

SURE START TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL: CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

(developed on their behalf by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Training and Development Project)

RATIONALE:

The present policy context in terms of children's services stress the following:

- Child and adolescent mental health is every one's business
- Mental health promotion and emotional well-being, particularly in the early years, needs to be a priority
- Provision for children and young people needs to happen through multi-agency, partnership working

AIMS OF THE TRAINING:

Sure Start is thus an ideal setting in which to ensure that the young children and their families are enabled to develop to their fullest mental and emotional potential. In order to achieve this it is important that the staff of Sure Start are able to:

- work with families and settings to assess the factors that contribute to the development of positive mental health in their children
- where gaps in these are identified to help carers identify the need for change and development in that area and to work with them on strategies to fill this gap
- identify those factors in the environment that that may hinder or negatively impact on the child's mental health and emotional well-being
- work with carers and settings to diminish the impact of factors that could have a negative impact on the child's emotional and mental development.

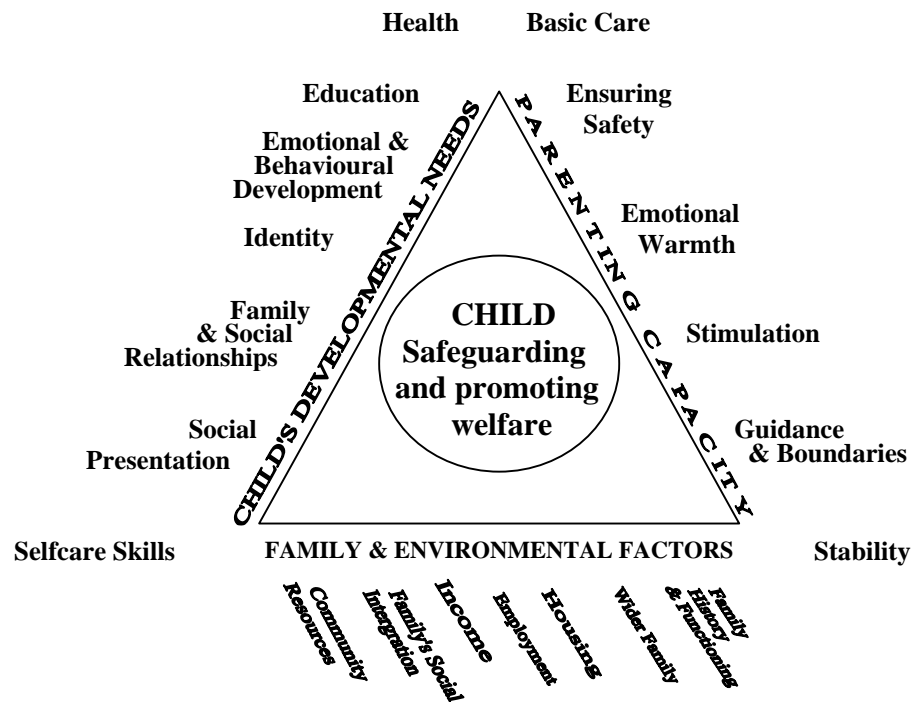
This initial training will provide the basis for understanding and assessing mental health and emotional well-being for all Sure Start staff including support workers, volunteers, Homestart volunteers, community planning etc.

THE TRAINING FRAMEWORK:

In order to avoid the training being seen as a variety of disparate days offered to the staff of Sure Start, it is proposed that the training needs to be held together by a unifying framework on which all of the training and future development and support can be hung. For this purpose it is proposed that we use a version of the Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review cycle as the core framework and place this alongside a systemic understanding of the issues being faced. In this way the different elements of the training can be linked to the various elements of the model and the systems understanding will allow people to see the interconnectedness of the various elements of the training course.

The focus for the first set of modules will be on healthy development, mental health and emotional well-being, mental health promotion. This will provide workers with a good basis when working with young children and their families to assess and identify strengths that can be developed, gaps that can be filled and threats that can be worked with to overcome. It is important that all frontline workers see the importance of assessment as a part of what they do whenever they engage with a child or family. It is thus vital that they have a good understanding of healthy/normal development in terms of mental health before they begin to try and assess mental health problems or ill health.

It is suggested that the training, in using an assessment framework, makes use of the Department of Health Framework of Assessment. This framework, using a developmental approach, identifies three dimensions: developmental needs of the child, parenting capacity and family and environmental factors.



The reason for suggesting this framework is that it allows us to focus on mental health promotion and the protective factors that we find within the young child, their family and their context. In this way it does not only focus on risk or deficit but has a real emphasis on health, strengths and normal development. This framework will thus give people an understanding of what life might look like for a child or young person who is thriving developmentally. If a practitioner uses these guidelines as a backdrop they can build up a picture through their contact with a child and his or her carers of how they are thriving. It is hoped that this framework, will not only provide a way of linking the elements of the training but will provide a systematic way of analysing, understanding and recording what is happening to children within their families and the community in which

they live. From this understanding of what are inevitably complex issues and inter-relationships, it is hoped that workers will be able to make clear professional judgements about need and ways of dealing with the need.

TRAINING MODULES:

It is proposed that the training comprises of a series of three sets of modules.

- **Series One:** Basic understanding of development, mental health and emotional well-being, the factors that support mental health and mental health promotion
- **Series Two:** Understanding of mental health problems and disorders, impact of carer mental health on child's mental health, interventions for the front-line worker
- **Series Three:** More specialised and in-depth understanding of mental health problems and disorders

Series One:

It is proposed that the first series of modules, offered to all Sure Start staff, will comprise of the following:

Module One: Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review

All modules will be linked into this framework for understanding the child and their context. It is important to emphasise the idea of holism and the importance of understanding development across the life span and not merely as a discrete area. This module can include the following:

- Assessment as the core of what practitioners do – assessment of vulnerability, risk and protective factors
- Different types of assessment (for participants to identify the type and purpose of assessments)
- Linking assessments to the family model (for participants to identify how the assessment processes can inform each other and be brought together to develop a fuller and more accurate picture of the whole family, individuals in it and their environmental context, and form a basis for intervention)
- The multidisciplinary network and its link to assessment
- Good practice in information gathering (to plan and undertake collaborative assessments of need and describe good practice in gathering information in collaborative assessments)

Module Two: Systemic Thinking for Frontline Workers

The module will focus on:

- Systemic ways of viewing the children, young people and their families.
- Assessment of the context as well as the child and a focus on protective and risk factors.
- Looking at problems systemically and how one can look at solutions in a holistic way.

Module Three: Understanding of Bio-Psycho-Emotional Development

This module will focus on development, particularly but not only, during the early years. It will include:

- Physical development
- Psychological (mental and emotional) development
- Social development
- Moral development

Module Four: Understanding Mental Health And Well-Being

This module will focus on the emotional and mental development, particularly but not only, during the early years. It will focus on:

- Defining mental health and emotional well-being
- Development of positive mental health and emotional well-being
- Looking at factors that impact on mental health
- Exploration of participants feeling around mental health and problems associated with it, how do you describe mental health, focus on attitudes towards mental health

Module Five: Knowledge of the 'Family'

This module will focus on:

- Defining the family
- The 'family' as a concept and a system
- Family development – family life cycle
- Different kinds of families
- The influences and dynamics of the family on early development

Module Six: Mental Health Promotion

This module will focus on:

- Factors that influence the mental health of young people
- Risk and resilience / Protective and adverse factors relating to mental health
- Strategies for promoting mental health
- Strategies for the prevention of mental health problems.

These modules will comprise of a day training. Each module will be run between a month to two months apart. This will ensure that workers have time to attempt to put their new knowledge and understanding into practice and will enable some discussion at the following sessions.

Organisational Support and Development:

As part of the training package it is proposed that Sure Start looks at ways in which the learning from the training sessions can be effectively practiced and reflected upon within the organisation. It is suggested that a system of supervision or group work discussions and consultations be set up to enable

staff to reflect on the ways in which they are trying to utilise their new understandings and skills.

Development of Training Materials and Resources for Parents:

Over the year that Series One training will take place a task team, selected by the Sure Start staff, will work with the project manager from the CAMHS Training and Development Project on developing a set of training materials and manuals that cover the issues being worked on in Series One. This will ensure that they are able to provide in-house training for new staff and refresher courses on an ongoing basis. For those staff who select to go on to do Series Two and Three these materials can then be used by them to run training around mental health and emotional well-being.

It is also proposed that this task team develop resources for parents and carers around the issue of mental health development and promotion. This will enable carers to think about ways in which they can contribute to the emotional well-being of their child.