

Infant Massage Evaluation**CONTENTS**

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Infant Massage Evaluation

1.0 Introduction.

Infant or baby massage by mothers has been popular and is a major part of bringing up children in many cultures. (1) However it is a relatively new concept in the United Kingdom.

A number of studies have shown the benefits of infant massage both for the mother and the infant. Some of the benefits include:-

- Helps bonding relationship between the baby and care giver, strengthening the emotional attachment. (2)
- Improves the mental health of mothers with postnatal depression. (3)
- Encourages social contact between mothers(4)
- Delivery of health promotion messages (5)
- Helps with colic and sleep. (6)

With the above benefits in mind, Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start established an Infant Massage Service in its Local Programme Area. It was envisaged that the potential outcomes of an Infant massage programme may have helped in working towards achieving the national Sure Start Objective, "Improving health and improving social and emotional development." The Infant Massage Service was also part of the Aspley and Bells Lane Maternal Mental Health Strategy in providing appropriate services for mothers who suffered from post-natal depression. The service became fully operational in April 2004. After eight months it was decided to undertake an evaluation of the Infant Massage Service.

The main objectives of the evaluation were to see;

- If mums liked the Infant Massage Service.
- If mums continued massaging their baby at home after coming to the infant massage session(s).
- The benefits to mother and baby from doing infant massage.
- If any changes could be made to the delivery of the service to make it more accessible.

This report contains the results of the evaluation of the Infant massage service provided by Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start.

2.0 Infant Massage in Aspley & Bells Lane Sure Start Programme Area

In order to make the vision of establishing an Infant Massage Service a reality, Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start invested in training a Sure Start Health Worker, (who is a qualified Nursery Nurse) in the techniques of Infant massage. The Sure Start Health Worker successfully completed an Infant massage programme provided by Touch Learn (7). A local Health Visitor, employed by Nottingham City Primary Care Trust, who had trained as an infant masseur in the past, expressed an interest in providing an Infant Massage Service with the support of Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start.

The following Infant Massage Service was fully established in April 2004.

1. Infant massage programme held on Wednesday mornings from 10 am until 11:30 am. At Aspley Community Training Centre. This service is provided by the Sure Start Health Worker supported by a Sure Start parent volunteer. The sessions are run as a drop in and parents are encouraged to attend four of the sessions.
2. Infant massage programme held on Friday mornings at Aspley Community Training Centre. This service is provided by a Local Health Visitor and the Sure Start Health Worker. They work the service in six week blocks. A free crèche is provided at this session for any older children to use while parents are attending the infant massage session. A Sure Start parent volunteer also supports this session.
3. Home visits are also provided by the Sure Start Health Worker arranged by referral from local Health Visitors for mums who don't feel confident to attend a group session initially. However this aspect of the service is not evaluated within this report.
4. The Sure Start Health Worker would give demonstrations of Infant Massage taster sessions at other groups such as the, "Bumps a Daisy" antenatal group on an ad-hoc basis.

2.1 Cost of service

This report doesn't provide a cost benefit analysis of the Infant massage service. However it is considered useful to know what costs are incurred in

providing the service for future reference. The following list is the main cost factors to be considered.

- Sure Start Health Workers (Nursing and Midwifery C grade - pre Agenda for Change) time. Two hours once a week and planning time. Also two hours for Friday sessions in six week blocks.
- Health Visitor Time (Nursing and Midwifery Scale G grade - pre Agenda for Change). Two hours for Friday session in a six week block.
- Room hire at Aspley Community Training Centre (One room, twice a week for two hour sessions.)
- Parent Volunteer time and associated costs e.g. child care provision.
- Crèche hire for Fridays session (2 hours) maximum of eight children.
- Fruit and drinks for each session.
- Stationery, colour photocopying/ administration
- Baby oils and plastic bottles.
- Folders and information packs for parents to take away with them.

2.2 Numbers attending / Recruitment to service

For the eight months time period measured for the purpose of this report sixty six (66) different adults and their babies had attended the infant massage sessions in total on at least one occasion. Forty (40) of these had attended on more than one occasion.

The recruitment and advertising for the sessions was done in different ways. The main methods included:-

- ⊙ Flyers / posters at events and groups.
- ⊙ Flyer in Aspley Sure Start new birth information packs.
- ⊙ Word of mouth.
- ⊙ Recruitment by Health Visitors and their teams during home visits.
- ⊙ Demonstrations of baby massage at other groups.

3.0 Methodology/Evaluation strategy

Three different methods or sources of information about the Infant Massage Programme in the Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start Local Programme area were utilised for the purpose of the evaluation.

3.1 Questionnaire

A brief questionnaire was designed, consisting of seven questions using both open and closed questions.

The questionnaire was sent out in the post to people who had attended Infant massage on more than one occasion between April 2004 and December 2004. This was forty people. The questionnaire was sent with a letter explaining why we were carrying out the survey and a stamped return addressed envelope was included.

3.2 Analysis of individual diaries

Evaluation diaries kept by every person who had attended more than one infant massage session between April and December 2004 were to be analysed to ascertain if there were any consistent themes.

3.3 Aspley & Bells Lane Sure Start Baseline Health Survey 2004.

A questionnaire was posted to one hundred (100) households. The criteria for selection were families who had received free child safety equipment from the Sure Start Programme in the previous year. The population size was two hundred (200) and one hundred (100) families were randomly selected.

The questionnaire was designed by a group of parents with help from an external consultant. The questionnaire was picked up from the families by trained parent volunteers. The questionnaire included questions relating to the health component/services of the Sure Start programme as well as the child safety equipment. The questionnaire included a question relating to the baby massage service. A consultant analysed the collected questionnaires and produced a report. (8)

4.0 Results

The following section shows the results from all three methods used for collecting evidence about the Infant Massage Programme in the Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start Local Programme area.

4.1 Results from the Infant massage questionnaire.

Twenty (20) out of the forty (40) questionnaires sent out were returned, giving a fifty percent (50%) response rate.

The age range of the babies about whom the questionnaire were completed varied from the 0 - 3 months category to the over 12 months category. A response was received in every age category. The most popular age category was over 12 months. This accounted for fifty percent (50%) of the returned questionnaires. Table 1 illustrates this.

This response suggest that the questionnaires had been completed by people who had attended at different times of the period measured i.e. some at the start of the infant massage programme and some more recently.

Table 1

Table 1 illustrates the age of the babies for the returned infant massage questionnaire

Age range (months)	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
0 - 3 months	2	10
3 - 6 months	4	20
6 - 9 months	2	10
9 - 12 months	2	10
Over 12 months	10	50
Total (n)	20	100 %

Twenty (20) which accounts for one hundred percent (100%) of the respondents, stated that they enjoyed the Infant massage. Ten (10) or fifty percent (50%) of respondents who enjoyed the massage went on to comment further about how they enjoyed the massage.

Their comments included;

- ❖ "Yes very relaxing and you can talk and make friends with other mums."
- ❖ "It was also nice to meet the mother and their children."

- ❖ "X had lots of enjoyment and so did I."
- ❖ "Massage relaxed X and he slept for hours after."
- ❖ "Thought the sessions were really good, I wish I would have gone when my baby was a bit younger."
- ❖ "The head massage was the best for my little boy, still is!"
- ❖ "It was a relaxed and welcoming environment. A great place to meet other mums and share problems."
- ❖ "Found baby massage really enjoyable, to bond with him. We still have a massage now and again."
- ❖ "Although my baby was fretful in the early days of being undressed it was encouraging to see most of the other older babies enjoying the session and being told that it was normal for fretful behaviour in younger babies."

Ten (10) or fifty percent (50%) of the respondents stated that they still massaged their baby. One (1) said that they didn't massage their baby but a point to note is that the baby was in the 0 - 3 months category and the parent had written, "they intend to." Nine (9) or forty five percent (45%) of the respondents stated that they used to massage their baby but they had stopped. Further analysis of the data indicates that of the nine (9) respondents who used to massage their baby but now stopped, all the babies were either in the age range 9 - 12 months or over 12 months. Table 2 illustrates these results.

Table 2

Table 2 illustrates the ages of the babies and if the respondent still massaged the baby

Age range (months)	Yes still massage baby		No - Don't massage baby		Used to but stopped		Don't know	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
0 - 3	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
3 - 6	4	20%	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
6 - 9	3	15%	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
9 - 12	0	0%	0	0	2	10%	0	0%
Over 12	2	10%	0	0	7	35%	0	0%

Eight (8) of the respondents wrote a comment about the question relating to if they still massaged their baby. The comments included;

- ⊗ "But intend to."
- ⊗ "This is a good and special time for baby and me."

- ✱ "X doesn't stay still for very long but very occasionally I try to relax his tummy / legs with what I learnt from these sessions."
- ✱ "X doesn't hold still long enough for a full massage but sometimes I do his head when he is tired or he is in the bath."
- ✱ "He won't keep still for long enough anymore."
- ✱ "My baby enjoys it after a bath."
- ✱ "Cant keep him still long enough."
- ✱ "He's too active now but I used to 2/3 times a week."

A point to note is that the respondents who stated that their "baby wouldn't keep still any more," had babies past the 9 - 12 months age range.

Twenty (20) or one hundred percent (100%) of respondents stated that they found the baby massage useful. The respondents were asked to tell us how it helped then and their child. Twenty (20) or one hundred percent (100%) of respondents gave a response, these included :-

- ⊙ "It helped him with sleep, bonding and just to get out of the house for a few hours. To make new friends with mums who are in the same boat, who know just what your going through."
- ⊙ "It got us out of the house and enabled us to meet other new mothers and babies. It helped with colic and relaxing / calming my baby."
- ⊙ "It helped to relax the child and me and it helps with special parts of the body."
- ⊙ "I suffered from post-natal with my boy, so I needed something to help us bond, using the head massage in particular really helped as it soothed him and made me feel like we were connecting in some way."
- ⊙ "Helped to relax baby."
- ⊙ "Helped when it was bed time. Relaxed her when over tired to calm her down." Face massage to decongest her stuffy nose."
- ⊙ "I used to do it a lot after X's bath. It was our time together and was relaxing for both of us. X slept well after."
- ⊙ "My baby suffered from colic, whenever I could I would massage baby. As baby grew out of it I found that massaging baby relaxed him too."
- ⊙ "X used to suffer with colic and I found that when she would have an attack, I massaged her and the attack didn't last long."
- ⊙ "Knowing that I will be returning to work full time I have truly benefited from massage time as it has given me beautiful memories."
- ⊙ "Used it for relieving colic."
- ⊙ "Helped X be calmer at night until his teeth came!. "Helped me find new friends and get out of the house."
- ⊙ "It relaxed him and seemed to help with colic and eczema."
- ⊙ "X was very colicky and massage helped him relax. Also helped when constipated."
- ⊙ "Helped me to bond further with my baby. We both enjoyed as we found it very relaxing and soothing. It was nice to mix with new mums and watch all babies progress together."

- ⊙ "It made him relax and go to bed on time."
- ⊙ "X suffered from colic and later constipation. Massage helped relief a lot of symptoms of both. Very useful at bed time too after his bath."
- ⊙ "I met other mums and X improved his sleep and colic."
- ⊙ "I feel it helped having quality bonding me and baby time where I could focus on just that without worrying what else I had got to do. It also made me get out of the house and meet other mums and babies."

Analysis of the comments above, about how it helped you and your child, indicate a number of themes. These themes include:-

- a. Helped with **bonding** between mother and baby.
- b. Helped the baby **Relax**.
- c. Helped with **sleep** or a sleep routine.
- d. Helped in relieving **colic**.
- e. Helped in relieving **constipation**.
- f. Helped the mums to make **friends**

The next section of the questionnaire asked about the information sheet / folder they received following their baby massage session. Twenty (20) or one hundred percent (100%) of respondents answered yes to this question. This suggests that they all found the information sheet useful.

The last section of the questionnaire was a space for the respondent to make any other comments they wished about the Infant Massage Service. Twelve (12) or sixty percent (60%) of the respondents made a comment. These included:-

- * "Found it very useful and helpful. All staff involved with it were kind, considerate and very supportive. Should be offered to every new parent and baby."
- * "It was a very good class. I would recommend it to any mother."
- * Would recommend it to new mums. Helps you to relax and enjoy your new baby."
- * "Would recommend it simply because it made me make special effort to get closer to my baby in a quiet environment. It also exposed X to other babies."
- * "Baby massage is a great idea and the staff are helpful, happy and good to talk to."
- * "Very friendly environment."
- * "The sessions time was a bit early at 10am."
- * "We both really enjoyed it. It was a good way of bonding. Keep up the excellent work."
- * "My baby was premature when we first went to massage. Baby wouldn't settle so did not get much massage done. However the experience was definitely worthwhile and I still massage whenever I can."
- * Keep up the good work.

- * "I'll bring my new baby to the group as soon as I can!"
- * The instructors were very patient and encouraging to continue with the massage. Sometimes I wished it could last longer once my bay was old enough to enjoy it.
- * I found it useful and relaxed. I could also have my baby weighed without going to clinic. Very good ten out of ten. Thank you for the service.

4.2 Results from individual evaluation diaries written after each session of Infant massage.

Sixty six (66) individual Infant Massage Evaluation diaries were included in the evaluation. The evaluation sheets were chosen if the parent had made at least one entry into them following the session(s). The evaluation diaries were analysed and themes derived from them. The main themes obtained from the analysis about the Infant massage session(s) in order or popularity were:-

1. Enjoyed / Loved/ Good / Fun.
2. Relaxing.
3. Informative / Interesting / Learnt a lot.
4. Pleasant / Welcoming.
5. Helps with colic and sleep.
6. Meet new people.

4.3 Results for Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start Baseline Health Survey 2004.

The health baseline survey (8) asked if the person had used the baby massage service offered by Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start. Twenty six percent (26%) of the respondents said that they had used the service. The respondents were then asked if they were, very satisfied, satisfied, very unsatisfied or never used the service. Fifty percent (50%) of those who had accessed the service stated that they were very satisfied and fifty (50%) said that they were satisfied with the service. No one said that they were unsatisfied with the service.

5.0 Discussion of results

Considering the results from the three different evaluation strategies used it would appear that the Infant Massage service has been a great success within Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start. The results indicate a considerable positive response from users and it is obvious that parents and babies benefit from the service.

A total of sixty six (66) adults and their child attended at least one infant massage session during the first eight months of the service. Within the Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start Local Programme there are approximately two hundred (200) new babies born each year. If this is the case then it can be estimated that approximately 49.5 percent (49.5%) of parents of new born babies accessed the infant massage service in a full calendar year.

The fact that three different strategies have been used for the evaluation is positive as the results indicate the same responses from the service users. This makes the results more reliable as the process of triangulation applies in this case. Triangulation is simply a process of cross checking for the existence of certain phenomena by gathering data from a number of different sources.(9) The literature quoted in the introduction of the report quoting other studies etc. also match up with the findings of this evaluation, again adding evidence to the reliability of the evaluation.

Considering all the results it would appear that:-

- 1. Parents are satisfied with the baby massage service offered.**
- 2. Parents enjoyed the Infant Massage sessions.**
- 3. Parents used the sessions to socialise and make new friends.**
- 4. The Infant Massage was a relaxing experience for the parents and also for the babies.**
- 5. The Infant Massage helped with bonding between mother and baby.**

6. **Parents continued to massage their baby after they had stopped coming to sessions.**
7. **The environment was pleasant and the staff welcoming,**
8. **Parents learnt something and found it informative.**
9. **The massage helped with a variety of "problems," such as colic, constipation and sleep patterns.**

5.1 Limitations of the evaluation

A number of limitations are evident within the evaluation methods, however the triangulation process as mentioned above outweighs a lot of the limitations. However it is useful to be aware of possible limitations for the methods used and consider these carefully when analysing the results.

Questionnaire - The sample size was small and the people chosen to be sent a questionnaire were people who have attended more than once. However the sample size of forty (40) was sixty percent (60%) of the total people who had attended in the sample period. Only fifty percent (50%) of the questionnaire were returned and all gave positive responses. A point to consider is why the other fifty percent (50%) didn't return their questionnaires and what would their views be of the service?

Diary analysis - All diaries were included in the analysis. However possible bias could be that the users of the Infant massage service felt they had to write positive things about the service as the person leading the sessions would see them. Other possible sources of bias could be in the analysis in that the analysers wanted to see positive results as they are part of the service offered.

Health Baseline survey - The sample size was one hundred families, with a response rate of fifty seven percent (57%) this could be considered a small sample size if the Aspley Bells Lane Sure Start population as a whole is considered. Possible bias could have been in the collection process where the

questionnaires were collected by parent volunteers in that the person they collected from may have felt they had to put something positive about the service. Another source of potential bias is that forty three percent of people didn't return their questionnaire and the question to consider is why?

The above gives some possible limitations and sources of bias within the evaluation. However these are not mentioned to de-value the positive nature of the results but to add more value to it.

6.0 Recommendations for the future

It is difficult to make any recommendations based on the positive results of the study but a number of issues need to be considered for the future.

A. Time and venue

The only response which could be seen as negative was a comment from a parent saying that, "10 am was too early." This may be an issue with the reach of the Infant Massage Service. It may be beneficial to look at the times and days of the sessions as both are offered in the morning and from the same venue. It may also be beneficial to map the postcodes of the people attending and map the area they come from.

B. Sustainability of the Infant Massage Service

The Infant Massage service provided relies upon qualified instructors and teachers to be available to carry out the sessions. The sustainability of the Infant Massage Service needs to be looked at to ensure such a valuable service can continue if an instructor is not available.

The sustainability of Infant Massage services also needs to be considered in the light of the Sure Start National Agenda and the development of Children's Centres. If the results of this evaluation are meaningful then infant massage should be part of the "core offer," for every Children's Centre within the City of Nottingham.

C. Questions not answered in the evaluation

The evaluation has answered a lot of questions regarding the Infant Massage Service and the objectives for the evaluation stated at the start have been met. However it is apparent that it may be interesting to look at other aspects of the Infant Massage Service and technique in more detail in the future. Possible suggestions could include:-

- ▶ Cost benefit analysis of Infant Massage Programme.
- ▶ Look into how people heard about the sessions - look at best way to advertise or recruit.
- ▶ More in-depth research about the value of Infant massage and the effect on mums with post-natal depression.
- ▶ Look into the benefits of taking the Infant massage service on a one to one basis in the home and its potential effects. Case studies could be a possible method to achieve this.

The above are only suggestions of possible actions. The over whelming evidence for the success of the current Infant massage programme should be embraced and used as a foundation for future success. Credit should be given to all the parents & their babies and the staff and volunteers who have worked hard to make the Infant Massage Programme a resounding success within Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start.

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Further copies of this report can be obtained from :

Mark Hoyland
Health Services Coordinator
Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start
NCH
Garden Street Family Centre
Garden Street
Radford

Aspley and Bells Lane Sure Start

Infant Massage Evaluation

Nottingham
NG7 3HD

Telephone : 0115 9706811

Email : Surestart.aspley@nch.org.uk