

# **PART 6: WORKFORCE**

## **ANALYSIS**

**This section describes the workforce competencies and support required to effectively support babies' and young children's mental health. It contains a brief checklist which can be used for local self-assessment.**

Supporting babies' and young children's mental health requires a workforce across statutory services, local authorities, and the voluntary and community sector with a range of skills, capacity, understanding to do this important work. All professionals working with babies, young children and their families should have a range of understanding and skills at a level appropriate to their role.

Alongside professional skills and development, it is important that professionals and volunteers have support to do their role, such as access to reflective supervision. Adequate clinical leadership and capacity for specialist supervision across services such as health visiting, maternity services and social work is key to ensuring evidence-based and person-centred practice.

The list over the page sets out some core competencies, skills and support which should exist across the workforce in every local area. Alongside skills and competencies, the list describes supervision, support and opportunities for shared learning. This grid can be used by local partners for reflection and self-assessment.

Taking a joined-up approach to professional development across different services can help ensure consistency in approach and language which benefits families. It also helps professionals understand the services in their local area so that they can signpost and refer families who need additional help.

## Local example

### Supporting workforce development in Cardiff



The [Parents-Plus team](#) in Cardiff is a specialised parent-infant relationship team, consisting of psychologists and early years family practitioners who offer a range of targeted and specialised therapeutic support to families with a baby or child under five. In addition, they provide a range of indirect support to build the confidence and capacity of the wider workforce. This includes:

- An Attachment, Relational and Trauma-Informed Service Community of Practice Group
- “Thinking Together” conversations – consultations to support social workers, health visitors, family support workers and childcare practitioners to reflect on how best to work with particular babies, children and families.
- Psychology-informed training for practitioners linked with the AiMH UK Infant Mental Health Competency Framework.

For more information, you can contact the team via email at [Nicola.Canale@Cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.Canale@Cardiff.gov.uk)

## Useful resources

### Workforce capabilities



- [The AIMH-UK Infant Mental Health competency framework](#) describes competencies for infant mental health practice at three different levels. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that enable practitioners to deliver high quality care and the continuous improvement to services.
- The [Competency framework for perinatal mental health](#) was commissioned by Health Education England for all those who work with people in the perinatal period, their families and loved ones. The framework aims to build perinatal mental health capability in the workforce, by identifying the skills required and helping care teams to assess their training needs.
- The [Scottish Perinatal mental health curricular framework](#) is a framework for maternal and infant mental health which sets out the different levels of knowledge and skills required by members of the Scottish workforce to enable them to support mothers, babies and their families to have good mental health during the perinatal period.
- American organisation, Zero to Three has produced a [competency framework for those working with babies and toddlers in early education and childcare](#).
- [UNICEF EQUIP](#) is a global training package to build capacity for enhanced Mental health and Psychosocial support. It provides guidance and tools to assess and monitor competencies in helpers to enhance training and supervision and build safe, effective, and high-quality services.



## **Suggested action**

### **Workforce self-assessment**

You might use the high-level workforce checklist over the page as a brief self-assessment tool to consider the skills and capacities of different parts of the workforce in your local area such as across maternity services, health visiting, early years settings, family hubs, the voluntary sector, children's services and more. Service leads might be asked to review their own services, or teams could reflect together on their own development needs. Looking across assessments completed by different parts of the workforce can help local strategic partners to consider strengths and opportunities across the system.

## Workforce checklist tool

Use a simple RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rating, also known as 'traffic lighting,' to summarise current workforce capabilities related to mental health in infancy and early childhood.

To what extent do the workforce:	RAG self-rating	Comments
Understand child development – particularly social and emotional development - from pregnancy to age 5, including expected developmental milestones		
Understand how to meet the needs of children with additional needs such as physical or developmental disabilities, illness or who are neurodivergent.		
Have the knowledge and ability to implement strategies or practices, based in evidence, to promote babies' and young children's mental health in ways that are appropriate to their role (e.g. to support attuned parent-infant relationships or to support the development of young children's emotional regulation)		
Have the knowledge, skills and opportunities to "tune in" to the cues and communications of the babies and toddlers they are working with and respond sensitively and appropriately to their needs.		
Understand the importance of parent-child relationships.		
Have the knowledge and skills to observe the quality of parent-child relationships and identify any concerns.		
Have the ability to practice in a relationships-informed and trauma-informed way with both parents/carers and young children.		
Understand other services available to local parents and how to signpost or refer families for additional support as necessary.		
Have opportunities to reflect with colleagues and supervisors on what is happening for a child who is displaying emotional or behavioural problems, and what aspects of the child's environment or experiences may be playing a role in this, and what the best response might be.		
Have reflective supervision to reflect on their own wellbeing, culture, values, beliefs, feelings and behaviours, and to address issues to enable them to respond in sensitive, nurturing ways to families' needs.		
Learn together with other professionals in the local area, to develop shared understanding, to benefit from each other's skills and expertise, and to build relationships that support joined-up care for families.		