

## **Mentalizing in practice: working with parents and infants**

**4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

### **Daily Structure**

- 9:30 – 10:45: Seminar
- 10:45 – 11:15: Break
- 11:15 – 12:30: Seminar
- 12:30 – 13:30: Lunch Break
- 13:30 – 14:45: Seminar
- 14:45 – 15:15: Break
- 15:15 – 16:30: Seminar

### **Day One - Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November**

9:30 - 12:30 – Seminar One: Mentalizing in the parent-infant relationship – **Dickon Bevington** and **Gema Hadridge**

13:30 - 16:30 – Seminar Two: Mentalization: its importance for our role as professionals and the wider system – **Dickon Bevington** and **Eva Crasnow**

### **Day Two - Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November**

9:30 - 16:30 – Seminar Three: Mentalization-based work with parents and infants – **Gema Hadridge** and **Eva Crasnow**

### **Seminar information**

- **Seminar One** - Mentalizing in the parent-infant relationship

We will define and explain Mentalizing as a developmental and relational construct that is particularly helpful for framing our early years work. We will explore how the work of a parent/carer is as much about assisting in the collaborative endeavour with the baby of 'mind-making' (supporting the development of the baby's mind), as it is in body-rearing (carrying out the physical tasks required to look after the baby). The theory will be presented in an accessible way, where no prior knowledge of attachment studies or neuroscience is required; the emphasis is on the extremely pragmatic and applicable nature of this rich theory. We will conclude with a definition of the "Mentalizing Stance" and the importance of adopting this stance as both a parent/carer and a professional. There will be opportunities throughout for delegates to practice and digest this material,

through playful activities that allow you to relate to and apply the material to the realities of your work.

- **Seminar Two** - Mentalisation: its importance for our role as professionals and the wider system

In this seminar, we will learn about applying Mentalizing less in the direct interactions with families and more in support of yourselves as professionals. The capacity of professionals to 'carry on and keep mentalizing' is often challenged in contexts that involve high stress (for instance, safeguarding concerns around babies and their parents/carers) and that require the integration of contributions from what are often large and complex multi-agency and multi-professional networks. These networks frequently gather around clients in unintentionally '*dis-integrated*' ways, which can at best be burdensome for all concerned, and at worst increase risk (as misunderstandings and conflict obscure significant warning signs). In this part of the day, we will draw on some key lessons and practices developed in AMBIT (Adaptive Mentalization Based Integrative Treatment); an approach that is used by a wide array of teams across the world where these kinds of contexts (including clients who are often ambivalent or resistant towards engagement with professional help) are common features.

- **Seminar Three** - Mentalization-based work with parents and infants

We will review the learning from Day 1 and will cover in further detail how this relates to your work with parents/carers and babies. We will also hold space for case discussion so that we can think through how to apply Mentalization directly to your work with parents/carers and infants.

The day will focus on a Mentalization-based approach to working with parents/carers and infants. This approach helps parents/carers to begin the process of reflecting on their own and their children's mental states. Mentalization-based parent-child work helps parents/carers to become more aware of and responsive to their children's needs, leading to more emotionally attuned parenting, more secure attachment relationships and an associated decrease in child protection concerns.

There will be an outline of some of the tools and techniques that can be used in the work with parents/carers. These will help professionals to focus on the key parental skills (mentalizing their infant's experience, sensitivity, mirroring, attunement) that are important for enhancing reflective functioning of both parent/carer and the infant as they develop. The focus of the seminar will be helping parents/carers to mentalize their baby by thinking not only about their perspective, but also looking at the relationship from the infant's perspective.

The seminar will also look at how to help parents/carers to reflect on themselves and ask the question: what do I bring to the parent-infant relationship and where does this come from? The Parent/Carer Map tool (Cooper and Redfern 2016) will be shared as a way of applying this to your professional work.