wards. We are pleased that alongside the launch of this newsletter we are able to distribute our professional information leaflets, and other resources such as stickers for red books and prompt cards to support professionals to have conversations with families about their bonding experience with their baby.

We have hosted several professional information sessions to a wide range of professionals, delivering an overview of our service. This has given professionals an understanding of the service, the 1001 critical days movement, and information about the thrive model and the referral process. This has been received with great success! We have a link worker for professionals in each ward and plan to continuously link in with all professionals and look forward to working together.

To find out more about link workers and the resources that we have available to share in the community, please email us at [hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

## WORKING WITH PARENTS

Melkorka Stiller-Magnusdottir  
SSBC Parent Champion  
Chair of HLM Stakeholder group



It is without doubt incredibly important that when services are created, people with lived experience are invited to be involved in shaping said service right from the get-go.

This was at the forefront of the creation of the Healthy Little Minds service that we now offer to our families in Nottingham. When SSBC put out a tender for the creation of Parent infant Relationship (PIR) service, SSBC parent champions were crucial in sharing their experience and shaping what the key elements of the service should be.

The parent champions carefully considered all tender applications and working alongside SSBC staff concluded that NCC would be awarded the contract. At this point a Stakeholder group was created to make a start at setting up the PIR team, creating the name of the service and overseeing the continuous work of shaping the service. Through careful consultation with parents the service was given the name Healthy Little Minds and SSBC parent champion Melkorka Stiller-Magnusdottir was voted in as the chair of the stakeholder group.

By involving parents at every point of creating Healthy Little Minds, parents feel their lived experience is valued and that they are seen as an equal part of the Healthy Little Minds team, which in turn creates trust that the service is being run with families and their wellbeing at its heart.

# NEWBORN BEHAVIOUR OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVING TOGETHER

Tessa Pye  
Specialist Practitioner

As part of Healthy Little Minds assessment and interventions, we are offering Newborn Behavioural Observations to our families who have a baby up to 12 weeks old.

It can be difficult at times to understand what a baby is trying to communicate to us, especially when you're a sleep deprived new parent. Unfortunately, if a parent is feeling overwhelmed, de skilled or confused by their baby, this can have a significant impact on the attachment formed between baby and parent.

NBO is designed to help parents see and understand what their baby may be trying to tell them. As we know, a new born baby's way of communicating with us is through their behaviour. Therefore, in NBO, the parent and practitioner will together observe the baby, taking time to understand their signs, movements, and responses. We then reflect with the parent on what these behaviours may be communicating – what their baby is saying, who they are, what they like and dislike. Babies' communication is not random, and they are social beings ready and wanting to communicate with the world around them, straight from birth! By observing these behaviours, we can highlight to parents, their baby's strengths and also identify any support their baby may need.

**"Every baby is different and has many ways to tell us what they would like us to do. The NBO provides the baby with a 'voice'"**

**Dr T. Berry Brazelton**

NBO can help parents feel more confident in understanding and responding to their baby's cues, feel like they know their baby better and have a stronger relationship with their baby which can have a positive impact on both parent's and baby's mental health.



# UPCOMING EVENTS:

## Hot topics

A series of interactive bitesize workshops on MS Teams delivered by the Healthy Little Minds team.

**To book your place  
please email  
[hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)**

Introduction to Baby brain development and attachment

10th January, 1-2pm

Family scripts (Why families repeat patterns of behaviour)

17th January, 1-2pm

Bonding in the antenatal period

24th January, 1-2pm

Children's Mental Health Week

6 - 12 Feb

HLM & SSBC digital campaign  
and ward-based events

Keep an eye on Small Steps Big Changes



## HEALTHY LITTLE MINDS JOURNAL CLUB

The team are committed to raising awareness of the growing body of evidence in infant wellbeing, and connecting with colleagues to share best practice and learning.

We will be holding quarterly journal club meetings.

The meeting will take place at the Meadows Children Centre. To book your space please email: [hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

The first report we will be reading is Rare Jewels, Specialised Parent-Infant relationship teams in the UK, which has been attached to this newsletter for your convenience.

We invite you to join us at our first meeting  
27th January 2022, 2-4pm  
The Meadows Childrens Centre



## TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE CONFERENCE

15th March 2023 at Trent Vineyard

Booking information:  
[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/creating-trauma-informed-practice-tickets-477367317497](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/creating-trauma-informed-practice-tickets-477367317497)

Trauma-informed practice is an approach to health and care interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development.

# CONSULTATION

THINKING TOGETHER

Natasha Beer  
Team Manager

Consultation is dedicated and focused time, offered to professionals as an opportunity to discuss a parent-infant relationship where bonding and attachment difficulties have been identified. Early consultation can often address concerns and provide practical advice to support the professionals already involved in the family's care, empowering the network already involved in the family's life.

Having protected time to reflect can increase the resilience of the network of professionals supporting the family, which in turn increases the families resilience. A practitioner who specialises in parent-infant relationships will guide the network through the consultation process, which results in a containing and supportive experience. By thinking together, existing skill and expertise amongst professionals can be shared, fostering a culture of shared thinking and decision making.

Consultation can be particularly helpful when a family are unable to engage with support directly from Healthy Little Minds, but where they have established relationships with professionals from other teams. Healthy Little Minds will empower the network to develop a sustainable plan to manage current concerns and support the family to thrive.

Consultations work best when the professionals attending have pre-prepared information to share with the team. This allows a sense of partnership and collaboration in finding a way forward and offering the most appropriate support for the family. To request a consultation, please complete a Healthy Little Minds referral.

\*Please note the family must consent to a referral for consultation

## REFERRING INTO THE SERVICE

To make a referral, please complete a referral form which you can download from Ask Lion or SSBC website.



[www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk/  
healthy-little-minds](http://www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk/healthy-little-minds)



0115 876 4000



Referrals  
[CYPBEHM@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:CYPBEHM@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)  
General  
[hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

