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Improving parent-infant relationships through one-to-one support: findings from a mixed-methods evaluation of the Nottinghamshire Parent-Infant Relationship Initiative, UK

Eleanor Holding1, Nicholas Woodrow1, Habiba Aminu1, Bronia Arnott2, Hannah Fairbrother3, Helena Cripps4, Lisa Wilson5, Elizabeth Goyder1

1 Sheffield Centre of Health and Related Research (ScHARR), University of Sheffield 2 Population Health Sciences Institute, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2AX 3 Faculty of Health, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2LA, UK 4 Nottinghamshire County Council, NG2 7QP, UK 5 Nottinghamshire NHS Foundation Trust, NG3 6AA, UK

Background

- The first 1001 days of life, or from conception to age 2, are a critical period of development.
- Early parent-infant relationships are important for health and wellbeing.
- The Nottinghamshire NHS Parent-Infant Relationship Initiative (PIRi), delivered within the Nottinghamshire Healthy Families Programme (HFP), aims to support families with identified needs to strengthen their relationships through one-to-one support.

Methods

- PHIRST Fusion has been working to evaluate the PIRi. Funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), Public Health Research (PHR) Programme, Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Teams (PHIRST) provide timely and accessible evaluation of public health interventions delivered by local authorities.
- The evaluation comprised a mixed-methods approach utilising:
  - Descriptive analysis of routinely collected service outcomes data
  - Interviews with PIRi practitioners, health visitors and wider health professionals (N=9) and service users (N=14)

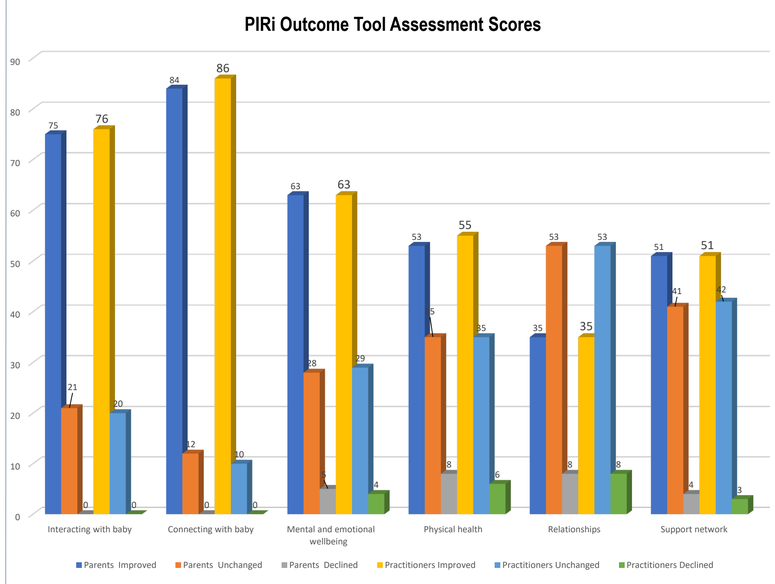
Results

- Parents reported several key benefits including increased confidence, skills, and relationship with their babies, as well as improved mental health.

***"It's [the PIRi] been tremendously useful for building my relationships with [baby name], it's given me a lot more confidence than I set off with"* (Parent)**

***"I felt more comfortable with being around her [baby], with understanding her needs"* (Parent)**

- Data from the PIRi pre and post-outcome scores from parents (N=77) echoed the qualitative findings and showed improvements in parent-infant connection/interaction and mental health and wellbeing:



- 95.65% of babies who received PIRi support scored above the threshold (achieving their ASQ-SE milestones) at their 12-month review, compared to 84.46% across Nottinghamshire County.

- Parents valued the one-to-one support, flexibility, accessibility and consistency of PIRi support.
- However, the evaluation identified challenges to the service, notably the awareness of the PIRI service from health visiting teams.
- Some parents mentioned initial concerns around stigma and judgement until they had a clearer understanding of the support.
- Health visitors described challenges in identifying parents with PIR difficulties due to limited family contact time, lack of confidence in discussing sensitive topics and fear of damaging practitioner-parent relationships.

Conclusion

- The findings highlight the potential of parent-infant interventions for improving health and wellbeing and strengthening parent-infant relationships but there is a need to further embed awareness of the service across health visiting teams. Our findings will be useful to services delivering early intervention for children and families.

For more information

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