

TWO YEARS IS TOO LATE

Because you know all about infant brain development and its ramifications I will not go through it all again but go straight to my call for action. I would be happy to meet any time discuss my proposals.

1) Training

I propose a new training model developed by the Oxford Parent Infant Project and Oxford Brookes University in conjunction with the Tavistock Centre and the Anna Freud Centre, leading experts in the theory and practice of early attachment and child mental health. The new model will be a mandatory part of the professional qualification for all health visitors, social workers and GPs. In addition I propose that the National Childbirth Trust becomes an accredited provider of early attachment theory and provides practical instruction as part of its ante natal classes to be extended to NHS ante natal classes.

2) Nurseries and Baby Care

As an extension of Every Child Matters, there should be a statutory requirement to promote attachment theory in Nurseries and as part of the Child Minding qualification. An identified key worker should be responsible for the care of each baby or toddler from nappy changing and personal care to handover of the child from his or her parent or guardian.

3) Education

Infant brain development should be taught in senior schools from the age of eleven and form part of the GCSE science course.

4) Adoption Legislation

The adoption process currently takes at least 2 years and 7 months to complete. This must be expedited as a priority to ensure that in appropriate cases a baby is adopted before the age of two. There should be far greater use of foster adopters (where an "at risk" child is passed between birth and foster parents pending a decision on an adoption).

5) Children's Centres

All new parents should register for child benefit at a local Children's Centre which should be the focus of delivery of perinatal services. Pilot schemes should be introduced in some Children's Centres to implement courses in expert parent infant psychotherapy.

6) OXPIP and NORPIP

OXPIP has been running for over twelve years promoting training in specialist infant psychotherapy to other professional and is hugely valued by families, doctors, social workers and health workers for the counseling in early attachment it provides. It is a charity funded 40% by charitable donations and 60% by statutory providers. In 2011 I plan to launch NORPIP in Northamptonshire to lead the way in how to set up a new Countrywide service and pilots in other counties. Training for NORPIP therapists will be provided by OXPIP during 2011/12. Evaluation of the new NORPIP service will be key to providing a baseline for the financial as well as the social benefit of early intervention.