



Module PR-M2

Promoting attachment, responsiveness and positive relating with older children: One-on-one time

Content

- Understanding the way attachments develop for older children
- Parents understanding their children's attachment behaviour
- Helping parents observe their older children, having a period when a child leads and the parent follows rather than attempting to organise and direct play
- Parents developing a capacity to observe and comment on their children's activities, play and achievements, increasing the amount of positive attention provided; and emphasising to parents the importance of such activities, even if there has been difficult behaviour at other times
- Helping caregivers to see that reinforcing positive behaviour is an excellent way of managing behaviour in general and supporting the process



- Helping parents appreciate that regular positive times can make it easier to make demands of children, particularly when it comes to managing behaviour.

Materials

- h **Handout**
- n **Practitioner notes**
- r **Record**
- w **Worksheet**

- Using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) to assess children's behaviour before and after a period of regular one-to-one time¹²
- The HOME Inventory¹³ or Family Assessment¹⁴

Main steps

Put the module in the context of other work – that is, feed back from previous sessions and outline the agenda.

Before using the module, check each parent's completed SDQ and, where available, the class teacher's completed SDQ, and discuss them with the parent(s).

When the parent or carer has completed the SDQ ask them about their ratings for different items. Check for differences in each parent's perception of the child. Check for differences in the child's behaviour between home and school. For example:



In answer to the statement 'Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers' you have rated this as 'Somewhat true'. Would you please tell me a little more about this? When was the last time? Can you please described what happened?

Discuss the particular pattern of behaviour that is of concern to the parent and then discuss the scores, diagnostic predictions and general goals the parent has for the child's emotional and behavioural pattern and wellbeing.

Attachment behaviour in general

Introduce ideas about attachment as it develops through the lifespan.

Attachments during the first three years of the life of the child

- Use the information from the 'Briefing paper for practitioners: Promoting attachment, attuned responsiveness and positive emotional

¹² Available from Youth in Mind, www.sdqinfo.com

¹³ Cox, A., Pizzey, S. and Walker, S. (2010) *The HOME Inventory: A Guide for Practitioners – The UK Approach*. London: Child and Family Training.

¹⁴ Bentovim, A. and Bingley Miller, L. (2001) *The Family Assessment: Assessment of Family Competence, Strengths and Difficulties*. York: Child and Family Training.



relationships – younger children, older children and adolescents' [PR-B1] to discuss what the parents understand attachment is, and what they know about the differences between secure and insecure attachment.

- Discuss the sorts of ideas about what leads to secure or insecure attachments, and review with the parent how the pattern of attachment developed for their child in the first three years.
- In discussing the pattern of seeking a secure base, balanced with exploration, Bowlby described the behaviour of children throughout the early years of schooling, and noted the persistence of 'holding or pulling a parent's hand when out walking, or returning to a parent for emotional sustenance if something goes wrong, or they are frightened, with an arms-up or hand grasp to be picked up'.¹⁵ So the 'circling' responses observed in two-year-olds persist in older children in a much less dominating fashion. This is a time of significant creativity, rapid language development, acquiring significant educational skills, mastery of the environment, climbing, running, throwing, playing games, but there remains a need for a secure base, and an understanding of the importance of a safe haven throughout childhood.



What is the pattern shown by your child over the early years – the changing balance towards autonomy and independence whilst maintaining a 'secure base'?

Attachment of older children



During the first three years of life children develop their particular attachment patterns.

They can be secure, they can feel confident and have begun to explore the world with a sure sense that their parents will be there for them. Their behaviour is secure and their feelings are secure.

Some children are untrusting of people. They seem almost self-sufficient, turn away and seem to be uninterested. This is their way of coping with times that have been difficult.

Other children seem to be clinging, insecure, anxious, feeling the need for reassurance that they are loved and they are being thought about. They cling on as their way of making sure.

Other children seem not to know whether it is safe to cling on, or whether it is best to be self-sufficient, and these children can become very controlling, or they sometimes seem like little mothers, to have learnt a sort of parental behaviour. From what we know about your child and from what we have learnt, we wonder which of those patterns best fits your child.

¹⁵ Bowlby, J. (1969) *Attachment and Loss*. Volume 1. London: Hogarth Press, p.252.