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Method of presentation: oral presentation

Abstract title: Supporting healthy parent-child attachment relationships, child neurodevelopment and emotional wellbeing: insights from parent focus groups

Background: Children with learning and behavioural difficulties, often began school with a history of delayed or discorded acquisition of key neurodevelopmental skills, and poor emotional regulatory skills. Supporting significant early life relationships and influencing family-centred environmental factors can affect a child's school readiness. During pregnancy, and over the first 5 years of a child's life, new parents have up to 25 contacts with health professionals. However, variability exists in the quantity and quality of information that new parents receive regarding optimising healthy parent-child attachment relationships, and therefore a child's neurodevelopment and emotional wellbeing.

Method: A qualitative method was used of 3 parent focus groups in children's centres in the London Borough of Haringey. Each group consisted of between 6-12 new parents (with a child under 1-year-old) who had recent experience of local antenatal and child healthcare provision.

Results: Parents reported receiving good quality written information (predominantly about breastfeeding) at drop-in clinics, baby massage sessions and new birth home visits. Parents felt that staff did not sufficiently explain or demonstrate the skills parents needed, and too much information was given at the wrong times (e.g. just after birth).

Discussion: Focus groups established the need for specific verbal advice that is easily understood, practical, meaningful and consistently explained and reinforced across sectors and disciplines. A "train the trainer" approach has been developed for professionals working with parents of children under 5, as part of Haringey's relationship based approach to resilience.

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