



Parent-Infant Foundation

The importance of infant mental health and the role relationships play in building the foundations during the early years to enable the best start in life



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What is Infant Mental Health?

Infant mental health

describes a baby's capacity to experience, regulate and express emotions and form close and secure relationships.



- Child development is shaped by a complex interaction of factors - both *within* and *around* the child.
- **Within the child:** The child's biology, temperament, health, etc.
- **Around the child:** The immediate environment of relationships, where the importance of **attuned interactions** is well-established and the *broader environment* where caregivers are raising young children.

What surrounds us, shapes us

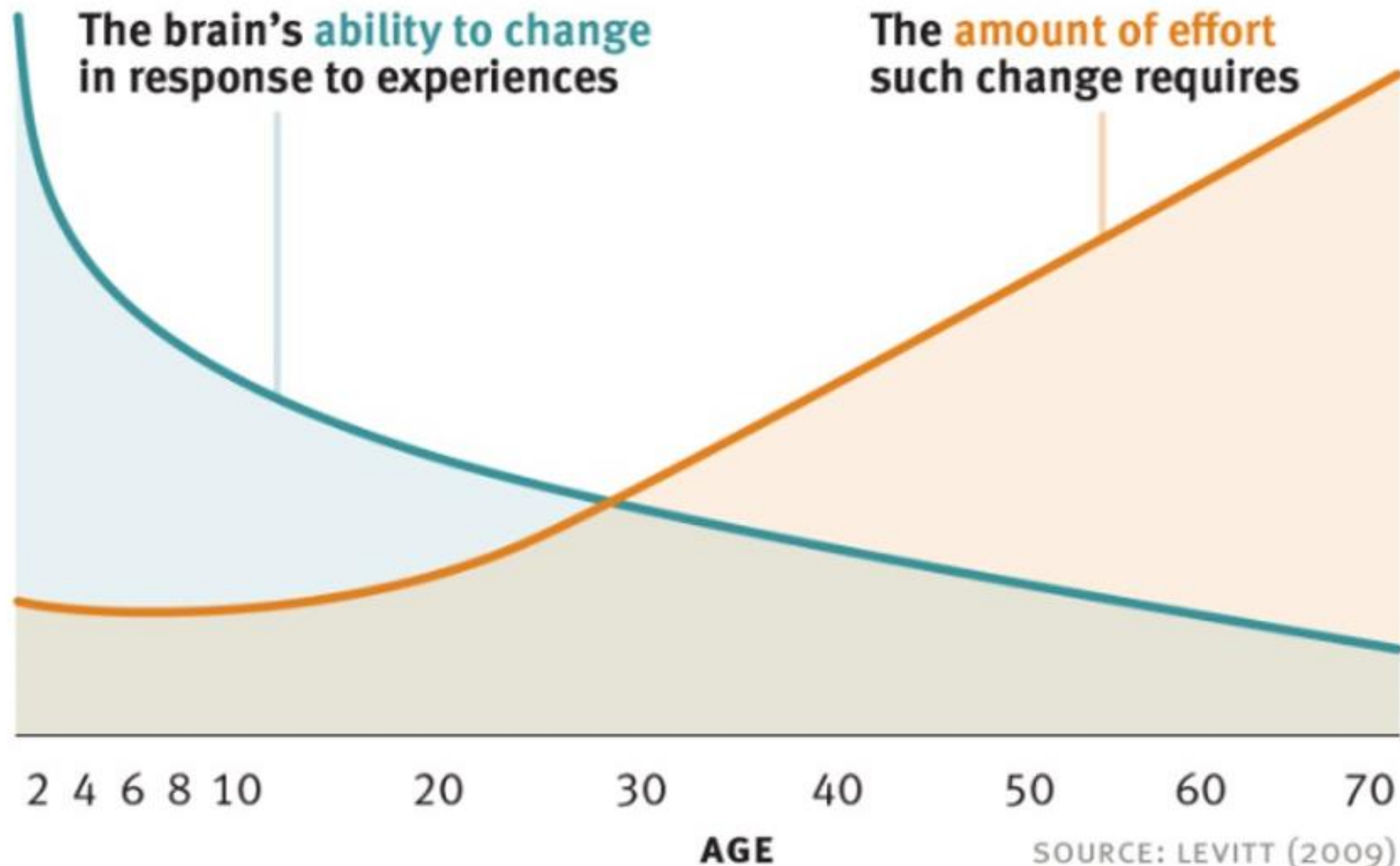


Build Strong Brains and Healthy Minds



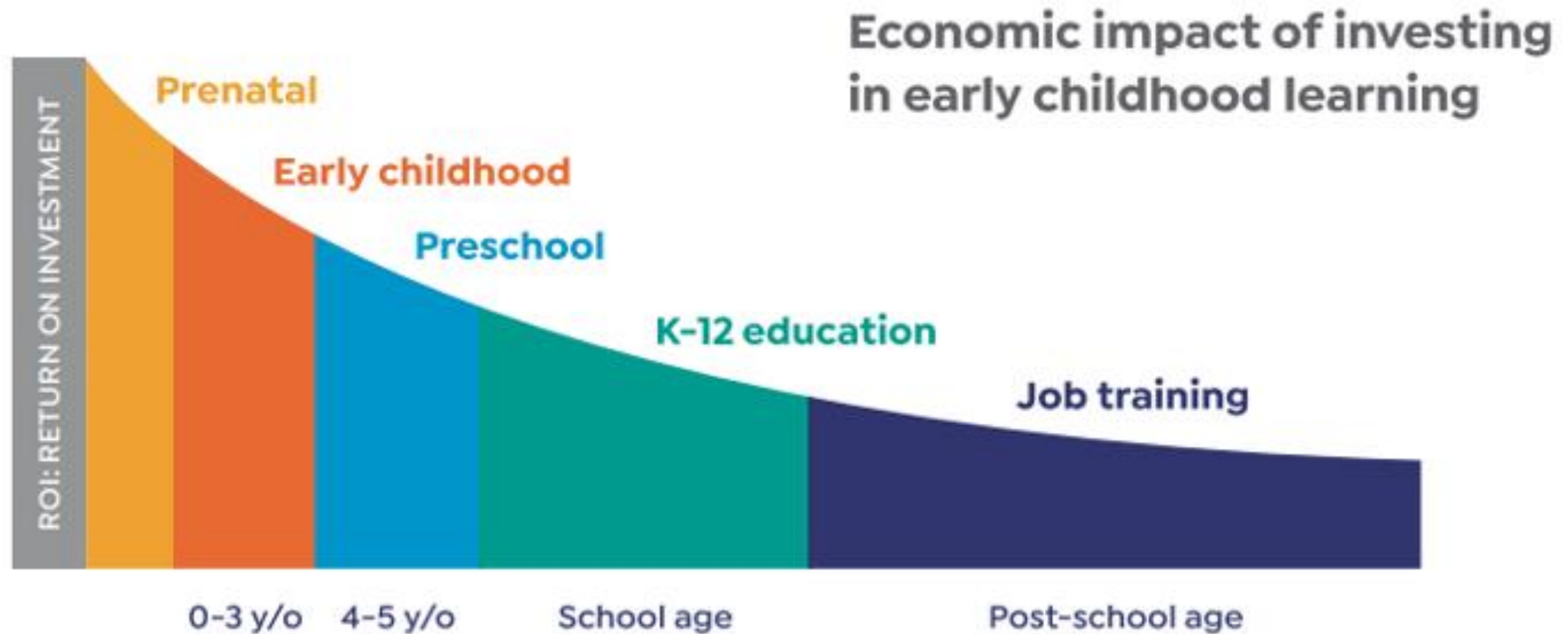
During pregnancy and the first few years of life the brain (and mind) is developing more rapidly than any other period and is highly susceptible to environmental influences – both positive and negative.

This makes it a unique period of *opportunity* and *vulnerability*.



Parent-Infant Relationships (PAIR) Services Commissioning Toolkit (2023)





Heckman, J. J., & Mosso, S. (2014). The economics of human development and social mobility. *Annual Review of Economics*, 6(1), 689-733.



*The foundations for flourishing are laid by strong social and emotional skills – all of which have their roots in **early childhood** ...but continue to develop throughout our lives as we encounter new situations and experiences.*

(Shaping Us: The Royal Foundation, 2025)

The AAA of Parent-Infant Interactions

The early interactions babies experience with their caregivers can be:

- **Attuned:** these **support** all aspects of a child's development and wellbeing.
- **Adverse:** which can **hinder** a child's development and wellbeing.
- **Absent:** which can **inhibit** a child's development and wellbeing.

What do we mean by attuned interactions?

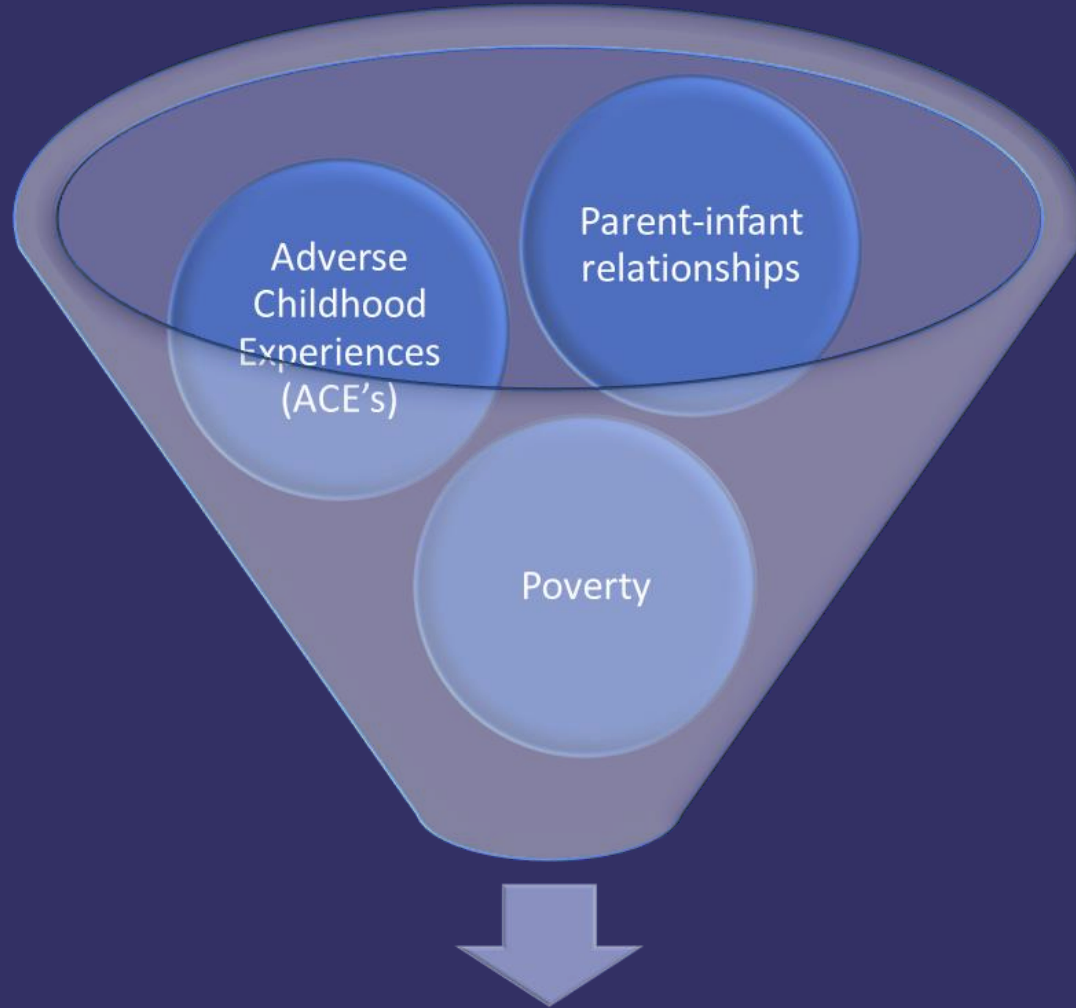
Children need attunement to feel secure and to develop well, and throughout our lives we need attunement to feel close and connected.

(Dr Dan Siegal)

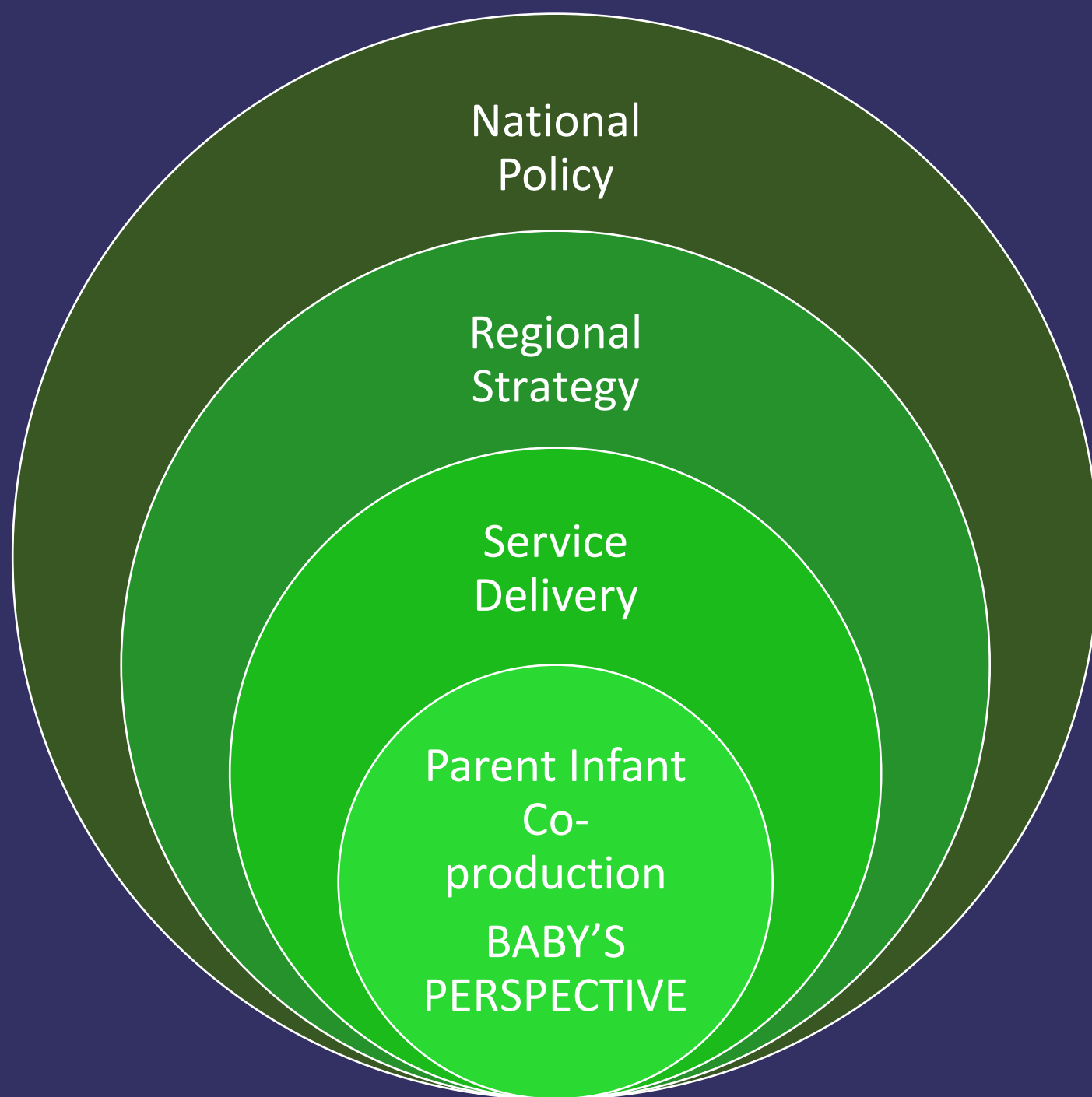
"If we value our children, we must cherish their parents."

(John Bowlby)

The parent-infant relationship, starting from conception, is one of the key mechanisms by which our **life-long outcomes** are enhanced or diminished

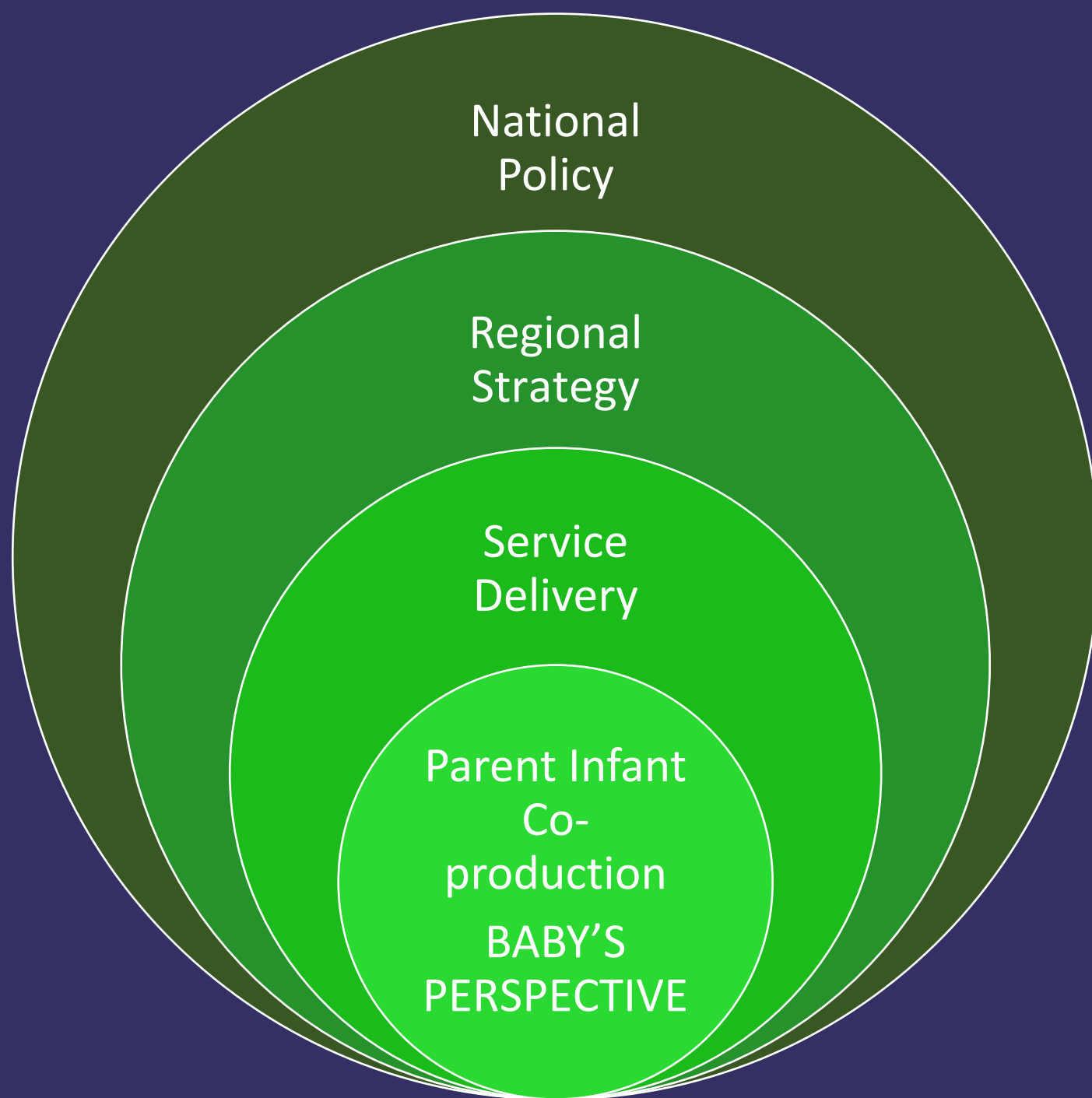


Risk of significantly poorer outcomes









All-Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2024-2034

Making sure people in Wales live in communities that promote and support mental health and wellbeing.



Hello

Mental health and wellbeing are important – they're just as important as your physical health.

Our mental health plays a big part in the way we think, feel and act. It affects:



★ The Welsh Government wants everyone in Wales to have good mental health and wellbeing. We want everyone to have the right support, at the right time.

This tells you about our new plan to make sure people in Wales live in communities that promote and support mental health and wellbeing. It's called the **All-Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2034**.



? What do you think?

We want to know what you think about this new strategy. Please fill in the questions here:
gov.wales/mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy
You may want to get support from an adult you trust with the questionnaire.



This strategy also connects to our **Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy 2024-2034**. You can read about it here:
gov.wales/suicide-and-self-harm-prevention-strategy

<https://executive.nhs.wales/functions/strategic-programme-for-mental-health/perinatal-mental-health/resources-for-practitioners/influencing-the-next-mental-health-strategy/>

What matters to you

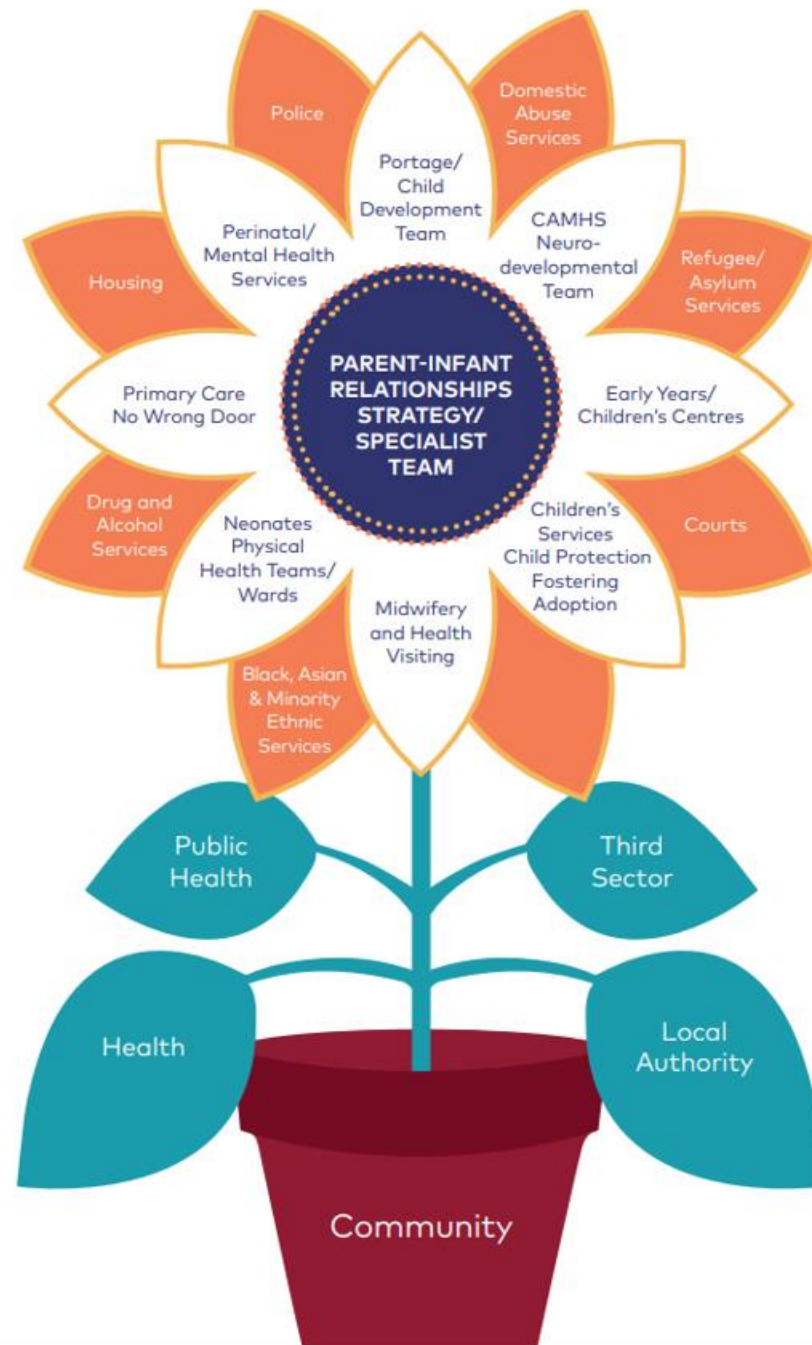
The golden thread

A Case for Developing Specialist
Parent-Infant Services in Wales

Dr. Liz Gregory
Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes
and Sharon Fernandez

Supported by:
Parent Infant Network Cymru

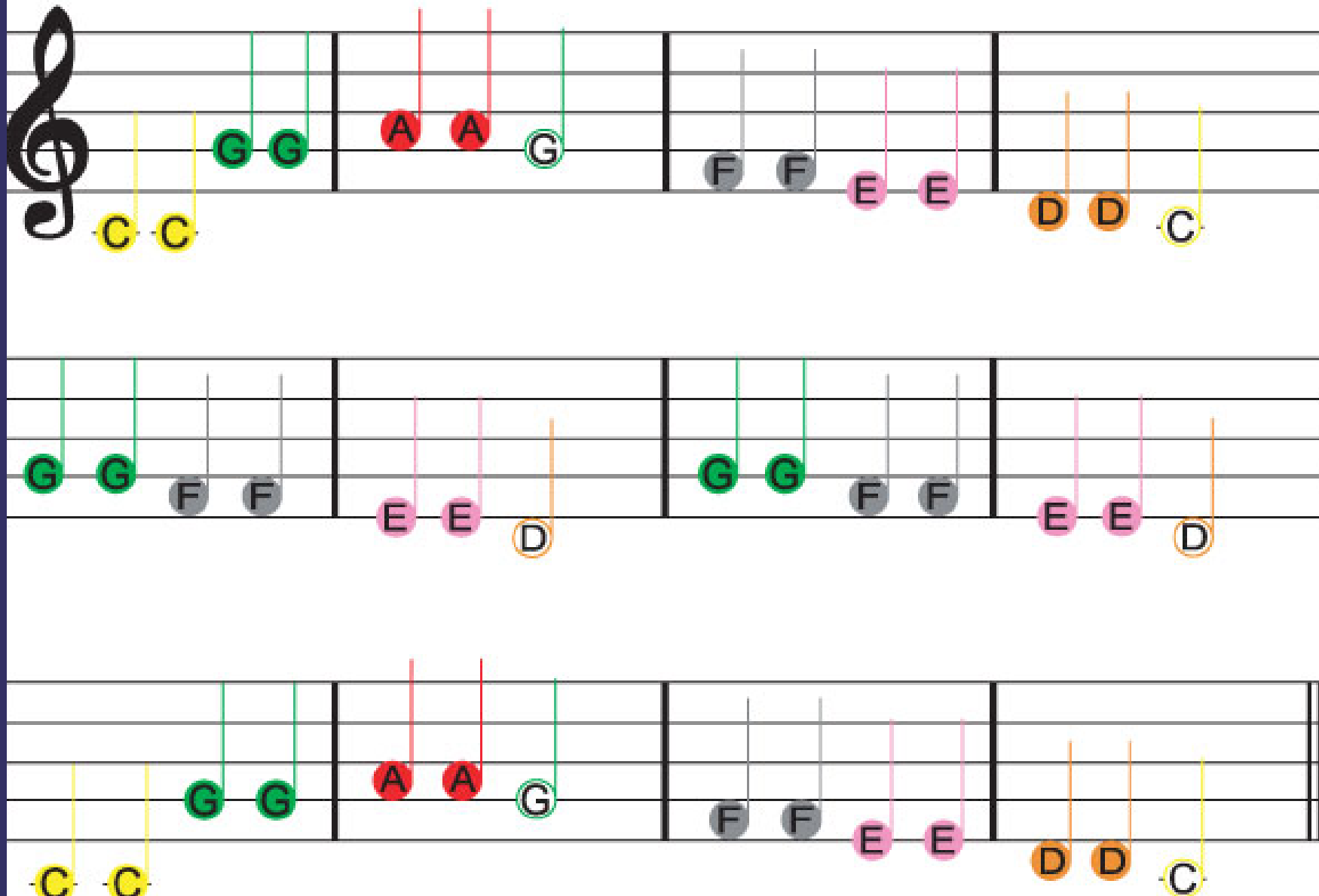




What do you notice about this clip?



Twinkle Twinkle Little Star



Simpleinteractions.org

- Connection
- Reciporcity (serve and return)
- Inclusion (Belonging)
- Opportunities to grow





If you want to go fast go alone, if you
want to go far go together.

African Proverb



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