



The Leeds Early Attachment Observation (EAO)

Gemma Dyble – Consultant Clinical Psychologist
Chris Whitman - Infant Mental Health Practitioner (Health Visitor)
Leeds Infant Mental Health Service

Agenda

1. Setting the Scene
2. What the tool looks like in practice
3. What's working well and current blockers
4. Development & Next Steps
5. Q&A

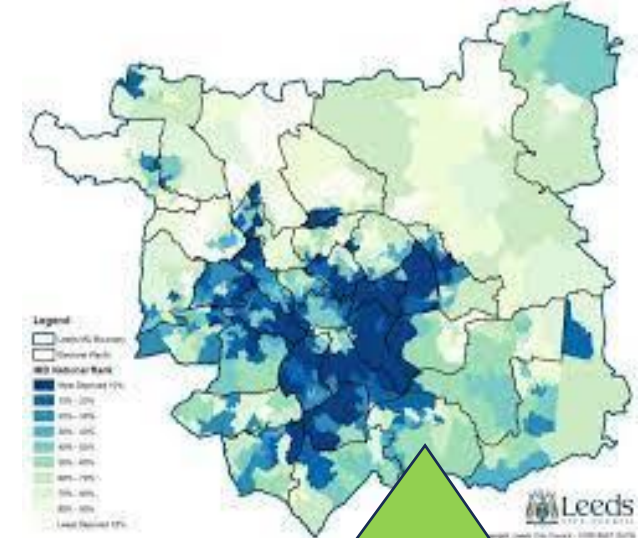
Setting the Scene

- Documentation:



9,500
births
every
year

Deprivation in Leeds



Leeds
population
812,000

114
(24%)

- Identifying Problems with Attachment Early
- Pilot: 2014

What?

- Ask caregiver **three enquiry questions** about emerging relationship
- Complete a **2-minute observation** of Caregiver-infant interaction
- Part of the universal assessment completed at the **6–8-week contact**

When?

(6-8 Week Contact)

Finances

Employment

Drugs / Alcohol / DV

Family

Housing

Parental Mental Health

Safe Sleep

RELATIONSHIPS

Smoking

Play

Home Safety

Vaccinations

Support

Feeding

Oral Care / Dentist

Groups / Local Services

Child Development



The Questions

“

What is the best thing about your relationship with your baby?

”

“

What is your biggest fear about your relationship with your baby?

”

“

Describe your relationship with your baby in three words...

”



When they smile at me
When I feel like I have got things right
When I can soothe them
Just looking at my baby



That I will miss something
That I won't be good enough
That I will make the same mistakes that my parents did



What 3 Words

- Importance of setting up and starting conversation
- Avoid giving examples
- Words from discussion
- Deeper discussions
- Mindful of own responses

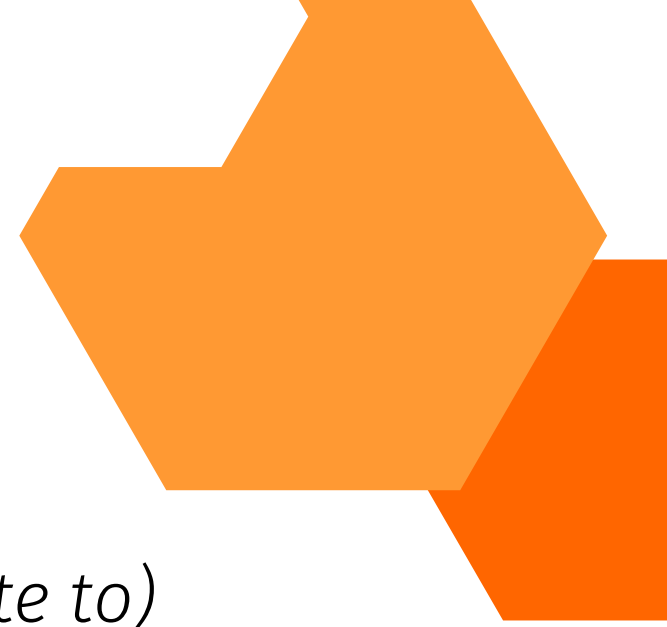


The Observation

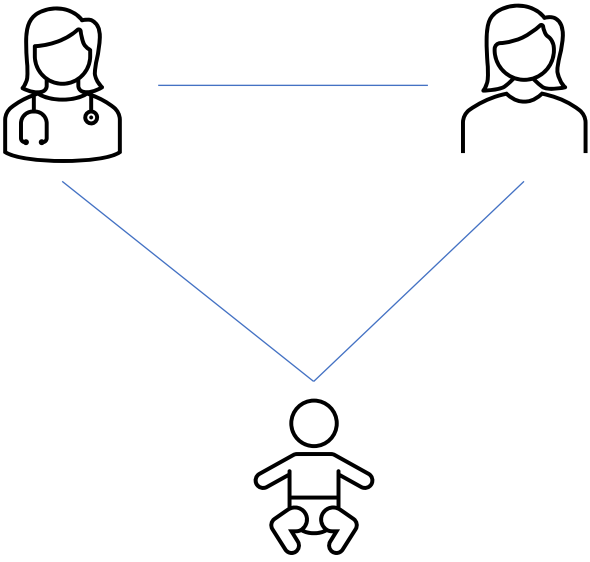
Free Floating Attention

“being close enough to experience (and relate to) others, and far enough away to have space to reflect”

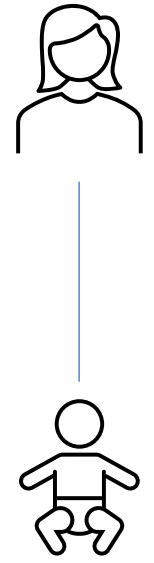
“being available for the ‘intense emotional impact’ of being within a family with a newborn baby”



Positioning



Triad



Dyad



Setting Up The Observation



I'm looking forward to seeing how your baby is responding to you and the world

We could spend some time together noticing what your baby does

We can spend some time thinking about the relationship you have with your baby



Let's wonder together what your baby makes of the world

It would be good to have some space and look at how your baby is interacting

What are we observing?



Positioning

Vocalisation

Sensitivity

Contingency

Affect

Situational challenges

Wariness
from families

Chaotic
households

Use of
interpreters

Sleeping
babies

Lack of
consistency in
practitioner

What to do
with what you
see / hear

Conversations after the Leeds EAO



Why are these conversations important?



What if it was a difficult interaction?




What next steps can I take as a professional?



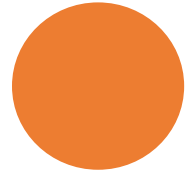
Ongoing developments

Internal:

- Task and finish groups
 - Refresher training
 - EAO In Action Sessions (starting 2024)
 - Prompt sheet
 - Bespoke CPD slots (PMH)
 - Online library of resources
 - Considering EAO adjustments
- 

Leeds EAO Model Supporting National Guidance


- Prompts for Holding Parent-Infant Relationships in Mind
- Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme
- Currently being piloted



Department
of Health



Clinical Audit, Quality Improvement and Analysis of Data

- Previous audit
 - Meeting Standards
 - Exploring themes
 - Evaluating training
 - Commissioning Service Evaluation Projects
- 

More Information: Published Paper

› IN PRACTICE

Development and use of the Early Attachment Observation tool for infant mental health

› Abstract

The Early Attachment Observation (EAO) is a simple assessment tool that has been developed by the Leeds Infant Mental Health service in collaboration with Leeds Health Visiting Service for use by health visitors to identify emerging attachment difficulties. The EAO is delivered as part of the universal offer at the routine 6–8-week health visitor contact. The EAO protocol requires the health visitor to ask the primary caregiver three questions about the emerging relationship between themselves and their infant: Describe your relationship with your baby in three words; What is the best thing about your relationship with your baby?; and What is your biggest fear about your relationship with your baby? The health visitor completes a 2-minute observation of the interactions between the infant and parent. The purpose of the EAO is to screen for emerging attachment difficulties, in line with the WAVE report *Conception to Age 2: The Age of Opportunity*. The EAO is now a crucial element of the Leeds Early Start infant mental health pathway. The purpose of this article is to outline the development, pilot, implementation and evaluation of the use

research base has continued to grow and is one of the most empirically grounded theories in relation to parenting and infants. The concept of attachment relates to the fundamental relationship between the infant and their parent that is essential to the infant's development and survival (Bowlby, 1969; 1980). When an infant feels a sense of threat or danger, the attachment system is activated and the infant will respond in a way that promotes increased proximity to, and/or contact with, the attachment figure. In the first few months these attachment behaviours include smiling, vocalising, crying and grasping, and as children become older and more mobile, crawling and then walking. Over time, experiences with caregivers lead to the development of mental representations (internal working models) of the self and the attachment figure.

One of the conditions that supports the development of attachment security is the

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Advancing evidence-based public health practice

EDITORIAL

Peer mental health linked to pandemic restrictions

NEWS

Children need 'accurate, accessible information' about their health
Home Office must address 'pandemic of violence' against women

FEATURE

Why have emergency admissions in under-5s been increasing?

IN PRACTICE

Promoting safety in the home during the pandemic and beyond

The Leeds Infant Mental Health Service Early Attachment Observation

RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT

Becoming parents by adoption: A systematic review

LAST WORD

Eating disorders on the rise in children



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Hunter et al., 2021
<https://www.magonlineibrary.com/doi/abs/10.12968/johv.2021.9.3.108>

Time for Questions

