



Better
beginnings
brighter
futures



The Big *Sleep* Conference

Understanding Infant Sleep:

Bringing together evidence, expertise and responsive practice to better support babies and families

 **REGISTER NOW**

Conference Programme

Wednesday 18 November 2026

Online



Welcome to The Big Sleep Conference



We are delighted to welcome you to AiMH UK's National Conference 2026 as we celebrate 30 years of championing babies, families and the professionals who support them.

Bringing together leading researchers, practitioners and pioneers in infant mental health, The Big Sleep Conference explores infant sleep through biological, developmental and relational perspectives.

Moving beyond sleep as simply a problem to be fixed, we will consider what babies' sleep tells us about their needs and relationships, and how responsive, evidence-informed approaches can better support babies and their families.

Through expert presentations, an interactive workshop and clinical insights, we'll explore practical approaches to supporting infant sleep, alongside a special conversation with AiMH UK founder Dilys Daws, reflecting on 30 years of learning and practice.



Who should attend?

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Early years practitioners, nursery staff, childminders, health visitors, midwives, family support workers, therapists and anyone supporting babies and families.

*A full programme bringing together
evidence, practice and lived experience*



Programme at a Glance

Wednesday 18 November 2026 | Online

09:30



Welcome

Professor Jane Barlow, President of AiMH UK

09:35



Holding On and Letting Go: Sleep and Separation

Dr Alexandra de Rementeria

Exploring how separation and togetherness shape babies' sleep and emotional wellbeing.

10:00



Waking Up to Baby Sleep: Why Responsive Care Matters More than Sleep Training

Professor Helen Ball

The latest research on normal infant sleep and the importance of responsive care.

11:00



Coffee Break

Time to relax, connect and visit our virtual exhibition.

11:15



Baby Sleep, Reimagined: A Holistic Framework for Understanding Infant Sleep and Supporting Parents

Dr Lyndsey Hookway – Interactive workshop

An interactive session exploring a holistic, relationship-based approach to infant sleep.

12:45



Lunch Break

Time to recharge and network.

13:30



Through the Night: Thinking with Parents About Babies' Sleep

Dilys Daws in conversation with Professor Jane Barlow (Pre-recorded)

A reflecting on 30 years of listening to and learning alongside parents.



AiMH UK Lifetime Achievement Award

Celebrating an outstanding contribution to infant mental health.

13:45



Still Not Settling? Thinking about the Baby's Experiences Around Sleep

Associate Professor Björn Salomonsson

Considering what unsettled sleep can tell us about babies' needs and experiences.

14:45



30 Gems for Baby-Focussed Practice

Celebrating 30 Years of AiMH UK

Key messages, reflections and practical takeaways from three decades of learning.

15:00



Close

Thank you for joining us!



REGISTER NOW

Our Speakers

Dr Alexandra de Rementería

Principal Child and Adolescent
Psychotherapist,
South London and Maudsley
NHS Trust

Holding On and Letting Go: Sleep and Separation



Session synopsis

This presentation will explore how parental anxieties and strains within the parent–infant relationship can become expressed through sleep difficulties in babies.

From this perspective, approaching sleep primarily as a medical or behavioural problem can miss something important about what the baby may be communicating through their difficulties settling and sleeping.

The paper will argue that for a baby to feel able to let go of consciousness and ‘drop off’, they need to experience safety at a bodily level, and that this sense of safety is communicated through the way the parent holds, touches and responds to them, and through how the parent’s own body feels to the baby.

The session will explore ways of addressing infant sleep problems based on this model, including the important role of fathers as an alternative to the mother’s body, and the impact of wider cultural factors such as prohibitions against co-sleeping.

Biography

Dr Alexandra de Rementería is a Principal Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist working in the Child and Family Department at the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

She has many years of clinical experience supporting infants, children and families, with a particular interest in the parent–infant relationship, early emotional development and the ways in which relational experiences are expressed in everyday life, including sleep.

Alexandra draws on psychoanalytic and developmental perspectives in her work and is committed to helping practitioners develop a deeper understanding of infants’ emotional needs and the importance of attuned, sensitive caregiving.

Key takeaways

-  Understanding when sleep challenges can be relational.
-  The importance of feeling safe for letting go into sleep.
-  How wider cultural practices shape experiences of baby sleep.



 **REGISTER NOW**



Our Speakers

Professor Helen Ball

Professor of Anthropology
and Director of the Durham
Infancy & Sleep Centre,
Durham University



Waking Up to Baby Sleep: Why Responsive Care Matters More than Sleep Training

Session synopsis

Drawing on research over the last 30 years, this talk explores why infant sleep should be understood as a developmental process shaped by physiology, caregiving and context rather than a problem that parents have to manage.

Babies are not designed to sleep like adults, and frequent night waking, feeding and contact seeking are normal features of early life. When parents are encouraged to interpret these patterns as pathological, anxiety and conflict increase, undermining infant regulation and parental confidence.

This session will highlight how responsive care supports babies' sleep, helping parents develop realistic expectations and practical strategies that work for them.

Biography

Helen has spent over three decades studying infant sleep, night-time infant care and the parent-infant sleep relationship from a biosocial perspective. Her research bridges anthropology, biology and public health, and has informed UK and international guidance on safe sleep, breastfeeding and infant care.

She founded the Baby Sleep Information Source (BASIS) and has authored over 130 publications on infant sleep and parenting, including her recent book *How Babies Sleep* (2025: Penguin Random House).

Key takeaways

- ✓ Human babies are completely dependent on caregivers, and frequent waking and contact-seeking are normal.
- ✓ Responsive care is biologically aligned and helps babies feel safe and regulate.
- ✓ Supporting families as a whole helps build realistic expectations and practical strategies.





Our Speakers

Dr Lyndsey Hookway

Holistic Sleep Advocate,
Paediatric Nurse and
Specialist Health Visitor



Baby Sleep, Reimagined: A Holistic Framework for Understanding Infant Sleep and Supporting Parents

Session synopsis

This interactive workshop explores a holistic, relationship-based approach to infant sleep, considering biological, developmental, emotional and environmental factors.

Moving beyond a focus on sleep as a behavioural problem, we will examine what babies' sleep tells us about their needs and experiences, and how responsive, evidence-informed approaches can better support babies and their families.

Through a combination of presentation, practical activities and discussion, the session will offer a framework for thinking differently about infant sleep and provide tools and strategies that professionals can use in their practice.

Biography

Lyndsey has worked with infants, children and families for almost 20 years. With a background in paediatric nursing and public health nursing, as well as being internationally board certified as a lactation consultant, she serves both families and professionals with her wealth of knowledge in infant feeding and behaviour, sleep and parenting.

An international speaker, Lyndsey regularly shares her expertise at events around the world, bringing a unique mix of humour, current research and real-world experience.

She is the co-founder and clinical director of the Holistic Sleep Coaching Program, and the author of several books including *Holistic Sleep Coaching*, *Let's Talk About Your New Family's Sleep*, *Still Awake*, *Why Childhood Illness Matters* and *Breastfeeding the Brave*, and co-author of *The Writing Book* with Amy Brown.

Key takeaways

- ♥ A holistic, relationship-based understanding of infant sleep.
- ♥ Practical tools and strategies to support babies and their families.
- ♥ How to move beyond sleep training towards responsive, evidence-informed practice.



 REGISTER NOW



Our Speakers

Associate Professor Bjorn Salomonsson

Psychiatrist, Member of the
Swedish Psychoanalytical Association
and Associate Professor at the
Karolinska Institute



Still Not Settling? Thinking about the Baby's Experiences Around Sleep

Session synopsis

This session considers what unsettled infant sleep can tell us about babies' needs and experiences, drawing on psychoanalytic developmental perspectives.

Bjorn will explore how infants' sleep, waking and settling are shaped by early relational experiences, internal states and the developing capacity for regulation. Using clinical examples, he will reflect on how sensitive, attuned responses to babies' experiences can support their emotional and developmental wellbeing.

The session invites us to think about infant sleep beyond behavioural explanations, considering the deeper meanings that may lie beneath unsettled sleep and the importance of containment, attunement and relationship in supporting babies and their families.

Biography

Bjorn Salomonsson is a psychiatrist, a member of the Swedish Psychoanalytical Association working in private practice, and Associate Professor at the Karolinska Institute.

His studies focus on Parent-Infant Psychotherapies, child and adult analysis, and the weaving thoughts' presentation method. His articles on theoretical concepts with clinical vignettes have been published in many languages.

In 2024, he received the Sigourney award for his contributions to Parent-Infant Psychotherapy.

His fourth book in English, *Traces of the Infantile in Psychoanalytic Therapy with Adults*, was published recently by Routledge.

He is a member of the Layered Analysis Research Group, headed by Tessa Baradon and with Evrinomy Avdi as third member.

Key takeaways



Unsettled sleep can be understood in the context of early relational experiences.



Attunement and sensitive responses support infants' emotional regulation.



Thinking beyond behavioural explanations can deepen our understanding of babies' needs.



REGISTER NOW

Our Speakers

In conversation: AiMH UK Founder Dilys Daws and Professor Jane Barlow

A special short interview reflecting on the early days of AiMH UK, key developments in infant mental health over the past 30 years and hopes for the future.



Dilys Daws
Founder of AiMH UK



Professor Jane Barlow
President of AiMH UK

Through the Night: Thinking with Parents About Babies' Sleep



Session synopsis

We are delighted to present a pre-recorded interview with Dilys Daws, for AiMH's 30th Birthday.

In this conversation, Dilys talks about her founding of AiMH UK, her decades of work with parents and their babies and reflects on the importance of helping families find their own pathways towards more settled sleep.

Dilys will be in conversation with Professor Jane Barlow, President of AiMH UK.

Key themes



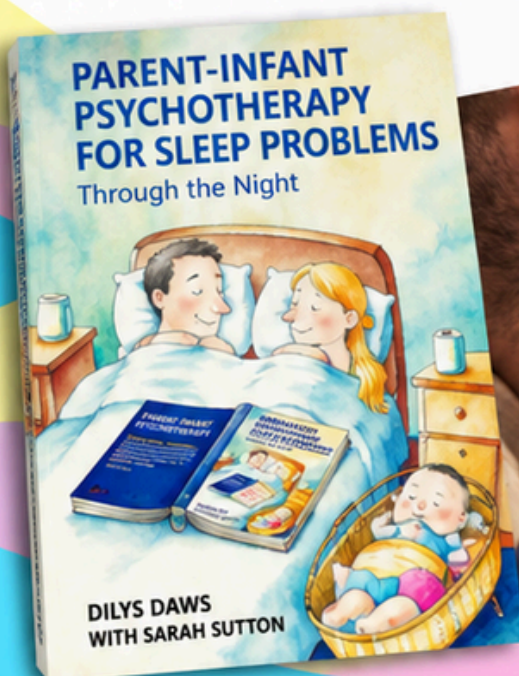
The founding of AiMH UK and its lasting legacy.



How parents' experiences have shaped thinking about infant sleep.



The importance of supporting families to find their own pathways towards more settled sleep.



REGISTER NOW



The Big Sleep Conference

Understanding Infant Sleep:

Bringing together evidence, expertise and responsive practice to better support babies and families.

All attendees will receive:



A special conference gift



A downloadable copy of
30 Gems – 30 Years of Learning
(AiMH UK's new resource)

TICKETS

£30

for 30 Years Anniversary Early Bird
(individual members, for two weeks)
Available until 28 October 2026

£50

Standard Individual Member

£70

Non-Member



Team/Organisation
Discounts available
contact info@aimh.uk

SCAN TO BOOK



Wednesday
18 November 2026



9:30am – 3:00pm
(UK time)



Online