

Croydon Early Years
Parent And Infant
Relationship Service
(PAIRS)



...a blended
model of public
and voluntary
sector
organisations



Why is it important for PAIRS to support infant mental health?

PAIRS work preventatively under the Early Help umbrella within the first 1001 critical days (pregnancy to age 2):



- Phase of development which provides a **window of opportunity** for whole family as well as child's development
 - Impacts on health **outcomes throughout their lifespan** - including long-term implications for the child's brain and emotional development/ resilience to stress
- ▶ To be the **voice of the baby in the early relationship and in the mind of the parent** and community system
 - ▶ To help parents lay the foundations of a **secure attachment**
 - ▶ Using the understanding of neuroscience that **relationships change brains**
 - ▶ To offer a psychodynamic approach to **'ghosts and angels in the nursery'**

Why are the first 1001 days so critical?

Pregnancy - mother's environment, mental health and wellbeing

Supporting parents to meet needs of baby

Attachment - importance of secure attachment relationships for future relationships

Peak period of **brain development**



Foundations for **cognitive, emotional and physical development**

Experience (**nurture**) shapes how genes (**nature**) are expressed

Importance of **early diagnosis** - if babies do not follow usual developmental trajectories

Without early intervention...

- ▶ **Impact of early adversity on brain development** - new evidence that children facing adversity in the womb, like maternal health issues, show accelerated brain development as a survival response - which shortens the period of neuroplasticity and increases risks of cognitive impairment and mental health disorders (Chan, Ngoh, Ong, et al., 2024)
- ▶ **Long term consequences for life trajectory** - stress and adverse experiences during the first 1001 critical days can have lifelong impacts - unrelieved activation of the baby's stress management system (without the protection of adult support) may lead to long term consequences for future physical and mental health
- ▶ In 2016, Early Intervention Foundation estimated the **costs of late intervention for children and young people** added up to at least £17 billion a year across England and Wales (over £22 billion in today's prices). This includes the cost of children taken into care, the cost to the health system of youth drug and alcohol abuse, and the cost to the criminal justice system of youth offending.
- ▶ **The good news is early intervention can reverse these effects - importance of timely mental health support!**

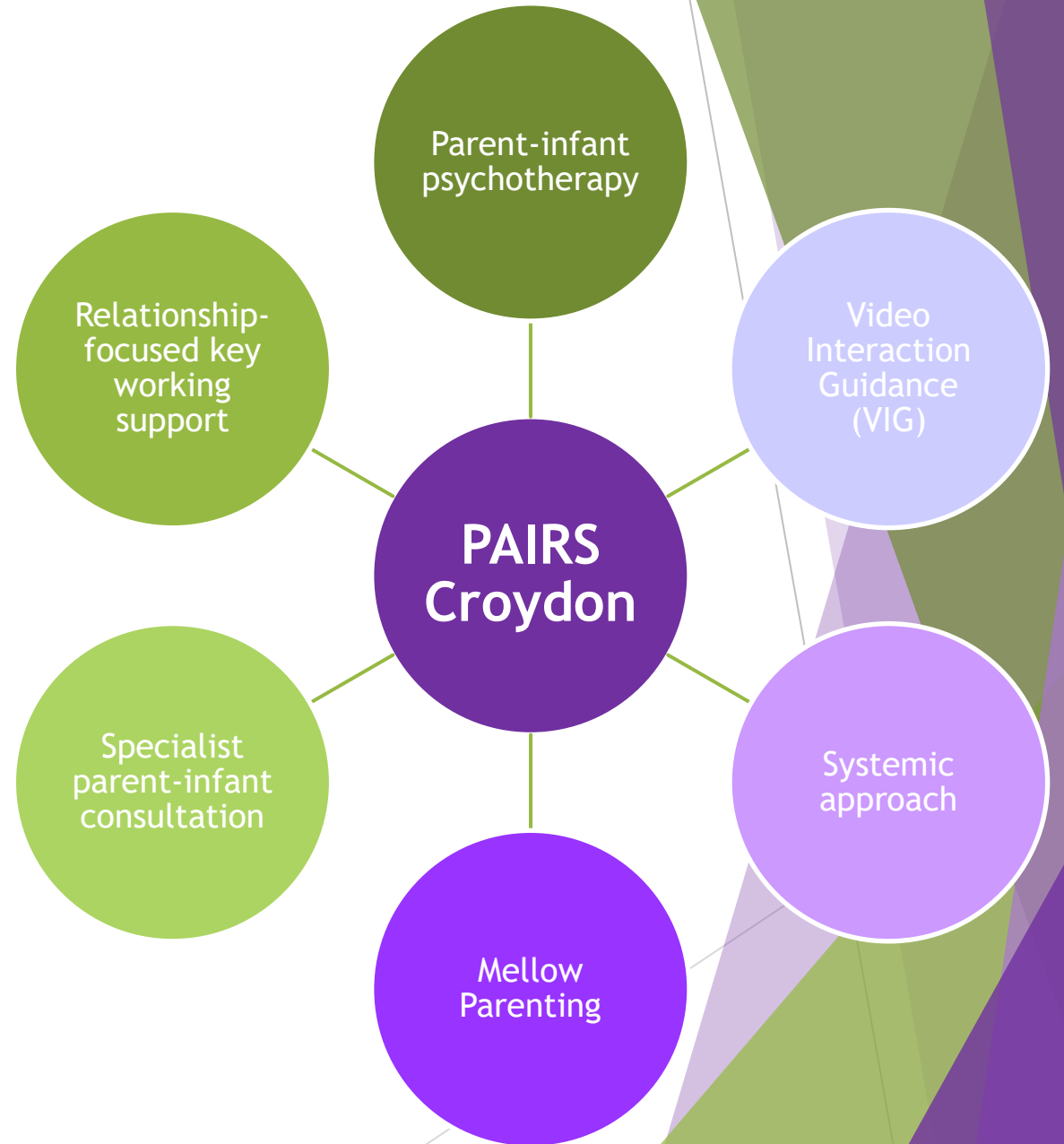
Tackling adversity + supporting early relationships → healthier brains + better futures

"The period from pregnancy to age three is when children are most susceptible to environmental influences. Investing in this period is one of the most efficient and effective ways to help eliminate extreme poverty and inequality, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow."

Unicef, World Bank and World Health Organisation Nurturing Care Framework



Interventions



Specialised parent-infant relationship teams are multidisciplinary teams with expertise in supporting and strengthening the important relationships between babies and their parents.

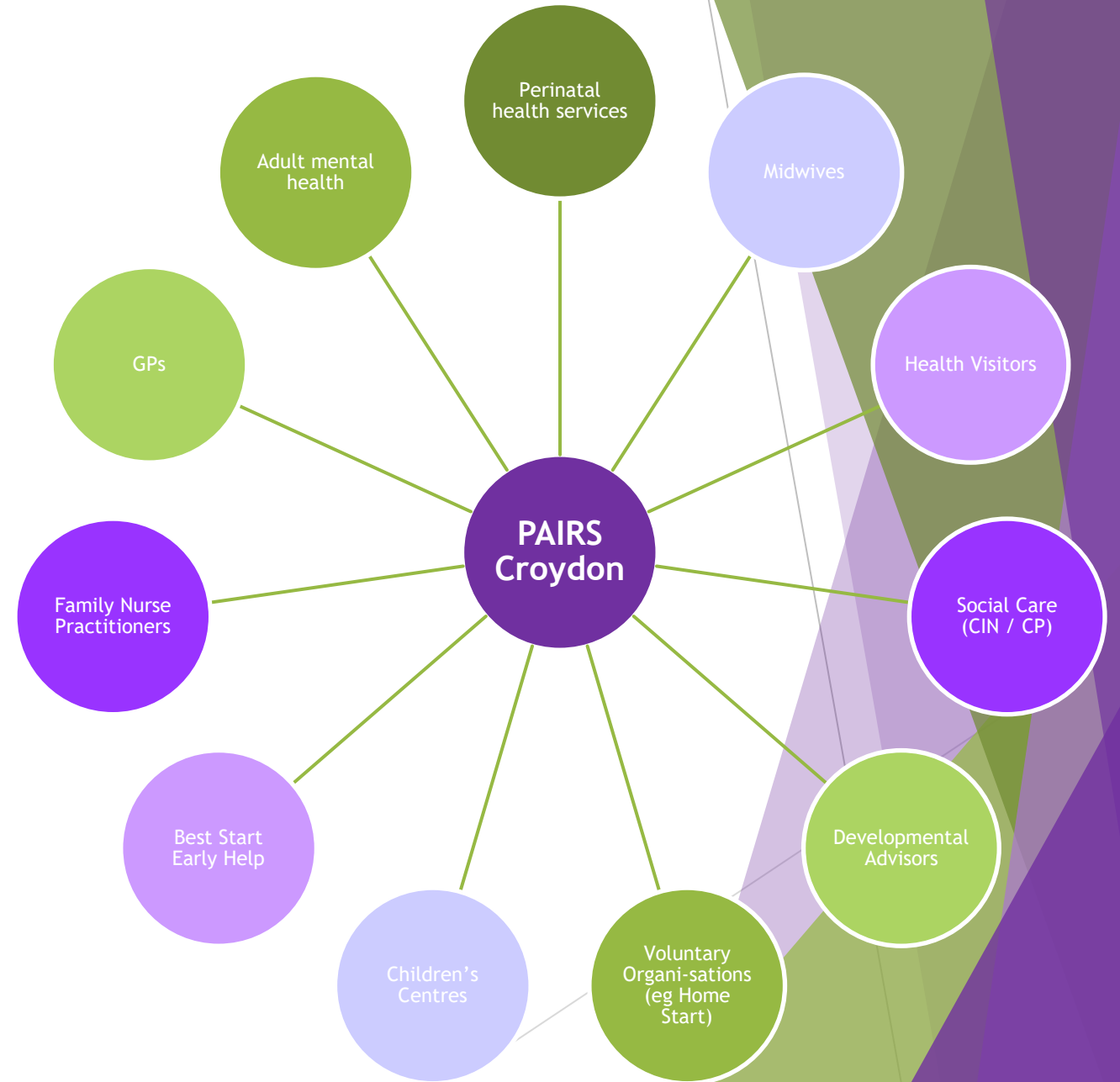
Specialised parent-infant relationship teams are expert advisors and champions, driving change across local systems.

Secure, responsive relationships between babies and their parents are a vital ingredient in healthy brain development.

Specialised parent-infant relationship teams can help all the services around a family to do more to support early relationships.



Who we work with



Need for culturally sensitive working

STATISTICS FOR CROYDON:

- ▶ The Croydon population continues to grow from long-term international migration and 34.6% of the population is made up of non-UK born residents (ONS 2020 estimates)
- ▶ In 2020/2021, around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the homeless were made up of residents from non-white communities.
- ▶ The highest proportion of accepted homeless households have been made up of lone parents with dependent children (Homelessness Review and Strategy 2018)
- ▶ 14.5% of people had a language other than English recorded as their main language (including 2.5% of the total Croydon population who could not speak English well or at all) (Census 2011)
- ▶ 5th highest teenage conception rate per 1,000 girls aged under 18 years across London in 2019.
- ▶ 2nd highest rate (2.9 per 1,000) of under 16 conceptions in London
- ▶ The rate of domestic abuse incidents and offences per 1,000 population has been increasing, year on year, and has one of the highest rates in London.



MBRRACE-UK

Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through
Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK

2020 Report

Key findings from the MBRRACE-UK's 2020 report (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK), showed that Black women were **3.7 times more likely to die during or in the first year after pregnancy** than White women.

Maternal support organisations such as **Five X More** have campaigned to address disparities in maternal outcomes for Black mothers. This includes hosting **Black maternal health awareness week (11th-17th April 2024)** to raise awareness about disparities in maternal outcomes and empower Black women to make informed choices throughout their pregnancy and after childbirth.

CASE STUDY

- ▶ Father (Y) and baby (X) (British Caribbean) were first referred to the PAIRS team by their social worker, to discuss Y's concerns, learn about X's development from her point of view as well as better understand the impact of Y's past experiences on his developing relationships as a father.
- ▶ Y had recently been living with his partner in a parental assessment unit along with X. This was soon followed by a supervision order, under which Y was to be the primary carer. This process had been traumatic for Y, especially as his toddler was also under an SGO with the paternal grandmother, living within the same family home. The children's mother had weekly supervised contact with the children, however, due to her residence in another borough, did not participate in sessions.
- ▶ In the beginning, Y struggled to trust his PAIRS key worker and psychotherapist, after previous negative experiences with professionals. Y, however, was a committed father and eager to talk about his young children, as his relationship with their mother was strained and he appreciated being able to explore X's development as her main carer.
- ▶ Parent-infant psychotherapy enabled him to explore his changing identity as a new Dad unexpectedly, trying to juggle the demands of his family as well as lose his independence and survive financially. He also discovered how to consider each of his infants as an individual and reflect on his relationship with both, shaped by different circumstances, temperaments and pre/ post-natal experiences.
- ▶ Key work focussed on introducing Y and X to services and to create opportunities to cultivate a stronger bond. He had recently attended and completed the Croydon 'Baby and Us' course. Y and X engaged with various local baby groups including Purley Oaks children's centre, Aerodrome children centre, a local library rhyme time session and eventually, a local leisure centre soft play session.
- ▶ The Children Centre staff shared some positive feedback regarding Y's renewed motivation to attend groups with X on his own, which was a clear outcome of the work, alongside support to access child benefit and the 'healthy start card.' Two-year-old funding was also awarded for the older infant, who was able to begin attending nursery.
- ▶ Social Care are now no longer involved with the family due to the positive progress Y made as a result of his engagement with the PAIRS key worker and parent-infant psychotherapy.

Feedback from Y in his end of service evaluation

“X’s personality is growing, she now has a voice, and she is able to tell you her likes and dislikes. She’s confident, more sociable, willing to play and good at expressing herself. I feel more confident in my parenting. Sessions have helped me understand my baby’s perspective, as well as my toddler’s, much deeper. This has made me more aware of how she is developing and what she needs from me. She needs more than stability and making her feel safe, but also helping her to feel understood and knowing how and why she is behaving the way she is. It’s been a real eye opener. I feel that both therapy and key work has helped me to feel that things are much better than before, when X first came home with me. This has made me realise how much I’ve done as a Dad who has also had a ‘Mum’ kind of role. I’ve been able to take a moment to really understand what I’ve been going through.”



‘GHOSTS’: Are you there...?





‘ANGELS’: There you are...





I can trust and relax

...develop and explore



Referral Considerations

How internal and/or external stressors in the family play out in the parent-infant relationship?

▶ Please consider:

- ▶ Sensitivity to infants' cries or signals
- ▶ Presence of a consistent caregiver for infant
- ▶ Vocalisation to infant and amount of 'conversations'
- ▶ Eye-to-eye contact
- ▶ Preparation during pregnancy
- ▶ Knowledge of parenting and child development
- ▶ Community support network
- ▶ Economic resources
- ▶ Attributions made toward child; 'jokey' negative attributions
- ▶ Participation or encouragement of child's development

▶ Please keep in mind:

- ▶ Infant attachment behaviour differs across cultures
- ▶ How are our own experiences and worldview influencing your interpretation of the problem in the family?
- ▶ Are we considering the cultural context before we come to conclusions about parent-infant interactions?

Referral symptoms

- ▶ Referral may focus on individual symptoms of the parent or the baby or environmental stressors placing strain on parent-infant relationship, such as:
 - Parent's mental health - in need of psychiatric/ perinatal MH services
 - Child Protection Plan or Child In Need (as long as there are no plans to remove baby)
 - Parent's unresolved relational issues impacting on relationship with baby in pregnancy and birth
 - Premature birth and/or spent time in Special Care Baby Units

How do I make a referral?

- ▶ To make a referral for Children's Social Care, Early Help or an Emotional Well-being & Mental Health (EWMH) service, please submit a referral via: [Croydon MASH - Referral Form](#)
(MASH = front door / gatekeepers for external referrals)
- ▶ Service request - internal referrals from Croydon Council staff
- ▶ **WHAT TO INCLUDE:**
 - ▶ Observations about baby
 - ▶ Social/emotional wellbeing concerns
 - ▶ Professional involvement
 - ▶ Support network for family
 - ▶ SPECIFY whether you would like keyworker support and/or parent-infant psychotherapy

Quiz Time

- ▶ In the first weeks of life, how many new connections are formed each second in a baby's brain?
 - A) 1000
 - B) 10,000
 - C) over 1,000,000
- ▶ True or false: Children's development at 22 months has been shown to predict their qualifications at 26 years.
- ▶ True or false: Adults who reported 4 or more adverse childhood experiences had 4- to 12-fold increase in alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempts compared to those who experienced none.
- ▶ Long term studies have shown that for every pound invested in early intervention for low-income families, how much is returned?
 - A) between £2 and £5
 - B) between £4 and £9
 - C) between £6 and £10
- ▶ True or false: Children whose mothers are stressed in pregnancy are three times as likely to have mental health problems as teenagers



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- ▶ Fraiberg S, Adelson E, Shapiro V. Ghosts in the nursery. A psychoanalytic approach to the problems of impaired infant-mother relationships. *J Am Acad Child Psychiatry*. 1975 Summer;14(3):387-421. doi: 10.1016/s0002-7138(09)61442-4. PMID: 1141566.
- ▶ Lieberman AF, Padrón E, Van Horn P, Harris WW. Angels in the nursery: The intergenerational transmission of benevolent parental influences. *Infant Ment Health J*. 2005 Nov;26(6):504-520. doi: 10.1002/imhj.20071. PMID: 28682485.

Resources

- ▶ <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/1001-days/resources/>
- ▶ <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/why-we-do-it/building-babies-brains/>
- ▶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/605c5e61d3bf7f2f0d94183a/The_best_start_for_life_a_vision_for_the_1_001_critical_days.pdf
- ▶ [Borough Profile \(croydonobservatory.org\)](https://croydonobservatory.org/)
- ▶ <file:///C:/Users/2006334/Downloads/early-intervention-to-support-levelling-up-and-covid-recovery.pdf>
- ▶ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/maternal-mortality-rates-in-the-black-community/>