



The perinatal period – “a magic moment” for intervention? Working with registrars and midwives

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The **Parent Connection** has substantial effects on:

- The quality of relationships within the family
- The effectiveness of parenting
- Family stability
- Father's involvement with children and father-child relationships
- Children's' outcomes
 - physical and mental health
 - academic achievements
 - social and economic well being

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The **Parent Connection** is increasingly fragile in 21st Century

- Relationship satisfaction decreases once couples become parents
- The frequency of conflict rises
- Post-natal depression exacerbates or is exacerbated by relationship difficulties
- Increasingly parents break up while their children are dependent
- Modern parenthood is becoming less connected to partnership.
- A child may experience a range of family structures during childhood
- Economically disadvantaged couples – as many young parents are – at greater risk of relationship breakdown

A “magic moment” for intervention?

“The magic moment of birth is a good time to offer services to unmarried parents”

“..rather than see marriage as a starting point after which a couple work towards common goals, these couples see marriage as the crowning achievement”.

Professor Sara McLanahan and Professor Irwin Garfinkel
Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study
University of Princeton

Services that:

- attempt to strengthen their relationship
- treat mothers and fathers as a couple
- begin at birth in the hospital

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Durability of Parents' Relationships

Table 1

12 – 18Months after Birth (% in each category)				
At Birth	Married	Cohabiting	Romantic	Not Romantic
Married	94	1	0	4
Cohabiting	15	60	5	21
Romantic	5	32	14	48
Non Romantic	1	8	4	87

Table does not include respondents who indicated the father was deceased. Row percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Registrars and midwives are key frontline staff in the perinatal period

- See all new parents
- Are trusted
- Have opportunities as part of their routine contact with parents to:
 - Notice problems
 - Respond when 'turned to' for information and advice
 - Normalise and reassure
 - Make relevant referrals

The One Plus One Approach

Responding to the “magic moment” for intervention

Primary prevention – promoting healthy relationships

Secondary prevention – early intervention to limit the intensity and duration of problems

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What parents say they want

- Reliable information about relationships
- Targeted to their specific needs
- From people they see routinely and trust
- To be listened to in a supportive way
- Help to unravel an issue
- To feel in control and experts in their own families' needs

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So – how can we help?

- By listening to whatever is being disclosed
- Pick up and respond to signals
- Offer support without fear of being overwhelmed
- Work with clients in partnership and alongside
- Manage personal and professional boundaries
- Relevant referrals where necessary

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Outcomes for those receiving support

- Cope with change and transitions
- Improves relationship quality and therefore stability
- Better management of parental conflict – together or not
- Better parenting
- Better physical and mental health for adults and children
- Better use of services – informal, semiformal and formal

Resilient families → Resilient Communities

