



Healthy Little Minds

Newsletter
April Edition 2023



In this second edition of our newsletter, we are excited to share that we have expanded our service offer to cover all wards within the Nottingham City boundary! This means even more families are now able to benefit from our support. Referral guidance on when to make a referral can be found on page 2 of the newsletter, with information on where to make referrals on page 10.

We've been busy working with lots of new families following an increase in referrals. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and the addition of caregiver-infant relationship support in Nottingham City has been very well received by colleagues, commissioners and most importantly families! Go to page 10 to read the feedback.

We continue to shine a spotlight on the interventions that the team offers, which can be found on pages 3-4, illustrating some of the ways the team can support families referred to the service.

We have had a busy quarter, in addition to supporting more families, we have been attending workforce team meetings, held our first journal club (page 6) and spoke at the SSBC trauma-informed practice conference which you can read more about on page 9. If you missed the practice conference, fear not! We have adapted our conference speech into a trauma-informed workshop, which can be found with the upcoming events on page 5!

We continue to get out into the community to meet families and professionals. Over the next few months, you will find us promoting maternal and infant mental health as part of the upcoming awareness weeks—read more on pages 7 and 8. We will also be at the next SSBC trauma conference (page 9) to launch our toolkit, and with our expansion into the city, we will be attending even more team meetings!

The HLM Team

P2 WHEN TO REFER TO
HEALTHY LITTLE MINDS

P3 PARENT-INFANT
PSYCHOTHERAPY

P3 THE SOLIHULL APPROACH
PARENTING WITH
CONTAINMENT AND
RECIPROCITY

P4 THERAPLAY
ATTACHMENT BASED PLAY

P5 UPCOMING EVENTS AND
STAKEHOLDER GROUP

P6 JOURNAL CLUB

P7 MATERNAL MENTAL
HEALTH WEEK

P8 INFANT MENTAL
HEALTH WEEK

P9 TRAUMA INFORMED
PRACTICE CONFERENCE

P10 FEEDBACK AND
REFERRALS

WHEN TO REFER TO HEALTHY LITTLE MINDS?

Natasha Beer,
Team Manager

As a service that is not only new but in its infancy within the national landscape of parent-infant relationship teams, we recognise that identifying difficulties in caregiver-infant relationships can be challenging for many reasons:

- What do we need to look for in the relationship?
- How do we know when a family needs additional support?
- What if the baby hasn't been born yet?
- How do we open up the conversation with the family?
- How will the family react?

All of which may act as a barrier to making a referral.

From the families perspective, we must recognise that acknowledging difficulties in their relationship can be a vulnerable process and that it is not an attack on their ability to parent or their capacity to love their baby, offering gentle exploration and empathetic reassurance.

We must continually develop our understanding of the nuances that exist within relationships. Many parents who would benefit from our support will experience feelings of love towards their baby. Difficulties in the relationship do not necessarily represent a lack of love but rather how this love is expressed, which can be shaped by our own experiences of being parented, our mental health and our environment.

There are many terms we use to describe and illustrate these concepts such as bonding and attachment, containment and reciprocity (read more on page 3), attunement, holding the baby in mind, serve and return interactions, love languages and more—and it can be easy to get lost in the jargon!

So what exactly are Healthy Little Minds looking for in referrals?

Vulnerabilities in the parent-infant relationship will look different for each family. When we receive a referral we look for information that tells us about the relationship dynamics for example:

- How does the caregiver interact with their baby or baby bump?
- How does the baby respond to their caregiver?
- What helps the baby feel loved and safe in the relationship?
- Is the baby developing good emotional well-being?
- What challenges are the caregiver and baby experiencing when relating to each other?
- Are there any vulnerabilities? Whilst the caregiver loves their baby, this sometimes is a barrier to them being able to understand all of their baby's needs.

These questions can be used as a guide when completing the referral form.

In many referrals that we make as professionals, we often look for strengths in the relationship that act as a protective factor. When making referrals to Healthy Little Minds, we would encourage professionals to consider these questions when outlining protective factors on the referral form:

- What does the caregiver feel is working well
- What would the infants voice be—for example 'I like it when my daddy sings to me, it makes me smile and laugh'
- Special moments from the families perspective 'We enjoy meal times together'
- What strengths have you observed in the family, for example do they have a good support network, do they meet their baby's basic care needs

This will support us to isolate the difficulties in the relationship and work with the family in a strengths-based way.

As ever, the team are happy to have case discussions to support colleagues to make referrals. Please contact us to book a case discussion using the contact details on page 10.

PARENT INFANT PSYCHOTHERAPY

We want to extend a warm welcome to our newest member of the team, Rachel.

Rachel is a trainee Parent Infant Psychotherapist with the School of Infant Mental Health, who has joined Healthy Little Minds whilst gaining her clinical hours. Her expertise complements the core interventions that we are able to offer.

Families' suitability for PIP will be considered during their initial assessment with the team. Rachel shares a bit more about Parent-Infant Psychotherapy and its benefits for families.

Parent-infant psychotherapy is a type of psychological support for expectant parents and parents and their children when they are experiencing challenges. Questions, worries and concerns are raised and thought about in a safe, non-judgmental therapeutic space.

Sessions are one-to-one and parents are invited to attend with their baby, though they may also attend alone at times where appropriate.

The focus of the sessions is to support and nurture the parent-infant relationship, with the aim of facilitating healthy attachment and infant development. This type of therapy draws from several different therapeutic approaches, adapted appropriately in order to attend to the needs of each individual family.

We will support families in thinking together about any difficulties they are facing, and the feelings that these difficulties bring up. We may also think about how the parent's own history impacts the challenges they face in parenthood. When infants are present in our sessions we will observe them and think about their communication and feeling states, too.



THE SOLIHULL APPROACH PARENTING WITH CONTAINMENT & RECIPROCITY

Healthy Little Minds use the Solihull approach to encourage positive & secure attachments between infants and parents, offering Solihull groups from pregnancy until two years old.

The Solihull approach combines 3 theoretical concepts: containment, reciprocity, and behaviour management. Containment and reciprocity are the building blocks underpinning attachment, giving the infant a safe and secure base to develop and thrive.

- Containment helps the infant make sense of their feelings, so they are able to manage their emotions and learn to self-regulate, therefore vital to positive well-being.
- Reciprocity describes the interaction between infant and parent, where they are both involved in the initiation, regulation, and termination of the interaction process. The parent acknowledges the infant's needs/feelings and responds accordingly. The infant can also respond from an early age through facial expressions and vocalisations – these are sometimes called serve and return interactions.

An infant-parent relationship without containment and reciprocity can result in the infant being hyper-aroused or dissociated. Early exposure to negative experiences can impact their long-term capacity to regulate feelings, and a strong early attachment to the primary caregiver encourages resilience to traumatic experiences later in life.

We have a Solihull Group starting on the 25th April. If you have a family that would benefit from this support please make a referral to the team by the 14th April.



THERAPLAY®

ATTACHMENT-BASED PLAY

Debra Lievesley
Specialist Practitioner

Healthy Little Minds offers a 'Theraplay based' intervention, which focuses on strengthening the relationship between the parent/carer and child, enhancing their sense of connection and mutual understanding.

Activities are simple and fun and encourage delight and enjoyment in each other.

Core concepts

- Activities are interactive and relationship based. Parents are actively involved to help them find new ways of interacting
- Activities focus on the here and now – what's happening in the session
- The session is guided by the adult
- Adults are responsive, empathic, attuned and focused on the child's emotional state
- Activities are modelled on natural patterns of healthy interaction between parent and child
- Sessions are playful and entice the child into a relationship of joy and excitement

Theraplay has four Dimensions, each one has activities that help to meet the child's needs:

- **Structure** – Parent/carers set boundaries and demonstrate they are trustworthy and predictable. It helps to convey the message "You are safe with me because I will take good care of you"
- **Engagement** – Parent/carers provide excitement, fun, surprise, and stimulation to encourage their child to engage in developmentally appropriate activities, which are sensitive to their emotional state. It helps to communicate the message "You can be close to others. You have feelings I can appreciate and share. You are fun to be with"
- **Nurture** – Parents are warm, soothing, calming and comforting. They provide a safe haven. The message of nurturing care is "You are loveable. I will respond to your needs for care, affection and praise"
- **Challenge** – While providing a secure base, parents encourage the child to extend themselves a little, become more independent and enjoy new challenges. This gives the message "You are capable of growing and achieving new things".

Theraplay activities aim to help the child develop an inner representation of themselves as loveable, special, competent, & able to make an impact on the world. And of others as loving, caring, responsive and trustworthy.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Hot topics

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

17th April 10-11.30am

Attachment and Baby Brain Development

15th May 10-11.30am

Family Scripts: Why families repeat patterns of behaviour

5th June 10-11.30am

Bonding in the Antenatal Period

28th June 9.30-11.30am

Parent Infant Relationship toolkit interactive workshop

26th July 10-11.30 am

Trauma Informed Practice in the Early Years



To book a workshop, or to arrange training for your team please email:
hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Save the date

Trauma-informed practice conference

June 13th at Trent Vineyard

Conversations that make a difference

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/526436905957

Join us for the second Trauma-Informed conference

Keynote speaker Lisa Cherry, a leading international trainer & consultant specializing in assisting professionals who work with vulnerable children and families to understand trauma, recovery and resilience.



GET INVOLVED

Healthy Little Minds hold a quarterly meeting for stakeholders to connect, chaired by Melkorka Stiller-Magnusdottir SSBC parent champion. The stakeholder group gives an opportunity for professionals from a range of backgrounds to connect with the team and contribute to conversations about developments which shape our service. We are keen for a wide range of voices and communities to be represented in our stakeholder group and value the input that helps meaningfully develop our service in a way which reflects local needs. We have an exciting opportunity for you to get involved in work that will improve outcomes for children across the city!

We actively encourage families to be involved as their voice underpins the way in which we operate in Healthy Little Minds. If you have a family in mind, please support them to contact us and we will guide them through what being a stakeholder involves.

2023 Stakeholder meetings:

- 3rd May 1-2.30pm at Bulwell Riverside
- 6th September 1-2.30pm Venue TBC
- 6th December 1-2.30pm Venue TBC

Parents are invited to attend from 12.30pm for refreshments with the opportunity to talk to other parents in the group

If you have a passion for infant well-being and parent infant relationships, register your interest in attending the next stakeholder group email us at hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

JOURNAL CLUB

The team came together in January to hold the first journal club meeting. We offered an open and reflective, shared learning space for professionals to come together. Our first read 'Rare Jewels' led to rich conversations, and considerations around the role of parent infant relationships. There was a real energy and passion in the room to achieve the best outcomes for children in Nottingham City, and the conversations felt very productive.

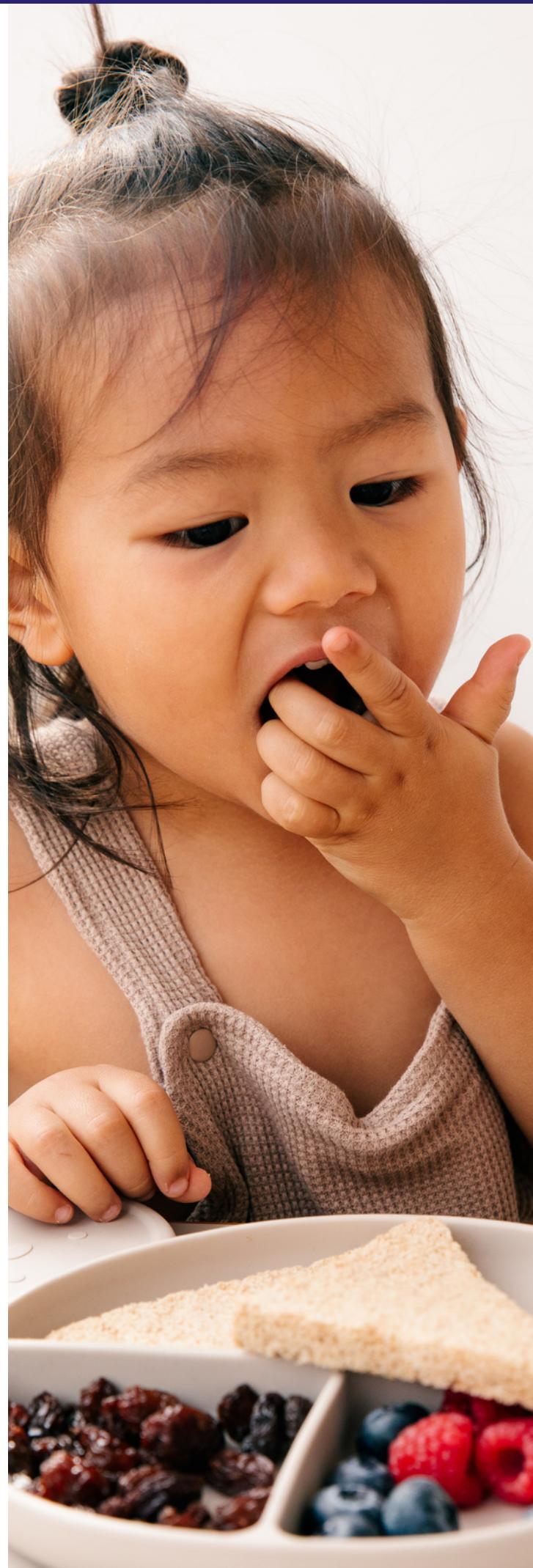
We considered the role of provision for infant mental health and the value of parent infant relationship (PIR) teams, the work being done locally to achieve status as a UNICEF Child Friendly City, and the impact that the government changes to the 10-year mental health plan will have on Children and Families.

From conversations that developed in the room with a colleague from the Healthy Lifestyles team, we reflected on the relationship between food and our emotions, and that often the way we see food and share meal times with our children can be the source of family stories and traditions, and how so much of our wellbeing can be tied up in this. Changes in this routine, can lead to difficult feelings for families and we considered the role of Healthy Little Minds within this context.

'I had a great time at the HLM journal club. It was really helpful to have time to reflect on my own work and actually how much of a cross over it has with infant mental health which isn't something I fully appreciated before. The reading was interesting and I look forward to the next one'

Our **next Journal Club** 8th June 2023, 1-3pm
Bulwell Riverside Conference Room
To book email: hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

June's read will be Trauma Informed Practice in the Early Years. Considering trauma-informed practice in the early years is vital in the work we do with families, and helps us to embed the work being done locally to become a trauma-informed workforce. The report has been attached to this newsletter for your convenience.





MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

'TOGETHER IN A CHANGING WORLD'

Tessa Pye,
Specialist Practitioner

Maternal mental health is something that has been recognised as increasingly important over the past decade or so. However, The Maternal Mental Health Alliance show that still 1 in 5 women experience a mental health problem during pregnancy or within the early postnatal years and 70% of those women will hide their difficulties or underplay their illness to others.

1st – 7th May 2023 is Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week, dedicated to raising awareness of perinatal mental health difficulties, advocating for women & families, and changing attitudes towards maternal mental health.

Although our service does not offer direct mental health support to our families, we understand the significant link between a mother's mental health, her ability to bond with her baby and the impact this can have on the parent-infant relationship.

The theme for Maternal Mental Health Week is 'Together in a Changing World'. Two possible ways of looking at this are:

- Together as parent and baby as you navigate both your worlds changing
- Together as a society to support families in a changing world, both of which feel equally important to recognise.

The theme also connects to the Infant Mental Health Week theme that we will be taking part in celebrating in June, '*Bonding Before Birth*' (more information on page 8).

Tessa shared that, 'for me, the connection lies in the idea that mother and baby are together from the point of conception, both their worlds are changing, and they are in it together. I then considered how important it is that we, as a parent-infant relationship team, be a part of that changing world, to support and be alongside them. We know that by supporting mothers with their mental health and with bonding antenatally, we can create a strong foundation for both mother and baby to be resilient and connected in their ever-changing world.'

INFANT MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

BONDING BEFORE BIRTH

Infant Mental Health is something that we are working to increase awareness of as it is a concept that still isn't widely understood. We have moved away from the idea that baby's are passive and towards the understanding that babies are active participants in their environment whether that be the womb or the world. These experiences help shape their future.

The Parent Infant Foundation have announced the theme for this year's Infant Mental Health week is Bonding Before Birth, highlighting the importance of how what happens during pregnancy, can impact on a baby's future mental health and well being.

Research shows that the experiences and relationships we have in the earliest years of our lives, including before birth, impact on the development of our brains and our emotional wellbeing. Stress during pregnancy can have a negative impact on babies' physical and mental health in the womb which can impact outcomes later on in childhood and adulthood.

Mothers, their partners, children and family members can bond with their baby whilst they are in the womb, which lays the foundations for a loving and attuned relationships once the baby is born. We recognise that pregnancy can be a period of vulnerability and some families may require extra support to develop the bond with their baby.

Bonding before birth is thought to help parents in their psychological preparation for the transition to parenthood and supports parents to:

- Increase positive feelings towards the baby
- Think of their baby as an 'individual' with thoughts and feelings of their own
- Begin to develop the capacity to think about things from their child's point of view
- Think about how their baby is developing and how they are supporting this development
- Which helps them to develop love, compassion and affectionate feelings towards the baby

Rachel Hunter,
Project Support Officer

Healthy Little Minds will be running a series of events across Nottingham during Infant Mental Health week to promote awareness of bonding during pregnancy and beyond, as well as an opportunity to meet the team and find out more about our work. This includes a celebration event for those families past and present who are using or have used our services since launching in September 2022.

Families will be invited to share their views and ideas about Bonding Before Birth, which will be used to create an animation which is being developed by students from Nottingham Trent University.

To learn more about Bonding Before Birth, book our bitesize workshop Bonding in the Antenatal Period 5th June, 10-11.30am

If you would like to collaborate with Healthy Little Minds at one of our Infant Mental Health Week events, email hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk



CREATING A TRAUMA INFORMED WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

In March SSBC hosted the first 'Creating a Trauma Informed Workforce' conference for colleagues from across Nottingham to come together and consider the impact of trauma, and importance of working with a trauma informed lens and the significant difference this can make for families.

Healthy Little Minds were invited to talk at the conference, alongside Dr Suzanne Zeedyk, Developmental Psychologist and Donna Stenton-Groves who is the Clinical Lead for Trauma and Trauma Informed Care in Nottingham City. Natasha from Healthy Little Minds spoke at the conference, introducing delegates to trauma in infancy, the concept of infant mental health and how this may present in infancy, and explored how family stories are central to us working in a trauma informed way with families.

Trauma experience can have a profound and lasting impact on families. Traumatic experiences in childhood can negatively impact on healthy brain development and emotional regulation skills. We know that children that experience trauma, are more likely to become adults that experience trauma and that adults who have experienced trauma are more likely to have had a trauma experience in their childhood.

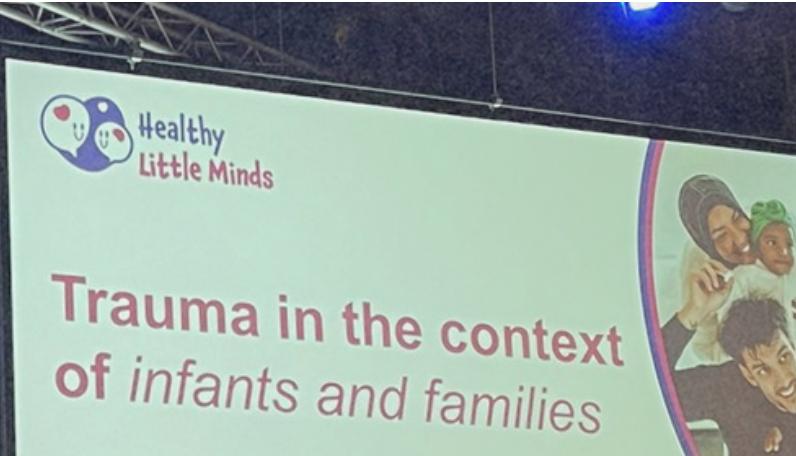
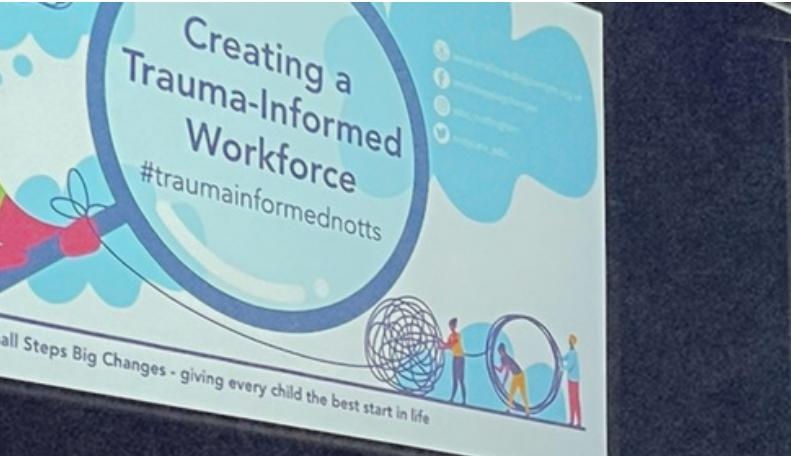
.

But how do we identify trauma in the context of infants and families? For infants, trauma experience can be their family story, which is experienced intergenerationally, it can be a traumatic birth or invasive medical procedure, or it can be emotional trauma experienced within relationships. By working in a trauma informed way, we can support and empower families to process trauma, and support them to develop capacity to parent using a trauma informed approach.

We are pleased to share that we have developed the information shared at the conference into a bitesize workshop to support colleagues locally to consider their work with families through a trauma informed lens. Details of how to book on to the workshop can be found on page 5.

At the next conference we will be launching our toolkit, designed to support professionals to facilitate short explorative and empathetic conversations around the parent infant relationship. This is in response to work we have done with the workforce locally to identify training and support needs. The toolkit will include conversation starters and guides, along with guided self-help activities to share with families and referral guidance.

We look forward to seeing you at the next conference 'Conversations that Make a Difference' with keynote Speaker Lisa Cherry. Tickets can be booked by following the link
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/526436905957>



SERVICE FEEDBACK

I have enjoyed learning the baby massage. It makes me feel closer to my baby, who enjoys it until we get to his feet! Haha. I wish I'd done it with my other 2 when they were younger. It creates a nice relaxing atmosphere and my baby is always full of smiles.

Thank you for allowing me to find ways to help me and my baby.

I understand his cues better and I'm thinking now about how he's feeling, what he's enjoying, noticing body language.

Bonding in the Antenatal Period training

- I feel more confident in explaining to parents about their unborn baby and why it is so important to bond with your baby at the earliest start

Family Scripts training

- Perfect length - really helps fit it into the day
- The session has been very educational and has increased my knowledge of how all families are different and how parents can pass on messages to their children unconsciously

Attachment and Baby Brain Development Training

- It was very helpful information on children's brains regarding attachment and how different environments can have such a significant impact.

REFERRALS

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 1771



Referrals:
CYPBEHM@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
General:
hlm@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

