

Solihull Approach and Solihull Approach Plus – Growing Infant Mental Health Competency in the Workforce

In the beginning: Camhs promotion of infant attachment and a Camhs Infant Mental Health (IMH) SureStart project had created a real interest in Infant Mental Health in the South Eastern HSC Trust. **Robin Balbernie** suggests that the Solihull Approach is a good way to move forward and introduce Infant Mental Health training in the workforce, particularly for our Health Visitors. The cascade approach to training is a big plus for us - and for management. We take Robin's advice and in October 2006 **we organised the first Solihull Approach training in Ireland.**



Hazel and Debbie deliver the training for a group of Health Visitors and Social Workers and one Camhs family Therapist. We all see it as so relevant to our work and are keen to become trainers ourselves. **So much is being joined up in the Solihull Approach.**

6 months later: We have Training for Trainers - this small cohort, supported by a HV manager established the South Eastern HSC Trust Solihull Trainers' Group and start to roll out SA training, not just for HVs but for all professionals in Children's Services - including SureStart and the Voluntary and Community sector.

Two years later: We now have a strong cohort of **Infant Mental Health Leads** - all our trainers and some really committed managers. The Trust recruits a full-time practitioner for one year to support the promotion of IMH. The Trust establishes the **New Parent Programme**, a wonderful project, and a protected caseload of 25, for our most vulnerable first time mothers. The HVs who are appointed are experienced SA trainers.

The Trust also commissions **Mellow Parenting** training - again most of the recruits are from our cohort of SA trained IMH leads. Before long the Trust is delivering Mellow Parents, Mellow Bumps, Mellow Babies and Mellow Dads.

One year later: With a lot more people trained and interested - South Eastern HSC Trust establishes an **IMH Project Group**. Practitioners, management and health promotion become involved. Our trainers are working hard – all beyond 'the call of duty'. None of this training has been commissioned but we know it makes a difference.

A Regional Review of Health Visiting and School Nursing is under way and we make a submission calling for **Solihull Approach training for all HVs and SNs**. This leads to the first regional commissioning of SA training for this group of staff. We are also able to grow our cohort of trainers and 2 more groups receive training for trainers. All of our HVs are now trained in the SA.

More recently: We promote the SA training within the Child Development Board of the NI **Public Health Agency** as the most effective way to promote IMH awareness and develop workforce skills. It is recognised that SA training needs to be made available for other practitioners who cannot access the training for HVs and SNs. The CDB agrees to commission a **5 year training programme for IMH to include SA training for these staff as well as VIG and Tavistock training.**

Our years of asking for a Solihull Approach Plus come to fruition and the first SA Plus pack is launched. We welcome Hazel back to Belfast to present this and to hear about all the other developments in Solihull Approach training. Hazel presides over the launch of the NI Solihull Trainers Forum.

And where next?

We really want to get moving with all the other SA programmes - this is already starting to happen in other areas in Northern Ireland. There is a huge interest in **Solihull Approach Plus** and how an expansion of this can contribute to the development of IMH skills and understanding in the workforce at all levels of specialism. **Solihull Approach and Solihull Approach Plus should be the key foundational IMH training for all grades of staff!**

We are looking forward to seeing the Solihull Approach Plus pack on **Attachment** training. We know we will also need to have a detailed module on **Disorganised Attachment**. We also really want to see a Solihull Approach Plus training on **Systemic Understandings** (a kind of basic introduction to Family Therapy and transgenerational influences). What is also desperately needed - and what staff are calling out for - is a Solihull Approach Plus training on **Trauma**. We are all working with trauma, and so few of us have received any training.

We just want more of this!