Working with infants and the early years: a psychoanalytic observational approach
PGCert / PGDip / MA

This course offers a practice-based and theoretical approach to understanding infant and young children's emotional, social, and cognitive development within a psychodynamic framework. Your studies are rooted in learning from detailed observation within a psychoanalytic framework.

Course outline
This course consists of the following elements:
• infant observation
• work discussion
• child development research
• psychoanalytic theory and its applications to infant mental health and early years' development
• young child observation
• MA dissertation.

Year one
Infant observation
You will observe a baby in his/her family home every week for two years. Your observations will be presented for discussion in a small seminar group, and your experience of observing will be the basis for learning about very early development and relationships.

Work discussion
During these multi-disciplinary seminars, with students from a wide range of early years' professional settings, you bring detailed studies of your work for discussion. This helps you improve your understanding of developing relationships with the parents, infants and young children you are working with. The group explores the dynamics at play at institutional and interpersonal levels, and the possible emotional meaning of verbal and non-verbal behaviors and communications.
Psychoanalytic theory one: theoretical perspectives
Theory one introduces you to key psychoanalytic concepts, and their application to specialist early years' contexts. The theory is presented as a way of organising and describing observation and experience, and takes the form of lectures and discussion reading groups. You will read key papers introducing psychoanalytic concepts, followed by papers illustrating the application of these concepts to parent-infant and young child interventions in a range of under fives settings.

Child development research
You will attend fortnightly lectures, with related reading, covering recent and seminar research in the field of infant and child development.

Year two
Young child observation
You will observe a pre-school child (between two and four years old) in his/her family, or in a nursery or other early years’ child care setting for an hour a week for an academic year. This will facilitate your learning about the emotional meaning of the child’s behavior, as he/she starts to relate to others outside the family.

Psychoanalytic theory two
This will offer you an overview of the development of psychoanalytic theory, key ideas and key thinkers. Key texts are read in conjunction with specialist theoretical and clinical papers which illustrate the application of these ideas to an early years context. Common themes pertinent to work with under fives, such as sleep, feeding, toileting issues, post-natal depression, developmental delay, are addressed.

Year three
MA dissertation
Individual supervisions and dissertation proposal seminars will help you to develop and research your ideas and write your dissertation.

This is a three year Masters level course. Students may exit after one year with a Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) or after two years with a Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip)

Why study this course with us?
This course will develop your skills in baby and young child observation and in applying observation to your early years' work setting. In addition, it will develop your understanding of infants’ and young children’s behaviour, play and communication and facilitating early identification and assessment of difficulties in this age group. You will be able to enhance your therapeutic skills in work with parents, infants and young children and have a wider frame of reference for thinking about your current work context. Upon completion, you may have eligibility to apply for the Clinical Training in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy M80

Who is this course for?
This course is for all Early Years' Professionals including health visitors, midwives, paediatric and school nurses, social workers, nursery and reception heads and teachers, clinical psychologists, child psychiatrists or children centre staff.
“This two year course took me on a journey into the most important years of life, seeing the world through the eyes of an infant… I have become a confident observer, and have achieved so much through this course.”

Entry requirements
In order to undertake this course, we ask that you:
• have had at least one year’s experience of direct work, paid or voluntary, with parents, infants or pre-school age children, or families with young children.
• are currently undertaking direct work with the above (minimum one day a week)
• have a first degree or the equivalent, or to be able to demonstrate that you will be able to meet the academic demands of the course. Please note that we do not insist on a degree, especially if you have extensive experience of work with under fives.

Fees and funding
The annual fee for this course is £3990 for Home/EU students and £7980 for International students.

We are happy offer a range of ways to pay your fees, as well as some funding for specific courses. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Please note that course fees will increase by 2% each year.

Find out more
Visit www.tavistockandportman/training and seach for ‘Working with infants and the early years: a psychoanalytic approach’ or contact Rosa Akerman at rakerman@tavi-port.nhs.uk