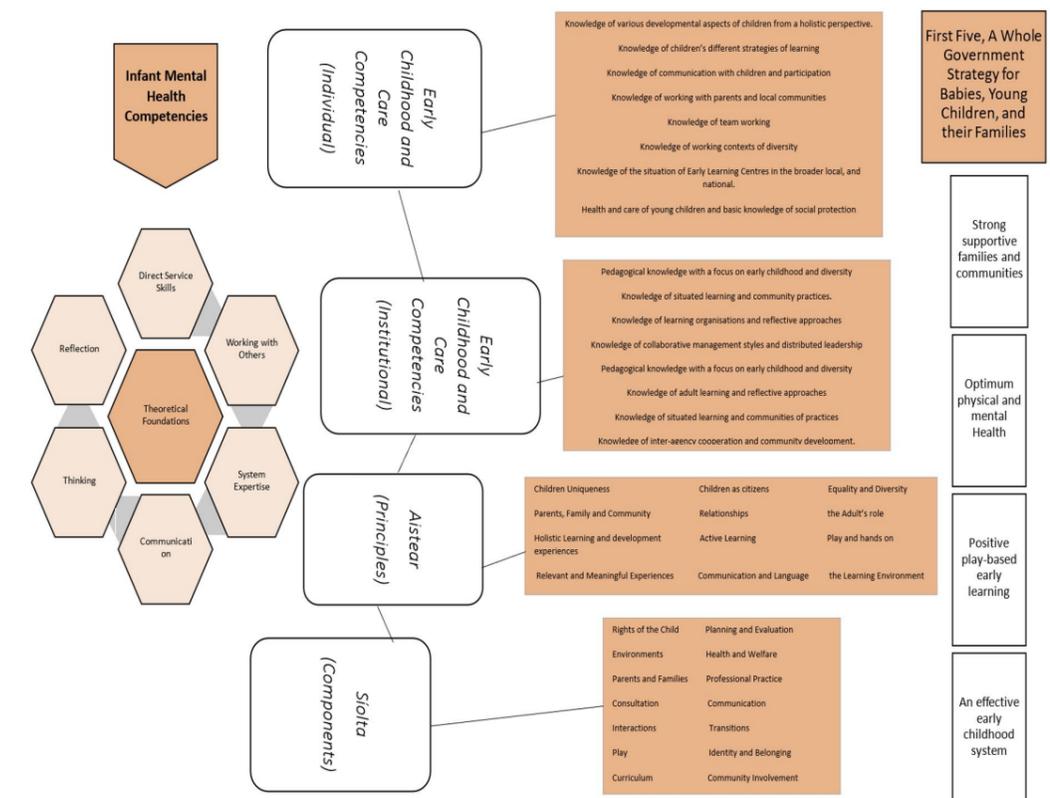


Supporting Relationships: Implementing Infant Mental Health training and capacity building for Early Years Practitioners

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present findings from a pilot Infant Mental Health (IMH) training programme for Early Years Practitioners in a preschool setting in Cork, Ireland. The project aimed to translate and make accessible the science of Infant Mental Health and early childhood development and apply this to a format which built capacity in the everyday practice of Early Years Practitioners. IMH is defined as 'the capacity of the child from birth to 5 years old to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage and express a full range of emotions; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community, and culture.' (ZERO TO THREE, 2017).

Competency Mapping



Introduction

Intersection between IMH Practices and Care Giver Relationship

Practitioners that have a core understanding of IMH can support children to reach their social and emotional developmental milestones (Raver, 2002).

Teacher- child relationships have positive and lasting effects on social, emotional, and academic development (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999, in Riblatt et al, 2017).

Research Methods

Stage 1 Pre-intervention measures: Pre-IMH training questionnaire completed by 12 Early Years Practitioners

Stage 2 Programme Implementation (4 weeks): Training programme was implemented consisted of four weekly sessions and online practice journal

Stage 3 Post-implementation measures: Post-IMH training questionnaire and online focus group.

Results

- Post-training, practitioners demonstrated increase in the use of IMH language and terminology such as 'Serve and return', 'regulation of emotion' and 'acknowledging feelings'
- Increased confidence in ability to support parents
- Increase in collaborative working in the setting
- Increased self-regulation for practitioner and awareness of their own emotions
- Increase in awareness of children's emotions, feelings, and behaviour and in their capacity to respond sensitively.

Conclusions

- Increase in practitioners' perceived ability to understand and interpret social and emotional developmental stages in young children.
- Increase in practitioners' confidence and competence in supporting parents, such as reducing parental stress around dealing with temper tantrums and separation anxiety.
- Results overall demonstrate that the IMH pilot training was successful in building competencies and confidence.

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