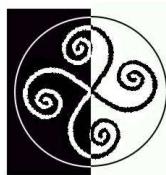


## West Midlands Institute of Psychotherapy

# The Analytical Psychotherapy Training: Birmingham



# Infant Observation Prospectus

**FEBRUARY 2026**

West Midlands Institute of Psychotherapy is a Company Limited by Guarantee  
Company Registration No. 2883306  
Registered Charity No. 1031011  
Member U.K. Council for Psychotherapy  
Registered with the British Psychoanalytic Council

## **MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING OF THE COURSE**

## **Infant Observation Leaders:**

Catherine McFarlane      Senior Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist  
                                    Member A.C.P. (Association of Child Psychotherapists)

## **Consultant to the Infant Observation Training:**

Lisa Miller, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Tavistock Clinic. Editor, International Journal of Infant Observation. Former organiser of the Under 5s Service and Workshop, Tavistock Clinic.

## External Essay Reader:

Marguerite Reid, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Perinatal Service, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London.

## **Administrator:**

Sue Harford

## **CONTENTS**

ETHOS	Page 3
THE CONTENTS OF THE COURSE	Page 5
PRE-REQUISITES	Page 7
METHOD OF APPLICATION	Page 7
FEES	Page 7
QUALIFICATION	Page 8
CODES OF ETHICS AND PRACTICE	Page 8

## ETHOS

Infant observation has been part of the Analytical Psychotherapy Training: Birmingham (previously referred to as the West Midlands Jungian Training in Analytical Psychotherapy) since its beginning in 1990.

The infant observation course is suitable both for psychotherapists who wish to enhance their professional work by a greater understanding of the baby's early life and relationships, and for those who are considering the possibility of training in psychotherapy.

### **Origins of Infant Observation**

As a discipline, infant observation has a long tradition. It began more than 76 years ago at the Tavistock Clinic as part of the first child psychotherapy training. Its inception and development is primarily associated with Esther Bick. Although Bick wrote rather little - only four published papers in all - her pioneering ideas, grounded in her observational experiences, have had a profound and enduring influence on psychoanalytic thinking about primitive emotional states in the baby. As a skilled observer of babies and as an inspiring teacher, she laid the foundations of an approach which has provided a new and powerful way into the baby's world.

### **The Nature of Infant Observation**

The term 'infant observation' is not strikingly informative and, as a field of study, it may even be confused with 'infant research'. However, infant research is a different approach where experiments are set up to observe the development and behaviour of babies under controlled conditions. Such research has, in recent years, produced a wealth of information about the competence and social relatedness of even tiny babies, and about the development of the self. These differing approaches may be seen as complementary: the one within the accepted paradigm of 'objective' research; the other, which is offered here, exemplifying a radically different model.

Infant observation is a 'naturalistic' experience and takes place within the family. The emphasis is on depth and particularity, and unconscious communications are of fundamental importance. The observer's task is to seek to enter the baby's world and to observe minutely what is going on for the child within in the family and particularly in relation to the mother. It requires the observer, as far as possible, to leave behind existing theories and presuppositions, and to open themselves to the immediate experience. The observer is required not merely to register what is 'out there' but seeks also to be aware of, and make use of, their own emotional responses. Counter-transference responses are central to the observational process.

This exploration of the baby's world engenders a vivid sense of the close links between psyche and soma and it affords the opportunity for the observer to witness, at first hand, the crucial power of relationship.

### **The Place of Seminars**

The spirit of openness and enquiry that characterizes infant observation is encouraged and developed in the seminars, and the collective explorations in seminar meetings are an essential part of the infant observation process. It is where uncertainties are shared and where emotional states, not least in the observer, can emerge and be reflected upon. Anxieties are thought about and, in time, the observer's capacity to bear anxiety, and seek to understand it rather than relieve it, can grow.

The seminar is not only a secure place of containment at difficult times but it is also where individual observations can be enriched by the thoughts and contributions of other group-members, and where all gain from the diversity of experiences. The seminar is a matrix in which imaginative insights and creative new thinking can be constellated. Observers often describe a sense of 'privilege' and wonder and even numinosity at what they experience.

While infant observation is not theory-driven, it is in the seminar that connections with theory can arise and be shared, leading to exciting examples of the reciprocal nature of theory and practice: sometimes what is found in an observation can be a powerful, lively representation of a familiar theory; sometimes a particularly knotty bit of theory is suddenly, through the observation, grasped; sometimes what is experienced in an observation raises questions about an aspect of psychoanalytic thinking that had previously been accepted, affording a salutary reminder of the provisional nature of theory.

### **Infant Observation and Clinical practice.**

First and foremost, infant observation enriches one's knowledge of the process of child development. But, because the process is grounded in empathic understanding, it is also a special and valuable form of learning for the observers themselves. The observation can evoke their own early experiences and contribute to a growing self-awareness.

Simply being with the patient is at the heart of psychotherapeutic work, and infant observation has relevance here. The role of the observer is to seek be present, to be in a kind of reverie, precluded from activity, bearing anxiety, and waiting for what will emerge. This is strikingly like what is needed in clinical work. It brings to mind the way that Bion abjures the therapist to leave behind memory and desire in entering the consulting room, and Freud's stress on the importance of observation over the need for quick meaning.

To undertake an infant observation is to make a big commitment and to open oneself to change. It is not to be undertaken lightly. However, almost invariably, observers find it to be a singularly important experience in their lives and for their clinical practice.

### **Relation to the Analytical Psychotherapy Training Committee**

This Infant Observation course is offered under the auspices of the West Midlands Institute of Psychotherapy's Analytical Psychotherapy Training Committee, who hold overall responsibility for its delivery. Whilst it is a stand-alone CPD course, it is consonant with the nature of the adult analytical training where richness, diversity and authenticity are valued in a way that leads to an experience of education that is open, questioning, lively, and evolving.

## **THE CONTENTS OF THE COURSE**

The infant observation training has several components:

- 1. Preparation seminar for the observation**
- 2. The observations themselves**
- 3. The seminar group in which observations are discussed**
- 4. Individual tutorials for infant observation group members**
- 5. Annual reports from the observation group leader**
- 6. A final essay based on the participant's infant observation (optional)**

## **I. Preparation Seminars**

Preparation seminars are led by one of the infant observation group leaders when there are spaces coming up in observation groups. The preparation seminar is an introduction to infant observation and is usually 1.5 hours in length and usually takes place in Central Birmingham\*. Issues discussed include: being an observer; setting up the observation and finding a baby to observe; the first observational visit; and recording of observations.

## **2. The Infant Observation**

The infant observation involves observing a baby from birth (or as close to birth as possible) for one hour a week up to the age of two, at a pre-arranged time, usually within the baby's home. It may be possible to move to fortnightly observations in the second year after discussion with the Seminar Leader.

## **3. Seminar Groups**

The seminar groups meet usually four times a term for, two and a half hours in Central Birmingham\*. The maximum number of participants in each seminar group is five. Each student will usually present a recent detailed observation to the seminar group twice a term, and will provide copies of the written recording of those observations for all other seminar members.

\* Location of seminars may be subject to change and participants will be notified in advance if a change is necessary.

## **4. Individual Tutorials**

Individual tutorials with the infant observation leader are scheduled to take place, usually, once a term. This time can be used, for example, to think about how the individual participant is finding the process of observing a baby, any problems which might have arisen, or for thinking about the content of the forthcoming final essay on the observation.

## **5. Annual Report**

A brief annual report will be written by the seminar leader for all participants. An opportunity will be made for these to be discussed with each participant individually by March 31 before copies are sent to the Administrator of the Training Committee. If there is a boundary issue between an infant observation participant and a member of the Training Committee, the report is kept confidential.

## **6. Final Essay**

An essay at the end of the observation will be optional for those not undertaking the full Training (between 4,000 – 6,000 words). It is however encouraged as a meaningful and integral part of the whole observation experience and is essential if the course is being taken as part of a psychotherapy training which requires an Infant Observation, in order that the individual gains the appropriate level of qualification. This paper should be submitted within one year. It will reflect the learned experience of the observation and can demonstrate links between the observed baby within the family, an understanding of attachment formation, psychoanalytic child development theory, and the significance of the seminar member as participant observer. Participants can discuss this essay with their infant observation seminar leader as part of their preparation for their essay, in which the development of the baby within his or her family setting will be central. There is a separate fee payable for the submission of this essay, which includes one tutorial and two readers' responses (in 2025/2026 this is currently £265.00).

For those undertaking the full Training, the writing of an essay is required and will be marked accordingly. The submission of a satisfactory paper is one of the components for meeting all of the requirements of the Training.

## **PRE-REQUISITES**

This programme can be followed as a CPD programme.

Applicants are expected to have established themselves in a relevant profession.

Applicants will be expected to have had some experience of individual psychotherapy of an analytical / psychodynamic orientation and also will usually be in therapy for a period before commencing and during the period of the observation.

If you have a child under two years old, are expecting a baby or are considering starting a family in the next 2 years, our experience has shown us that doing so is generally not in the best interests of the student's learning or the wellbeing of the family being observed. The observer task is complex and demanding; being a parent of a child under two or expecting your own baby adds additional complexities that can make it more difficult for any student, regardless of gender, to fully manage the observer role.

## **METHOD OF APPLICATION**

Application forms may be obtained from Mrs Sue Harford, Administrator, Training Committee, Unit 1A, West Stockwith Park, Stockwith Road, Misterton, Nottinghamshire, DN10 4ES, via [aptc@wmip.org](mailto:aptc@wmip.org) or via [www.apt-birmingham.co.uk](http://www.apt-birmingham.co.uk). There is an application fee to cover the cost of interviews and administration.

Applicants are asked to provide details of their current work situation; the name and professional membership of their therapist, the frequency and duration of their personal psychotherapy; the names and addresses of two referees. They are also asked to write about why they wish to take part in an Infant Observation programme.

Applicants seen as meeting these requirements will have an assessment interview with the Infant Observation facilitators. The facilitators are responsible for the final decision after also considering the references received.

## **FEES**

Training is self-financed and non-profit making.

### **1. Application Fee**

The Application Fee of £175 should be enclosed with the application form. The fee covers the cost of the application and selection process including the Introductory Seminar if an application is successful. In the event of an applicant not being selected for interview, £60 of this fee is refunded.

Existing trainees of the Analytical Psychotherapy Training are exempt from this application fee.

### **2. Programme Fees**

The programme fee covers the cost of teaching seminars, group processing seminars, tutorials and annual reports. The fee is payable termly in advance and is applicable from when an applicant is offered a place and commences the seminars. The fee is payable until the conclusion of the observation.

The fee is reviewed annually and may be subject to change.

As a guideline the termly fee for 2025/2026 is £375.00.

All fees should be made via BACS payment.

## **QUALIFICATION**

All participants will be eligible for a Certificate of Completion:

- as a part of their training in the Analytical Psychotherapy programme.
- or as a record of their Continuing Professional Development work.

A Certificate of Completion will be issued appropriate to the duration of the observation and level undertaken by the student.

## **CODES OF ETHICS AND PRACTICE**

All participants are required to abide by a Code of Ethics and Practice of at least the equivalent of the WMIP Code of Ethics and Practice.

Any participant whose work is not covered by an equivalent code will be expected to apply for general membership of WMIP and to abide by the WMIP Code of Ethics and Practice.

All participants are required to obtain an enhanced DBS; at the point of commencing the Infant Observation seminars. If a trainee is-registered for the DBS Update Service through their employer this will be acceptable for the course providing that they can arrange for the Administrator to have access to the results on a 3-yearly basis until qualification.

If a trainee isn't registered for the DBS Update Service, an enhanced check will be arranged via the Administrator at the current cost of £69.50.



## **Analytical Psychotherapy Training Committee**

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