



Press Release – Monday 13 June 2022

Psychological Society of Ireland supports Infant Mental Health Awareness Week 2022

- **Society's Special Interest Group in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health develops a series of videos to bring awareness to infant mental health**

Infant Mental Health Awareness Week takes place this week, from 13-19 June 2022, with the theme being 'Understanding Early Trauma'. The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is supporting this awareness week through the release of a variety of short videos on themes related to infant mental health. Developed by the PSI Special Interest Group in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (SIGPIMH), the videos will aim to bring awareness to infant mental health and ways in which infants can be supported in their development during this important stage in their lives.

Chair of the Society's SIGPIMH Dr Eithne Ní Longphuirt says: "This awareness week is an opportunity to promote understanding of the importance of a baby's mental health and what can impact on their wellbeing. Early experiences have a lifelong impact. When an infant is exposed to trauma, it can have a negative impact on their development and likewise, the emotional protection of parents and caregivers helps support a baby's mental health."

The videos series includes:

- **What is Infant Mental Health?**

Presented by Ms Molly O'Connor, this video gives a brief overview of infant mental health and how important an infant's relationship with a caregiver is to support their social, emotional, and cognitive development across the lifetime. Research has shown that strong early relationships lay the foundation for an infant's later relationships as well as their later mental and physical health. This video provides some quick tips on how to promote infant mental health through opportunities for connection, communication, and responsiveness with your baby.

- **Antenatal Bonding**

In this video, Dr Jillian Doyle discusses some ideas that may help parents, particularly mother-baby bonding during pregnancy. Jillian aims to convey that bonding with your baby during pregnancy is not a one size fits all approach, and the intention to begin forming a

relationship is incredibly important. A short mindfulness exercise around bonding is included in this video.

- **Your Baby is Speaking to You**

“A baby’s behaviour is his language...and you can trust that language” - Dr T. Berry Brazelton. These behaviours help communicate to parents what a baby likes, does not like, wants more of, less of, and is a way for them to interact with the world around them. In this video, Dr Anne-Marie Casey explores how parents learn to understand these cues, behaviours, bodily states, and language, which in turn helps their emotionally protective connection and the developing relationship between parent and infant in the long term.

- **Mentalising**

Presented by Dr Eithne Ní Longphuirt, this video highlights the importance of considering an infant's internal experience, i.e., their emotions, bodily experiences, wishes, etc. This focus on internal experiences creates a sense of being seen, of safety, and is a characteristic of secure attachments. Mentalising is particularly important as a buffer against stress and early trauma.

- **Video Interaction Guidance**

Presented by Dr Sabrina Coyle, this video showcases Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), an evidence-based intervention to support relationships between mothers and their babies or young infants. This intervention is based on the principles of attunement. Attunement is key to secure and loving relationships and involves the caregiver picking up on baby’s cues and responding consistently and contingently. The key message in this video is about the innovative ways in which clinicians can support mothers who are struggling in their early attachment relationship with their infants. This approach is particularly useful with mothers with ASD, mild learning difficulty, or where there may be language differences that complicate talking therapy approaches.

- **Supporting LGBT+ families**

In this video, Dr Eithne Ní Longphuirt highlights the risks to the LGBT+ community, difficulties for families arising from discrepancies in rights to parentage, and the prevalence of mental health difficulties in the LGBT+ community. It goes on to encourage staff to increase their awareness of LGBT+ families, particularly in the perinatal period.

To complement the short video series, the PSI Special Interest Group in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health has also produced a video highlighting the main aims and activities of the group.

The promotional videos developed to support Infant Mental Health Awareness Week are being made available via the Psychological Society of Ireland YouTube channel throughout the course of the awareness week, as well as being promoted on PSI and SIGPIMH social media platforms.

ENDS.

For further information, or to arrange an interview with spokesperson Dr Eithne Ní Longphuirt, please contact:

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Points to note:

- The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is the learned and professional body for the profession in the Republic of Ireland, with the primary object of advancing psychology as an applied science in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Connect with the PSI through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- The Special Interest Group in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (SIGPIMH) promotes the clinical practice, education, and research regarding the health and development of parents and infants from conception and pregnancy through to five years postpartum, within both the discipline of psychology in addition to interdisciplinary cooperation with other medical and allied health professions.
- Connect with SIGPIMH through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).
- Details on video presenters:
 - **Ms Molly O'Connor** is a first-year psychologist in clinical training at University College Cork with an interest in perinatal and infant mental health.
 - **Dr Jillian Doyle** is a senior clinical psychologist working in perinatal mental health and a committee member with the SIGPIMH.
 - **Dr Anne-Marie Casey** is a senior clinical psychologist working with infants and parents in a paediatric hospital, and a committee member with the SIGPIMH and the PSI Special Interest Group in Paediatric Psychology (SIGPeP).
 - **Dr Eithne Ni Longphuirt** is the SIGPIMH chairperson and a senior clinical psychologist working with parents and infants in a primary care setting.
 - **Dr Sabrina Coyle** is a senior clinical psychologist working in perinatal mental health and a committee member with the SIGPIMH.