BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
UNIT 16
ATTACHMENT/ ATTACHMENT DISORDERS/ NURTURE

Learning Objectives

When you have completed this module you will be able to:

- Consider the usefulness of attachment theory as a framework for understanding and responding to pupils with behavioural, emotional and social development difficulties (BESD)
- Understand how experience in early infancy and childhood can shape long-term development, and
- Know ways in which schools can work to minimise the effect of negative early experiences on emotional development.

ONLINE RESOURCES
The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.

Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:

- Highlight salient points
- Provide at-a-glance content summaries
- Introduce further points of interest
- Offer visual context
- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.

Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.

You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb

The first resource for this unit can be found here:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/intro

<u>Attachment Theory</u>

Attachment theory focuses on the processes that lead to bonding between infant and parent and the impact of this relationship on psychological development. Psychologist John Bowlby initiated attachment theory, describing attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous emotional impact that continues throughout life. The central theme of attachment theory is that caregivers who are available and responsive to the infant's needs establish a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world.

Drawing on ethological theory (the scientific study of animal behaviour), Bowlby proposed that human babies have a biological need to have a close loving bond with their mothers, or caregivers, and that parents are also biologically predisposed to bond with their infants – a two-way bond.

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/overview

He observed that babies appear to use genetically inherited skills to keep their mothers close. Small babies seek attachment by gazing, grasping, clinging and signal their need for proximity by crying if separated.

Bowlby suggested that these attachment behaviours are adaptive responses to separation from a primary attachment figure--someone who provides support, protection, and care.

However Bowlby moved on from a purely ethological perspective to suggest that this early bonding with a loving and responsive carer forms a template for future social relationships. He coined the term ' *internal working model'* for the mental representation of the infant's experiences with the primary attachment figure which becomes an organiser of emotional and social behaviour throughout the life cycle.

"Each individual builds working models of the world and of himself in it, with the aid of which he perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans. In the working models of the world that anyone builds, a key feature is his notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond. Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of how acceptable or unacceptable he himself is in the eyes of his attachment figures." Bowlby (1973)

Each individual's internal working model includes concepts of him/herself as well as expectations of later relationships with peers, partners and their own children. The theory predicts that children who develop a positive internal working model of social relationships through a loving and supportive relationship in infancy are more likely to be able develop secure attachments to others in later life.

Infants use caring adults as a refuge and source of comfort – a safe vantage point from which to explore their environment. Bowlby labelled this important factor having *"a secure base."* A secure base can enable a child to become self-reliant and develop autonomy with the confidence of trust in a supporting adult.

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/theory

Mary Ainsworth who worked closely with John Bowlby joined the research team at Tavistock Clinic investigating the effects of maternal separation on child development. Ainsworth had pioneered the concept of longitudinal, systematic, and naturalistic observation in her field studies of mother-infant behaviour, first in Uganda and later in Baltimore. Her research design "Strange Situation" enabled a classification of attachment behaviours which has been used in many later studies. In the Strange Situation researchers observe children between the ages of 12 and 18 months as they respond to a situation in which they are briefly left alone and then reunited with their mothers (Ainsworth, 1978). Based upon the responses the researchers observed, Ainsworth described three major styles of attachment: secure attachment, ambivalent-insecure attachment, and avoidant-insecure attachment. Later, researchers (Green and Goldwyn 2002) added a fourth attachment style called disorganized-insecure attachment based upon their own research.

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/types

This classification of children's behaviour has enabled many longitudinal studies to follow the development of toddlers, who have been identified as showing either secure or insecure attachment, through school and into adulthood and also to hypothesise about the causal relationship between the initial classification and later social and emotional development.

These include two longitudinal studies by Klaus and Karin Grossman, which were started in the late 1970s with newborn children. The children's experiences in the domains of attachment and exploration were assessed in infancy, childhood and adolescence and into adulthood.

In 1988 the Grossmans published a study showing that classification of attachment of infants under two years old is 87% successful in predicting certain behaviours at 6 yrs old. Secure attachment children demonstrated greater concentration, more independence, greater ego-control, and resiliency. Children who were identified as securely attached at one and half years old were later rated by pre-school teachers as being less aggressive towards peers and less dependent on teachers than insecurely attached children. Later assessments of this birth cohort found that security in attachment and partnership representation at the age of 22 was significantly predicted from security of attachment in childhood and adolescence (Grossman & Grossman 2005). A study by Green and Goldwyn (2002) suggests that disorganised attachment identified in infancy is associated with later withdrawn behaviour and peer rejection.

See online resource:

However there are of course many methodological problems with this type of longitudinal research. How to separate the many other life factors that impinge on these children as they grow older? Some of these children have very disturbed lives and poor attachment bonding may be only one of many factors contributing to later social and emotional problems.

There is also criticism of the methods used, particularly the Strange Situation (e.g. Lamb et al 1984) who believes that the strange situation reflects temperamental differences rather than functioning as an indicator of infant-caregiver relationships. Nevertheless there remains considerable support for the idea that early nurturing experiences and relationships with carers have severe and long-term influence on later emotional and social development.

 In his early work Bowlby (1958) proposed that, although children may form multiple attachments to special people in their lives with whom they have developed a close subsidiary attachment bond (siblings, grandparents, carers etc.) in infancy, there is a qualitatively different response to one primary attachment figure, which is preferential. Bowlby's term for this is monotropy (Bowlby,1958).

Bowlby's early emphasis on the mother as the primary carer led to criticism and some rejection of his theories. Michael Rutter (1981) strongly criticised Bowlby's concept of 'monotropy', claiming that infants show multiple attachments and often the primary attachment is to someone other than the mother. Researchers and theorists have since largely abandoned the concept of monotropy, accepting that the term 'primary carer' can apply to the father or other special adult. Since Bowlby's publications there have been major changes in the timing of mothers' return to employment following the birth of a child.

Figures from the Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues (2006) show that in UK in 1973, only 27% of women of working age with children under the age of five were economically active. By 1996-97 this proportion had almost doubled to 53%.

Moreover, in the early 1990s, around 10% of English mothers with children less than one year of age were employed; that figure has risen to around 50% by 2006. Very young children are therefore spending longer times with carers other than their parents.

What are the implications of this separation for attachment bonding?
An Influential multi-site study followed up over 1300 children from 10 different locations in US. (Early Childcare and Children's development prior to school entry NICHD National Institute of Child health and Human Development (1998-2003))
One of the main conclusions was that insensitive or inadequate parental care in the first year predicted later problems better than the type of care (parental versus nursery care).
Another study by Love (2003) examining associations between early childcare and child outcomes describes three studies in different national contexts, with a range of

childcare quality and a diversity of family characteristics. The conclusion from this study is that it is the quality of care rather than the amount of time spent in care, which is the most important factor influencing children's later development. Both of these studies suggest that separation from the primary carer does not in itself predict poor outcomes; rather it is the quality of the care (either in the home or in the nursery), which is the most influential predictor.

See online resource:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/separation-care-quality

More recently indirect support for Bowlby's theory and the influence of early emotional care on later development has come from a number of studies showing the long-term physiological effects of early emotional neglect. Fries and Pollak (2005) compared a group of children from orphanages in Romania and Russia who had been adopted by American parents, with a group of children raised by their biological parents in America. This study took place three years after the adoption process and all the children were around four years of age. Urine samples were taken from the children to measure base levels of vasopressin and oxytocin. (These two neuropeptides systems are recognised as being involved in establishment of social bonds and the regulation of emotional behaviours.) During the study the children and adults joined in a game with the children sitting on their parents' laps, which included some playful cuddling. The study found that after three years of adoption, base levels of vasopressin were lower in the children from orphanages and that, unlike children raised by biological parents, the levels of oxytocin in the adopted children did not rise after cuddling. If availability of either oxytocin or vasopressin is abnormally low, this might plausibly be associated with a reduced capacity to form social bonds and to manage stressful experiences (Carter, 1998). Therefore this study suggests that the differences in early experience between these two groups are in fact reflected in later physiological differences which may be related to their emotional responses.

Cortisol is the most typical of the stress hormones released by the hypothalamic-pituatary-adrenocortical axis (HPA). Megan Gunnar's infant studies focus on the emotional and social processes that regulate physiological responses to stressful events. Her research (Gunnar 1996) shows that usually over the first year of life behavioural expressions of distress become less closely linked to increases in Cortisol. At the same time, the responsiveness of caregivers to the baby's distress plays an increasingly important role. However she found that children of 18 months, who were classified as insecurely attached and who had received lower levels of consistent responsive care, revealed elevated levels of Cortisol. These same children at age 2 yrs continued to show elevated levels of Cortisol and appeared to be more fearful and inhibited than their peers. Based on these studies Gunnar (2009) suggests that the levels of stress experienced in infancy may permanently shape the stress responses in the brain, which may in turn affect the child's memory, attention and emotion.

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/infancy-stress

Although there is still much to be learnt about the function and interaction of neuropeptides, these studies do provide a link between Bowlby, and Ainsworth's original theory of attachment and our current understanding of infant responses to emotional bonding.

Since the 1950s attachment theory has remained a major developmental paradigm for understanding human social and emotional development. It provides a basis for greater insight into the meaning and implications of pupils' emotional and social difficulties and is also a basis for proposing a teacher support framework, which is aimed at a more empathetic response to children's challenging behaviour.

Nurture groups

Educational psychologist, Marjorie Boxall, was very much influenced by the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth on attachment. Working in inner London in the 1960s, Boxall was aware that a large number of children entering school were presenting severe social, emotional and behavioural needs. They seemed unable to form trusting relationships with adults or to respond appropriately to other children. In effect they were simply not ready to meet the social and intellectual demands of school life. Boxall believed that these problems were directly related to impoverished early nurturing. She found that children who had not had the opportunity to form secure attachments in infancy, perhaps due to neglect or bereavement or trauma, appeared to have difficulty connecting to others and managing their own emotions. This was sometimes reflected in a lack of trust and self-worth, a fear of getting close to anyone and often displays of anger.

Nurture Groups were designed as specific intervention for particular children where their difficulties could be assessed as being linked to the nature and quality of their experiences with primary caregivers. The main aim of the nurture group intervention was therefore to:

"create the world of earliest childhood; building the basic and essential learning experiences normally gained in the first three years of life and enable children to fully meet their potential in mainstream schools.
The emphasis within a nurture group is on emotional growth, focusing on offering broad-based experiences in an environment that promotes security, routines, clear boundaries and carefully planned, repetitive learning opportunities" (Boxall, 2002).

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/nurture-groups

Nurture groups are an in-school resource of small structured teaching groups for children whose emotional, social, behavioural and formal learning needs cannot be met in the mainstream class. Typically, such children have grown up in circumstances of stress and adversity sufficiently severe to limit or disturb the nurturing process of the earliest years.

Although there is some variation in the way these groups are set up and operate, the basic principles remain the same. The set-up is designed to replicate some of the early experiences which these children have missed. The room is arranged with a

number of different areas, some of which are designed to have a 'home' atmosphere Snack time is seen as an important part of this experience. Sharing round the table builds social skills and competencies. Staff work as a close team.

Children remain part of their own class and school and spend time in the nurture group on a daily basis. It is usual for children to spend two to three terms as part of the nurture group before returning full time to their own class.

The thrust of the work of the teacher and assistant is on the process and content of normal early emotional, social and cognitive development. This process is based in and through the theory of attachment. The children learn that they have in the nurture group staff a reliable attachment figure who is available for them .The children are able to build a picture of meaningful behaviour with the adults and this secure attachment provides the children with a *'secure base'.* Within a secure, predictable and responsive social environment the children have the opportunity to develop an *'internal working model'* which enables them to build a picture of themselves as worthwhile individuals.

For an up-to date assessment of the elements of successful nurture group provision and the difference that nurture groups make to the outcomes for pupils read the Ofsted report " Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach " (July 2011), www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100230

This report examines important issues including:

- Evidence of the progress made by the children both in behaviour and social skills and academic skills while in the nurture group
- The level of practical support for parents, which is provided by the group.
- Curriculum planning for individual children.
- Contact with mainstream class while attending the nurture group and the process of transition back to class.

In conclusion, this report commented that:

> *"When the nurture groups were working well they made a considerable difference to the behaviour and the social skills of the pupils who attended them. Through intensive, well-structured teaching and support, pupils learnt to manage their own behaviour, to build positive relationships with adults and with other pupils and to develop strategies to help them cope with their emotions".*

Although the concept of Nurture Groups is generally associated with primary schools, some secondary schools have introduced this approach in Key Stage 3 to good effect - see the video clip, *A Nurture Group in a Secondary Setting.*

See this clip: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/nurture-groups-video

TASKS

Consider the aims of a Nurture group as described by Marjorie Boxall in *Nurture Groups in schools (2002)*

1. If your school has a nurture group:
   a. Arrange a visit and talk with the staff. Identify specific ways in which the aims described by Boxall are being pursued.
   b. Discuss with the staff the list of key findings from the Ofsted report "Supporting children with challenging behaviours through a nurture group approach" (2011) and the extent to which these findings might also apply to their nurture group.

2. If your school does not have a nurture group either:
   a. Carry out further research into Nurture Groups and develop a proposal for establishing a nurture group (primary) or a nurture room (secondary) to be presented to the SENCo and SLT: this should also consider the range of needs and potential pupils, who you feel would benefit from this approach; or
   b. Discuss with colleagues ways in which it might be possible to achieve some of the aims of a nurture group within a mainstream classroom, with children who appear to have attachment related difficulties.

3. Watch the video clip "A nurture Group in a secondary setting"

   See this clip:
   www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/nurture-groups-video

   Note down in your learning log the rationale for the group and the different techniques mentioned in this unit which are employed by the nurture group staff in engaging with the students. How have these techniques been adapted to suit a secondary setting?

   Having read the unit, watch the clip again with a colleague/colleagues and using your earlier notes work out together a case both for and against having a dedicated nurture group in your school.

   Listen to the audio clip of the school managers talking about the importance of the nurture group entitled "Wider school policies and SEBD" and note how they assess the effectiveness of policy. Now listen to the audio clip "Otis's story".

   Listen to these clips:
   www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/school-policies-audio
   www.education.gov.uk/lamb/besd/attachment/otis-audio

   To what extent can any school attempt to attribute cause and effect to any one intervention in the area of behaviour and social and emotional

development? How would you assess the effectiveness of such a unit in your school? How reliable would this assessment be? (You might like to read the unit on assessment for exemplification of reliability and validity) Make a note of your deliberations as bullets in your learning log.

References

Ainsworth, M. et al (1978) *Patterns of Attachment: A psychological study of the Strange Situation. Hillsdale, N.J. Erbaum.*

Bowlby, J. (1958). The Nature of the child's tie to his mother. *International Journal of Psycho-analysis, 39, 350-373*

Bowlby, J. (1969) *Attachment and loss: Volume 1. Attachment*, New York: Basic Books

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger.* New York: Basic

Bowlby, J (1988). *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development.* London: Routledge

Boxall, M. (2002) *Nurture groups in school: principles and practice .* London Paul Chapman

Carter, S (1998) Neuroendocrine perspectives on social attachment and love. Psychoneuroendocrinology Volume 23, Issue 8 Pages 779-818
Fries, Pollak et al (2005) Early experience in humans is associated with changes in neuropeptides critical for regulating behaviour *Journal proceedings of National Academy* of Sciences Vol102, 47

Geddes, H. (2006) *Attachment in the Classroom. The links between children's early emotional well-being and performance in school.* London: Worth Publishing

Goldberg, S. (2000) *Attachment and Development.* London: Arnold

Green, J. & Goldwyn, R. (2002) Annotation: attachment disorganisation and psychopathology *Journal of Child psychology& Psychiatry 43, 835-846*

Grossman, K.E., (1988) *Longitudinal and systematic approaches to the study of high and low risk groups*, in Rutter, M. (ed) *Studies of psychosocial risk.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Grossman, K. E. & Grossman, K. W. E (eds) (2005) *Attachment.* From infancy to adulthood: The major longitudinal studies. N.Y. Guildford Press

Gunnar et al (1996*)* Stress reactivity and attachment security. *Developmental Biology 29/3, 191-204*

Gunnar et al. (2009) Effects of stress throughout the lifespan on brain, behaviour and cognition. _Nature Neuroscience,_ 10, 434-45.

Lamb, M. E., Thompson, R. A., Gardner, W. P., Charnov, E. L, & Estes, D. (1984). Security of infantile attachment as assessed in the "strange situation": Its study and biological interpretation. _The Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 7,_ 127-171.

Love et al (2003) Child care quality matters: How conclusions may vary with context. _Child Development 74/4, 1021-1033_

Ofsted (2011). _Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach._ HMSO

Rutter, M (1981) _Maternal Deprivation Reassessed,_ Second edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Taylor, C (2010) _A practical guide to caring for children and teenagers with attachment difficulties._ London: Jessica Kingsley