NHS
Education for Scotland

Solihull Approach Online
Implementation Guide

Psychology of Parenting Project

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD
SOLIHULL APPROACH

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Rationale

Since 2012, the Scottish Government has supported the work of the Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP), run within NHS Education for Scotland (NES), to ensure that parents and families have the support they require to help promote their child's social, emotional and behavioural development.

PoPP utilises evidence-based parenting interventions for use by a multi-sector children's workforce, incorporating an implementation science framework.

The programme of work delivered through PoPP is strength based, trauma informed, focusing on building strong parent – child relationships, empowering families and supporting parents to parent in ways that promote resilience in their children. This helps to buffer the impact of adverse childhood experiences and will ultimately improve the mental health and wellbeing of very young children.

Much of the work undertaken through PoPP has involved the delivery of group-based parenting interventions. The COVID-19 crisis brought new ways of thinking about engaging with and supporting families and led to the Scottish Government facilitating NES to provide access to a universal parenting resource, Solihull Approach Online, as an additional support for parents through those periods of working remotely and beyond.

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What is the Solihull Approach?

The Solihull Approach was developed by Health Visitors, Child Psychologists and Child Psychotherapists in 1996. It is embedded in child development and psychological theory.

The Solihull Approach brings together three core psychological constructs of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management with the aim of helping parents understand their child's behaviour in the context of their development and the parent-child relationship. It focuses on developing nurturing and supportive relationships between children and their carer by promoting reflective, sensitive and effective parenting. It aims to improve the parent-child relationship as well as the child's confidence, self-esteem and behaviour.

There are many Health Visitors, School Nurses and other primary care, education and third sector staff in Scotland trained in the Solihull Approach who evaluate it positively and report that it is well received by parents. It allows a consistency in the language used between professionals trained in the approach and parents.
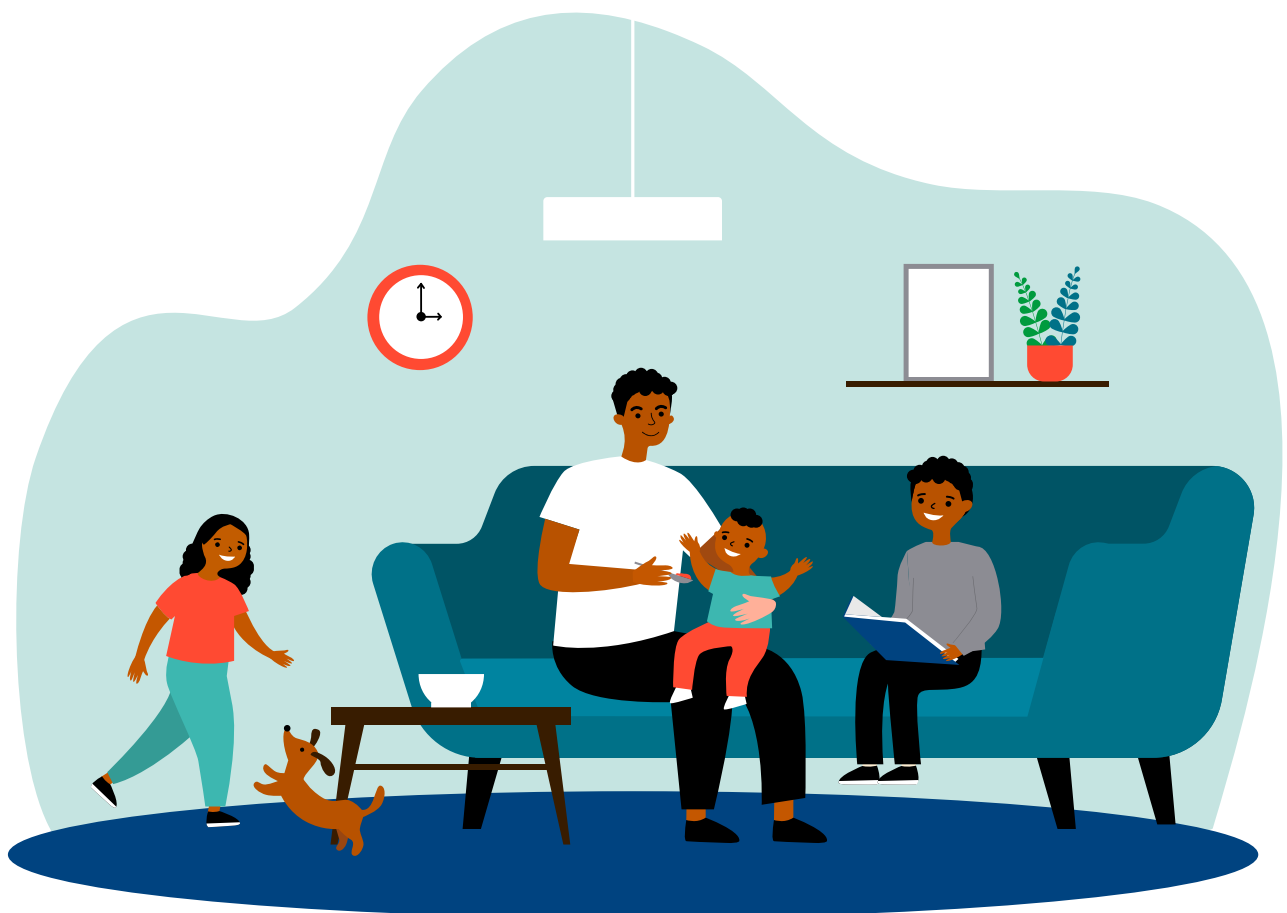
What is the Solihull Approach Online?

The Solihull Approach Online courses available are for all parents and carers across Scotland. In addition, the 'Understanding your brain' course is specifically written for teenagers to access directly. The courses are available in several languages and with an audio narration.

The courses are based on the principles of the Solihull Approach to provide information and knowledge about child development so as to help parents and carers increase their understanding of why children behave in the ways they do and build strong and healthy relationships with their child to maintain a happy, calm home. Consequently, although the courses do not have content specific to children or families with additional support needs, the core aims are relevant to all parents and carers in supporting the development of positive family relationships.

Parents, teenagers and practitioners will have lifetime access to the online resource providing they log in within the 2 year period it is on offer.

The courses that are available are:

- Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby

- Understanding your baby

- Understanding your child (0–19 yrs)

- Understanding your teenager's brain

- Understanding your brain – teenagers only!

Each of the courses are broken down into modules which participants can work through at their own pace (see Appendix 1–5 for details of course content). Each module has suggested activities to consolidate learning, with the intention that participants practice these with their children before moving on to the next topic. The course provides a notebook to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful summary of key learning. The course also incorporates a range of PDF handouts which families can download to refer to over time and which practitioners can use where relevant in their work with families.

Three key questions run through all of the courses to form a foundation for participants' learning. They are:

- What is the developmental age and stage of the child?

- What changes have taken place for them or their environment recently?

- How well can your child communicate their needs?

In addition to imparting new information and consolidating existing knowledge, the flexibility of the resource also allows for it to be used as a tool for engaging individuals, families or small groups, paving the foundations for ongoing work.

Implementation framework

In order to support Community Planning Partnerships in utilising the nationwide access to Solihull Approach Online programmes, an implementation plan has been developed (see below).

It is based around a model of implementation developed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill which details key implementation drivers, and is used within the wider work of PoPP. The model is structured around two implementation drivers: **Competency drivers** and **Organisation drivers**.
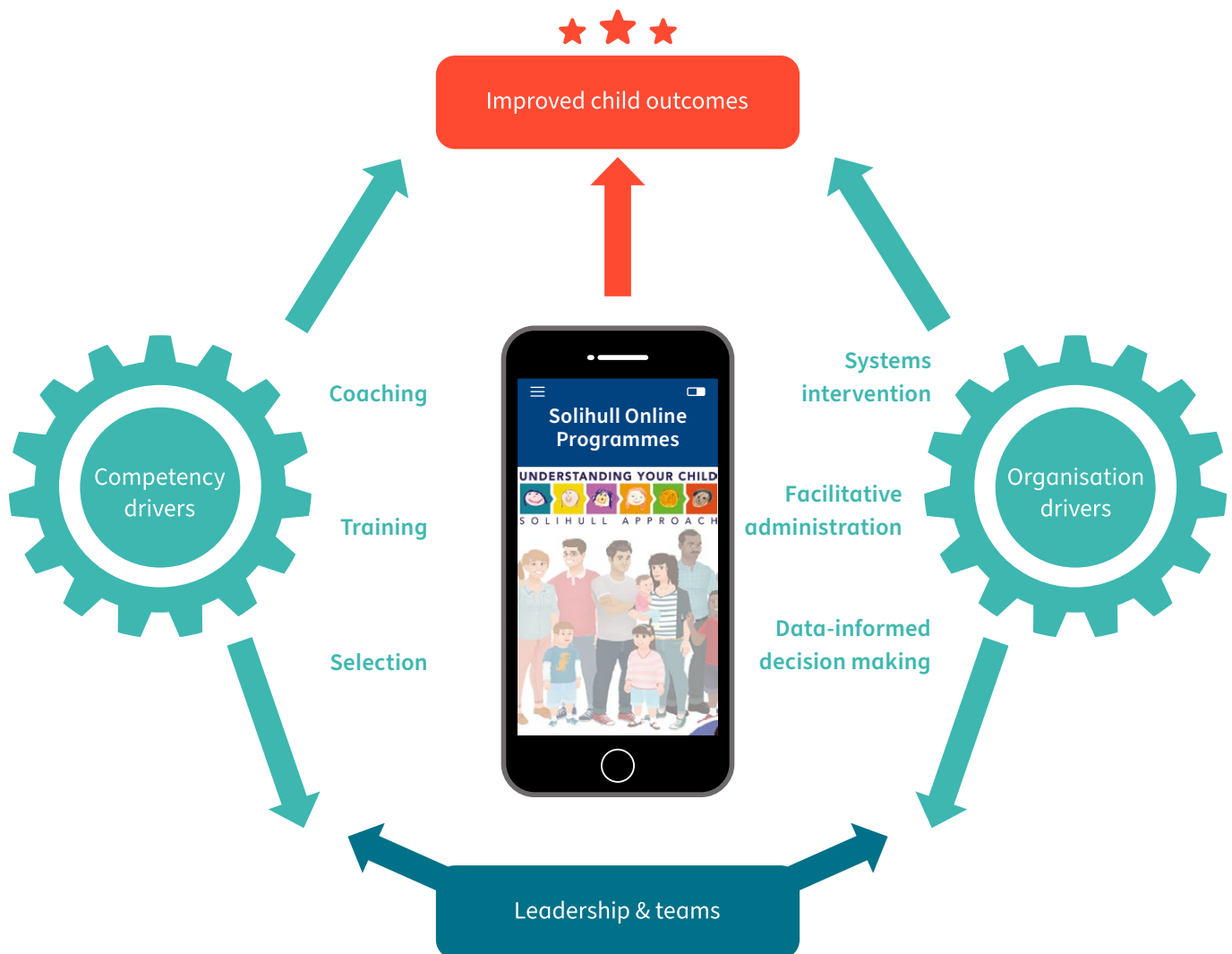
Competency drivers

Competency drivers include those aspects which contribute to the development and improvement of staff competencies, for example selection, training and coaching. These factors ensure that staff have the capacity and confidence to be able to implement, promote or disseminate a programme with fidelity.

Although Solihull Approach Online is a self-guided intervention and does not require that staff are trained to deliver or implement it, it will be beneficial to staff within local areas who work with, or come into contact with families in their daily work, to have an awareness and understanding of the Solihull Approach Online programmes that are available to all families (and practitioners) in Scotland.

To ensure staff knowledge and understanding of what the courses entail, practitioners are encouraged to access the programmes and work through them. This is also a valuable resource for their professional development, potentially enhancing their knowledge and understanding of parent-child relationships.

Having a good understanding of the content of the programmes offered can raise staff awareness of which families might benefit most from accessing the courses and facilitate directing those families to the resource. They can talk with families in an informed way and signpost those seeking support to the resources.

Learning from areas that have already successfully implemented the Solihull Approach Online into their communities has highlighted that training staff in the Solihull Approach Foundation Level training, is highly recommended. This has enabled staff to have a solid understanding of the principles and approaches adopted within the courses, allowing them to support families to make best use of the resources.

For the roll out of the Solihull Approach Online courses it may be beneficial for local areas to appoint an implementation team or local Champions. Having a named Champion or point of contact can be beneficial for guiding promotional strategies and lines of communication through the different levels of leadership.

The role of a Solihull Champion might include ensuring good, clear lines of communication regarding Solihull Approach Online through all partner agencies and ensuring senior management are kept informed about the promotion, engagement and reach of the intervention.

Organisational drivers

Organisational drivers encompass those factors which support an appropriate environment for a programme or initiative to be effectively implemented. These drivers ensure that the necessary operational support and resources are in place to allow staff to facilitate effective programme promotion and dissemination.

To ensure this national offer reaches as many families as possible it would be beneficial for leadership within local areas to take a strategic approach to communicating with their networks.

This might include:

- Identifying, and supporting with dedicated time, a Solihull Approach Champion/s

- Data-informed recommendations and decision making:
  - Liaison between the Solihull Approach Champion and senior management to relay outcomes from data reports and make recommendations for strategy based on the data
  - Regular updates to promotion and communication strategies shaped by the outcomes of data review

It is recommended that a coordinated approach to promotion is developed and that this is done through the joint working of the services within local areas. In areas of Scotland and the UK where its use is well established, the Solihull Approach Online has been embedded within local strategic priorities and plans, and specifically named as one of the parenting offers available within the communities.
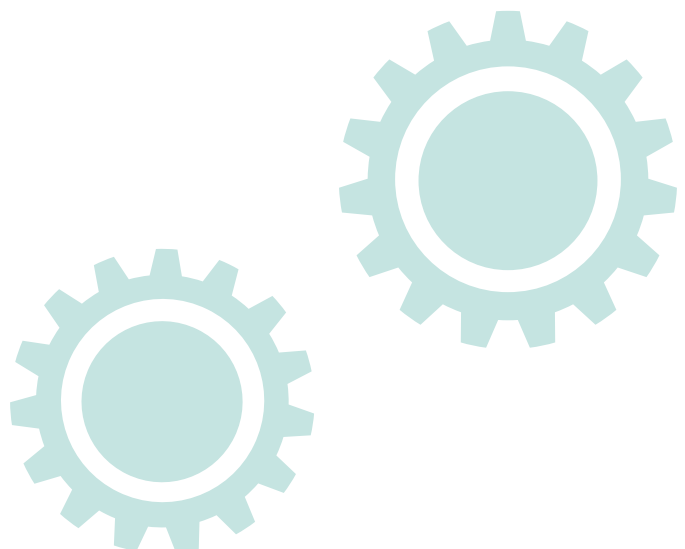
Promotion

Clear lines of communication and a coordinated strategy of promotion will ensure that all parents, teenagers and staff are aware of the availability of this offer.

A locally focused approach will increase the likelihood that families in your area will benefit from the intervention. This could be done by developing a schedule of initial and on-going communications to organisations/ services and to the wider population.

National promotional materials have been developed for use across the country and services (see Appendix 6). There are a number of methods of dissemination of these materials that could be considered:

- Promotion through digital means would be beneficial, keeping in mind platforms such as:
  - Emails for distribution to different services – one to highlight offer and another for them to forward to others to promote
  - GP waiting room screens / antenatal waiting rooms / clinic waiting rooms
  - Screen savers (Council and local NHS Boards) pop up banners
  - Media / Press
  - Social media
  - Websites / relevant blogs

- Identify existing channels of communication and relevant partners such as:
  - Adult networks
  - CAMHS
  - Early Intervention services
  - Public Health teams
  - Education
    - Educational Psychology services
    - Nurseries
    - Primary schools
    - Secondary schools
    - Children's centres / Family Centres
  - School Nurses
  - Health Visitors
  - Midwives
  - Community Child Health including Paediatricians & Allied Health Professionals
  - Social Care
  - Third sector parenting support team(s)
  - GPs
  - Library services
  - Citizen's Advice services
  - Job Centre Plus and DWP workers

- Promotion through regularly accessed services or paperwork should be considered. For example, promotional material with the access code could be placed in:
  - Midwife booking appointment letters
  - Immunisation letters from Child Health
  - School Admissions offer letter

Overcoming potential engagement barriers

Although the potential benefits of engaging with the Solihull Approach Online resources are known, for many families there can be a number of factors which can impact on this process.

Lack of awareness

Parents, teenagers and carers need to be aware of the resources available in order to benefit from them which is where successful local and national promotion strategies are so important.

Stigma

Accessing support for parenting can be associated with a sense of stigma or judgement for some families. This offer of Solihull Approach Online is a universal offer, relevant for all who have caring responsibilities or regular contact with children, which ensures that no individual or population feels targeted. The universal offer sends the message that all families want the best for their children and are deserving of high-quality resources to support their relationships to be as positive as possible.

Time

The thought of accessing a multi-module resource may be overwhelming for many overstretched parents and carers. The benefit of the Solihull Approach Online courses are that they are recommended to be completed in small, incremental stages, each module taking less than half an hour, with summaries, handouts and the reflective notebook to consolidate learning between online sessions. There is no time limit for engagement or completion, with registered participants having life-long access, so enabling them to dip in and out when time and motivation allow.

Technology

Access to and skills to navigate appropriate technology may be a significant barrier for some families. Local promotional materials could include a contact number for relevant services who can support participants in their registration process if necessary and potentially signpost to means of accessing the appropriate technology.
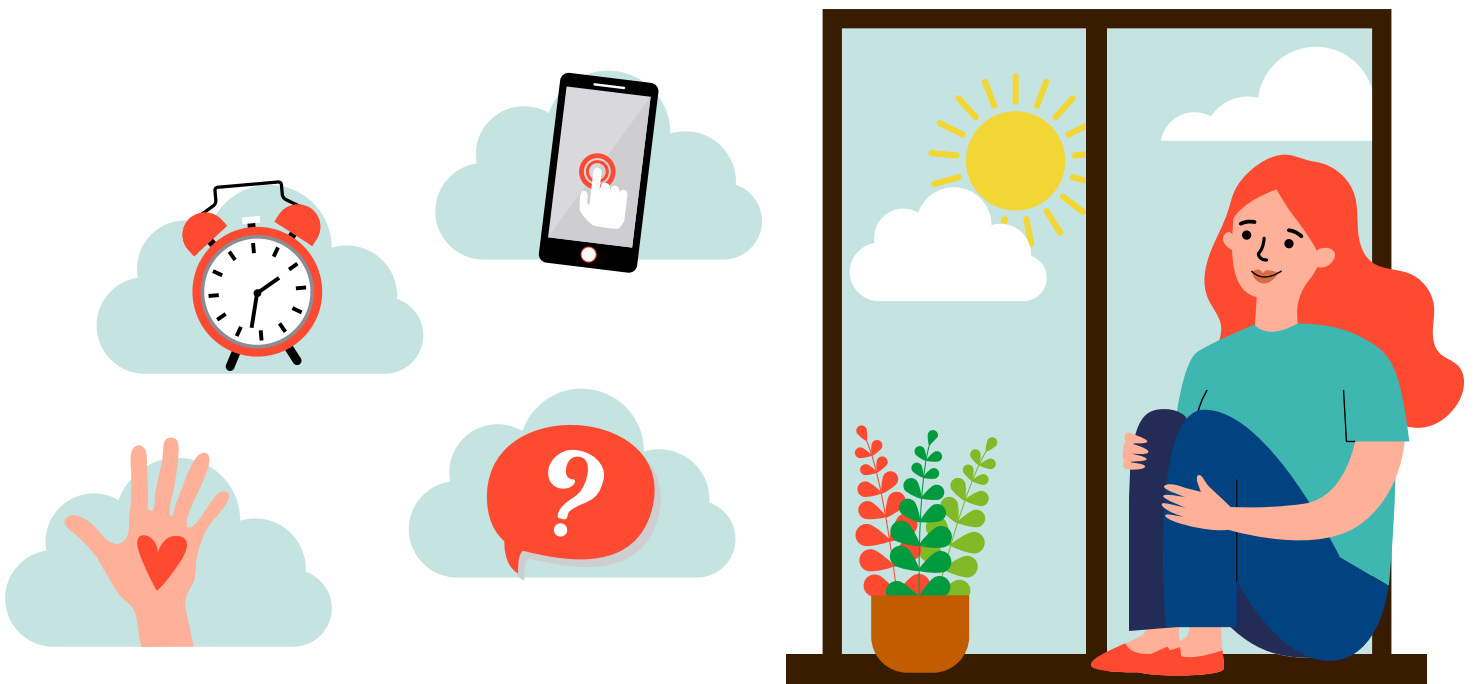
Appendix 1

Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby

Course content

Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby is made up of 9 modules and is for parents, grandparents and carers – for everyone in the new arrival's life who wants to access an antenatal course and build a strong, healthy relationship with the baby.

Each module has **suggested activities** to consolidate learning, with the intention that participants practice these with their children before moving on to the next topic.

The course provides a **notebook** to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful **summary** of key learning.

The course also incorporates a range of **PDF handouts** which families can download to refer to over time and which practitioners can use where relevant in their work with families.

Appendix 1: Course modules

1. Welcome

- About the course

2. Helping you and your baby through pregnancy and birth

- Who is around you?
- How are you feeling today?
- Who is helpful to you and how?
- Having the right people with the right skills
- How do you usually relax?
- Relaxing and breathing for everybody
- Other ways to relax
- Different types of relaxation
- Relaxing after birth

3. Getting to know your baby in the womb

- Getting to know your baby in the womb and beginning the relationship
- Understanding how your baby is developing in the womb.
- Knowing about how your baby's brain develops
- Understanding the positions of the baby in the womb now and in labour
- Understanding the importance of the relationship for your baby's development

4. You, your baby and the stages of labour

- Feelings during labour
- Signs of labour
- Stages of labour
- Instrumental delivery
- Going to the operating theatre

5. Helping you and your baby through labour and birth

- Support in labour
- Active birth positions and coping during labour
- Pain relief
- Support when you are home

6. Feeding your baby

- Feeding your baby
- Benefits of breastfeeding
- Frequency of feeding
- Mixed feeding
- Breast milk and your baby
- Positioning and attachment, expressing and winding
- Feeding is part of the relationship

7. Who's the Daddy now? – I'm the Daddy!

- Father's time with baby
- Fathers and breastfeeding
- Fathers – coping with other peoples' opinions

8. After you baby is born

- Your relationship with your partner
- Why babies cry
- Reassuring your baby
- Baby safety
- Baby blues
- Your relationship with your baby

9. Congratulations

- What you know
- Acknowledgements

Appendix 2

Understanding your baby

Course content

Understanding your baby is made up of 11 modules and is for everyone part of the circle around a new baby: from birth to 12 months.

This course gives you information about your baby's brain development and your baby's physical and emotional development. It shows how important your relationship with the baby is for the baby's development.

Each module has **suggested activities** to consolidate learning, with the intention that participants practice these with their children before moving on to the next topic.

The course provides a **notebook** to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful **summary** of key learning.

The course also incorporates a range of **PDF handouts** which families can download to refer to over time and which practitioners can use where relevant in their work with families.

Three key questions run through the course to form a foundation for participants' learning. They are:

- What is the developmental age and stage of your child?

- What changes have taken place for them or their environment recently?

- How well can your child communicate their needs?

Appendix 2: Course modules

1. Understanding feelings: both your own and your baby's

- How was the birth?
- How are you feeling today?
- How does it feel to be a parent?
- Who is helpful to you and how?
- Calming you, calming baby
- Helping your baby to process their emotions and anxiety
- Relaxation and breathing
- Home Activity: notice one new thing

2. Understanding your baby's brain

- Introduction and Home Activity
- Baby brain development
- You and your baby's brain

3. Understanding your baby's crying

- What do babies communicate?
- How do babies communicate?
- Views on crying
- Is it true? You can spoil a baby by picking him up too much when he cries?
- Is it true? Babies need to cry as it's good for their lungs
- Is it true? Leaving a baby to cry will teach them to comfort themselves
- Is it true? You should never leave a baby to cry
- Is it true? Parents are biologically designed to want to respond to their baby's cries
- Is it true? Crying is an instinct; a baby hopes someone will respond to them
- Recap and Home Activity

4. How to respond to crying

- Responding to crying
- Dealing with not knowing
- Why some babies cry more than others
- Crying due to pain such as colic, reflux or birth trauma
- What might affect how a parent responds to crying?
- Why does how a parent feel affect their response to crying?
- Recap and Home Activity

5. Understanding your baby's rhythms

- Introduction and Home Activity
- Getting to know your baby's rhythms
- Introducing the Dance of Reciprocity
- The Dance of Reciprocity
- Video of the Dance of Reciprocity
- Rupture and repair
- Home Activity: observe the Dance of Reciprocity

6. Developing healthy sleep patterns

- Understanding your baby's rhythms and developing healthy sleep patterns
- Helping babies to develop healthy sleep patterns
- Why is sleep important for a baby?
- How long should a baby sleep?
- What helps you get to sleep?
- What helps your baby get to sleep?
- Where should babies sleep?
- Crying and sleep
- Home Activity: one new thing and Recap Quiz

Appendix 3

Understanding your child

Course content

Understanding your child is an online course for all parents, grandparents and carers of children aged 0–18 years. There are 11 modules, each taking around 20 minutes each. The modules build on the ones before, creating a course. There is also an optional voiceover.

Each module has **suggested activities** to consolidate learning, with the intention that participants practice these with their children before moving on to the next topic.

The course provides a **notebook** to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful **summary** of key learning.

The course also incorporates a range of **PDF handouts** which families can download to refer to over time and which practitioners can use where relevant in their work with families.

Three key questions run through the course to form a foundation for participants' learning. They are:

- What is the developmental age and stage of your child?

- What changes have taken place for them or their environment recently?

- How well can your child communicate their needs?

Appendix 3: Course modules

1. How your child develops

- How do you currently feel about parenting?
- How parenting makes you feel on good days and bad days
- Developing your relationship with your child
- How the brain develops and the importance of early brain development
- What else affects brain development?
- The impact of high levels of stress
- Children's experiences informing behaviour
- Brain development through childhood, teenage brain development and how the teenage brain develops
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

2. Understanding how your child is feeling

- How we know we're happy, sad, tired and anxious
- Understanding when your child feels happy, sad, tired and anxious
- Reading behaviours
- How our behaviour affects our children
- The challenge of reading behaviours
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

3. Tuning into what your child needs

- Tuning into what your child needs
- Children's brain development
- Forging connections
- Reflecting on your child's brain development
- Helping your child learn new skills and what it takes to learn new skills
- Understanding developmental stages
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

4. Responding to how your child is feeling

- Containment
- What can happen when we have our own worries and the effect this has on the child
- Making space in your mind
- How feelings are communicated
- The underlying emotions
- Doing things differently
- Thinking about how we say things
- Saying things differently
- Developing a containing relationship
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

5. Different styles of Parenting

- Approaches to parenting
- What you might like to pass on to your children
- Styles of parenting
- Different kinds of parenting
- Authoritative parenting: getting the balance right
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

6. Having fun together

- Learning by playing
- Learning through play with adults
- How children learn through play
- How play can benefit relationships
- Ideas for playing
- Different ways of playing
- Another look at the play sequences
- The wider benefits of play
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

7. Rhythm of interaction

- The Dance of Reciprocity: the basics
- Communication between adults
- Understanding the Dance of Reciprocity
- The 7 steps of the Dance
- Understanding babies' actions
- Noticing the Dance with your children
- The Dance: some other parents' observations
- The Dance in everyday life
- Self-regulation and the Dance
- Building connections in the brain
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

8. Why sleep is important?

- Good sleep patterns: the basics
- Separating from a child
- Overcoming separation difficulties
- Common causes of sleep disturbance
- Why do we need to sleep?
- What helps us to get to sleep?
- Sleeping difficulties
- Having a routine to go to sleep
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

9. Self Regulation and Anger

- Anger and independence
- Coping with anger
- Seeing anger in a different way
- When can anger be helpful?
- What are the kinds of things that might make a child feel angry?
- How to help a child who feels angry
- Learning emotional containment
- Helping your child learn to manage their anger
- Anger and independence
- Parent child interaction examples and reflecting on what you just saw
- Alternative approaches you could take
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

10. Communication and tuning in

- The Dance of Reciprocity: recap
- How to recover when things go wrong: rupture and repair
- Where did things go wrong?
- Repairing the situation
- Repairing relationships
- What happens after a disagreement
- The importance of apologising
- Helping your child learn rupture and repair
- Reflecting on learning and have a go

11. Looking back and looking forward

- What have you managed to change?
- Quiz time
- Doing things differently
- Recap of resources
- Further resources
- Post-course questionnaire
- Solihull acknowledgements

Appendix 4

Understanding your teenager's brain

Course content

Understanding your teenager's brain is a 9 module short course. It aims to help you understand what happens to the brain as a child hits adolescence and helps explain some of the changes in their behaviour that parents often observe.

Each module has **suggested activities** to consolidate learning, with the intention that participants practice these with their children before moving on to the next topic.

The course provides a **notebook** to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful **summary** of key learning.

The course also incorporates a range of **PDF handouts** which families can download to refer to over time and which practitioners can use where relevant in their work with families.

Three key questions run through the course to form a foundation for participants' learning. They are:

- What is the developmental age and stage of your child?

- What changes have taken place for them or their environment recently?

- How well can your child communicate their needs?

Appendix 4: Course modules

1. Welcome and introduction
- How to work through the course
- What changes have you noticed?
- Every cloud has a silver lining

2. Teenager's brain development
- How do we know about the teenage brain?
- The main changes
- The prefrontal cortex
- The amygdala

3. Teenagers and reading faces
- The amygdala and reading faces
- Knowing what you are feeling
- The experiment and about the results
- What could this mean?
- What can you do to help?
- Some more ideas

4. Risk taking
- Risk and brain development
- Risks: the positive and the negative
- The accelerator and the brake
- So who has to be the brake?

5. Risk taking and friends
- Risk and friends
- An experiment and the results
- How does the brain affect risk taking?
- Teenagers and gangs
- How can you help?

6. Sensitive to rejection
- Teenagers and their friends
- Research
- An experiment
- Teenagers' reactions
- Why does this happen?
- What can help?

7. Teenagers and sleep
- Teenagers and their sleep
- Change in teenagers sleep pattern
- Why do teenagers' need their sleep?
- The growth hormone and the sleep hormone
- Changing to an adult pattern
- What can help?
- Sleep and emotions

8. Review
- The positives
- Eventually
- And finally

9. Congratulations
- Feedback
- Acknowledgements

Appendix 5

Understanding your brain – teenagers only!

Course content

Understanding your brain – teenagers only! is a 9 module short course aimed at teenagers. It aims to help them understand how the changes in their brains can explain some of the changes in their behaviour. It is paired with the parents' course **Understanding your teenager's brain**, so that both parents and teenagers have access to the same information.

The course has **suggested activities** throughout to engage teenagers with the materials and consolidate learning.

The course also provides a **notebook** to allow participants to record their reflections and progress and each module ends with a helpful **summary** of key learning.

Appendix 5: Course modules

1. Welcome and introduction
- What is this course about?
- What changes have you noticed?
- Every cloud has a silver lining

2. Your brain development
- How do we know about the teenage brain?
- The main changes
- The prefrontal cortex
- The amygdala

3. Reading faces
- The amygdala and reading faces
- Knowing what you are feeling
- The experiment
- About the results
- What could this mean?
- What can parents do to help?
- What can you do to help?
- Some more ideas

4. Risk taking
- Risk and brain development
- Risks: the positive and the negative
- The accelerator and the brake
- So who has to be the brake?

5. Risk taking and friends
- Risk and friends
- An experiment
- The results
- How does the brain affect risk taking?
- Teenagers and gangs
- How can you help your brain?

6. Sensitive to rejection
- You and your friends
- Research
- An experiment
- Teenagers' reactions
- Why does this happen?
- What can help?

7. You and sleep
- You and your sleep
- Change in your sleep pattern
- Why do you need your sleep?
- The growth hormone and the sleep hormone
- Changing to an adult pattern
- What can help?
- Sleep and emotions

8. Review
- The positives
- Eventually
- And finally

9. Congratulations
- Congratulations and feedback questionnaire

Appendix 6

National Promotional Materials

Solihull Approach Online | Implementation Guide

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk**.

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