

Parenting Early Intervention Programme: 2nd interim report

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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) provides funding for local authorities (LAs) to deliver evidence-based parenting programmes which have been shown to improve parenting skills, to parents of children and young people aged 8 to 13 years who are concerned about their child's behaviour. This second interim report presents the findings up to July 2010 on the implementation and impact of four evidence-based parenting programmes: Incredible Years, Triple P, Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities, and the Strengthening Families Programme 10-14. The final PEIP report will be published in Spring 2011.

Based on the evidence collected so far from the national rollout of PEIP, we recommend the following:

- Provision of parenting programmes should be directed mainly at those in greatest need; however, there are also benefits in recruiting a broader spectrum of parents in order to optimise group dynamics and achieve better outcomes.
- In order for evidence-based parenting programmes to maintain effectiveness when rolled out on a large scale, local authorities should ensure that the programmes are quality assured and maintain fidelity to their evidence-based models of implementation as set out in the guidance¹.

Main Findings

The rollout of evidence-based parenting programmes through the PEIP has been successful on a national scale and has significantly increased support for a large number of parents. The parenting programmes have had positive effects on the parents' mental well-being and the style of parenting, as well as their children's behaviours.

Our findings show that:

- The population of parents and children participating in PEIP has the same characteristics as that which PEIP is intended to target. Overall, they were more disadvantaged than the general population and their children were more likely to have significant behavioural difficulties

¹<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/localauthority/fundingforparents/>

- The population of parents and children also has very similar characteristics to that seen in the PEIP Pathfinder, which suggests that local authorities are continuing to target those with the highest need
- Parent outcomes were significantly improved in all four programmes after course completion:
 - Overall, 79% of parents showed improvements in their mental well-being
 - The average level of parental mental well-being increased from the bottom 25% of the population to the national average
- A considerable proportion of parents reduced their parenting styles of laxness and over-reactivity to misbehaviour over the course of the programme:
 - 73% of parents reported reductions in their parenting laxness
 - 74% of parents reported reductions in their over-reactivity
 - The percentage of parents who reported that their child had serious conduct problems reduced by a third, from 59% to 40%

It is important to note however that the individual parenting programmes may also lead to improvements in outcomes other than those which are measured in this report, due to differences in the nature and aims of the programmes.

- Parents highly rated their experiences of the parenting groups they attended:
 - 98% reported that they had found the parenting group helpful
 - 95% reported that the programme had helped them deal with their problems
 - 96% reported that the programme had helped them to deal with their children's behaviour
 - 86% reported that they experienced fewer problems after completing the programme
- There were differences in effectiveness on outcomes between the individual programmes but these were relatively small compared to the overall improvements reported by parents
- The number of parents supported through the programme varied substantially between LAs which were funded from 2008, ranging from over 500 parents supported per LA to fewer than 100 parents supported per LA

- The feedback from interviews conducted with parents and professionals indicates that the success of the programme and its delivery at LA level is not only a function of the quality of the parenting programme, but also the LA infrastructure and organisational setup which support the implementation of PEIP
- Most of the parents interviewed reported that they were introduced to strategies that enabled them to bring about positive change in their own and their children's behaviour. Parents interviewed 3-6 months after programme completion reported that these improvements had been maintained.

Methods

PEIP funding enabled LAs to fund one or more of five evidence-based parenting programmes as approved by the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners (NAPP).

These were:

- Incredible Years
- Triple P
- Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC)
- Families and Schools Together (FAST)
- Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 (SFP10-14)

All five parenting programmes have a strong evidence base for improving parent and child outcomes when tested in small scale, controlled trials. This evaluation examines whether these outcomes can be maintained and replicated when the programmes are rolled out and implemented in LAs. To do so we have collected information on:

- Reported changes in parenting styles following the attendance on one of the five NAPP approved parenting programmes (measure of impact)
- The organisational factors that support effective implementation of PEIP and its rollout

To assess the impact of the parenting courses on parent and child outcomes, we provided parents with questionnaires to complete at the beginning and end of their course and these scores were compared in order to measure change. Findings were derived from 3320

parents attending 474 parenting groups in 39 sample LAs. To measure longer term changes, parents are being asked to complete a one year follow up questionnaire and the results from these will be presented in the final report.

The measures of outcome used in the questionnaires completed by parents have been substantiated by, and used in prior research, including the PEIP Pathfinder report. These measures assess parental mental well-being, parental laxness and over reactivity in dealing with their child's behaviour, and the parent's view of the child's behaviour, all of which are expected to be influenced by the parenting courses.

To examine the organisational factors that support effective rollout of PEIP, interviews were conducted with a sample of parents and professionals.

Improved outcomes in this study are measured by:

- increases in parents' mental well-being
- reductions in inappropriate parenting styles (laxness and over-reactivity)
- reductions in child behaviour difficulties

1. INTRODUCTION

The Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) is an initiative to fund all local authorities (LAs) in England to deliver evidence-based parenting programmes. The PEIP Pathfinder (Wave 1; 2006-08) demonstrated the success of three parenting programmes (Triple P, Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC), Incredible Years) when these were rolled out in 18 LAs. Findings from the Pathfinder showed that there were substantial improvements in parents' mental well-being, parenting styles (reductions in over-reactivity and laxness) and improvements in their children's behaviour as a result of attendance at parenting courses.² This was then used to inform the Guidance³ that was issued to all LAs to help them set up and deliver PEIP. PEIP was rolled out to a further 23 LAs (Wave 2) from 2008, and nationally from 2009 (Wave 3).

In addition to the Pathfinder parenting programmes, two other programmes judged to have adequate evidence-base for their efficacy were added to the menu of parenting programmes eligible for PEIP funding from 2008, extending it to five programmes all together:

- the three Pathfinder programmes
- Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 (SFP 10-14)
- Families and Schools Together (FAST).

The current evaluation of the PEIP is made up of two main elements. The first examines its effectiveness in delivering evidence-based parenting programmes across all LAs to improve the following:

- parenting skills and mental well-being of those that attended the courses
- the behaviour of their children as reported by the parents who attended the course

² Lindsay, G., Davis, H., Strand, S., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S., Hasluck, C., Evans, R., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2008). *Parenting early intervention pathfinder evaluation DCSF-RW054*. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW054.pdf>

³<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/localauthority/fundingforparents/>

To address this aspect of the PEIP we are:

- collecting data submitted by a sample of 47 LAs (23 Wave 2, 24 Wave 3) on the numbers of groups run and parents supported
- collecting data using standardised parent-completed questionnaires as they start their programme (pre-course), as they end the parenting programme (post-course) and one year later (follow-up)

Secondly, we are examining the factors that support the effective implementation of the PEIP, including the training of group facilitators and organisational factors that support effective delivery. We are also examining how the PEIP is implemented as part of the LA's parenting strategy, along with other initiatives for parent support. This part mainly comprises interviews with key practitioners (the strategic and operational lead officers for PEIP, parenting experts, group facilitators, lead officers for parent support advisers, and school representatives) and with parents who attended courses. Evidence from these interviews provides insight into some key implementation issues experienced at the local level.

The 1st Interim Report⁴ was published in Spring 2010 and reported on the progress of Wave 1 LAs (Pathfinder areas) and the strategic and operational implementation of PEIP in Wave 2 LAs. The main focus of this report is on the evidence from over 3000 parents who attended a PEIP parenting programme, taken from the three self-completed standardized questionnaires⁵ administered by the group facilitator at the start of the group training programme (pre-course) and at the final session (post-course).

The measures we have used are:

1. *Parental mental well-being*

This examines how the parent feels, e.g. 'I've been feeling useful', and 'I've been feeling good about myself'.

2. *Parental laxness*

This scale examines whether parents are too lax when dealing with their child: for example, whether a parent backs down and gives in if their child becomes upset after being told 'no'.

⁴ Lindsay, G. Cullen, S., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Strand. S. (2010). *Evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme: 1st Interim Report*. London: DCSF
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR193.pdf>

⁵ See Appendix 1 for details of the research design and these measures

3. *Parental over-reactivity*

This scale examines parents' over-reactions: for example, whether a parent raises their voice or yells when their child misbehaves as opposed to speaking to the child calmly.

4. *Children's behaviour*

We report three measures: children's *conduct problems*; an aggregate measure (*total difficulties*) of conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and emotional symptoms; and the *impact* of the children's behaviour problems.

In addition, parents also completed a fifth questionnaire: 'How was your group?' at the end of their parenting programme. This provides information on their group experience, with particular reference to the effectiveness of the group facilitator's style and the helpfulness of the programme.

Our outcome measures examine key factors that are associated with positive and negative outcomes for children, mediated through parenting strategies. It is important to bear in mind however that our outcome measures do not cover all the factors that individual programmes address; some of the noticeable differences between programmes include the following:

- While all the programmes engage groups of parents, the length of the parenting course varies between parenting programmes
- FAST and SFP 10-14 engage the children and young people as well as the parents, with a focus on family interaction

There are also variations in their theoretical bases and in their aims. Nevertheless, all aim to impact positively on children's behaviour by means of improved parenting styles.

A final PEIP report will be produced in March 2011 to provide an overview of the full research findings at the end of the programme.

2. THE IMPACT OF PEIP

2.1 LA activity and parent engagement

This evaluation focuses on all 23 Wave 2 LAs funded from April 2008 and a sample of 24 Wave 3 LAs from the remaining English LAs that were funded from April 2009. This section primarily summarises the findings from 3320 parents who had started a parenting course in one of 39 LAs⁶ by summer 2010 and for whom LAs have returned questionnaires.

- Wave 2: 2676 parents from 22 of 23 LAs
- Wave 3: 644 parents from 17 of 24 LAs.

These figures are highly likely to represent an underestimate of the total number of parents supported by the 39 LAs as some LAs had not requested or returned all questionnaires for parents that had enrolled on a parenting course. As Wave 2 started in 2008 and Wave 3 in 2009, we would expect substantially higher numbers of parents to be supported by the former. However, there was also a large variation between the LAs in the number of questionnaires we received back in each of the waves. For example, the highest numbers of parents for whom we received data from Wave 2 LAs were between 500 – 200 per LA; the lowest was 31. These differences reflect, in part, the speed with which LAs set up support around the PEIPs and implemented the programme. Other factors included difficulties in securing training on the programme(s) for their facilitators. The breakdown of parental attendance by the five main programmes is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers (%) of parents attending each of the five main programmes⁷

	Number	%
Triple P	1589	48
Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities	540	16
Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 (SFP 10-14)	526	16
Incredible Years	411	13
Families and Schools Together (FAST)	65	2
Total	3131	100

⁶ Of the full sample of 47 LAs, one Wave 2 LA has not engaged with the evaluation and seven Wave 3 LAs have not yet returned data.

⁷ This table excludes the 189 parents who attended other programmes

As with the Pathfinder, Triple P is the most widely used programme in the PEIP. Of the two new programmes, FAST is under-represented as we did not receive sufficient numbers of national evaluation questionnaires to enable analysis. This has been addressed and data in FAST should be available in the final report. We also have data on three other programmes. However, these are low numbers and are not reported here, although data will be provided in the final report. Most LAs are funding either one or two PEIP programmes (18 and 16 LAs respectively).

2.2 Characteristics of the parents and their children

Parents

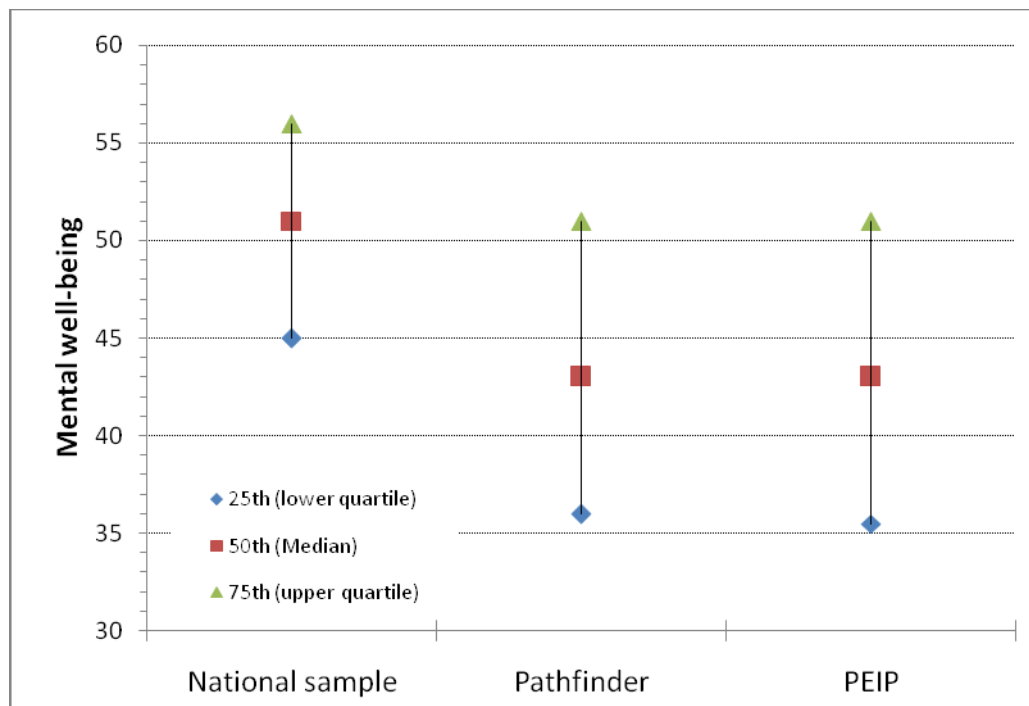
Most participants in the parenting programmes were mothers. The participants were more likely to be socially disadvantaged, to have lower levels of educational achievement and be from a minority ethnic group than the general population in England. The demographic profile was as follows:

- 91% biological parents
- 87% female parent
- 44% single parent household
- 63% rented accommodation (27% national average)
- 69% have sought help from a professional (mainly family doctor, 50%) in the last 6 months.
- 55% had either no education qualifications (23%) or some GCSEs at most (32%).
- 80.4% were White (compared to 92.1% in the UK Census 2001), with 10.1% Asian (4.0%), 5.3% Black (2.0%) and 2.5% Mixed Heritage (1.2%).

The questionnaires completed by the parents as they started their parenting groups showed that:

- The parents rated themselves as having substantially lower levels of mental well-being than the population as a whole, as shown by Figure 1: about 75% of PEIP parents scored below the national average (median). This is a similar finding to that in the Pathfinder.
- The parents also had high levels of inappropriate parenting styles characterised by high levels of laxness and over-reactivity in response to their children's behaviour.

Figure 1: Parental well-being of the PEIP sample at the start of their course compared with the general population and the Pathfinder parents.



Children

The characteristics of the children causing the most concerns to their parents at the beginning of the parenting course are described below:

- The majority were boys (62% vs. 38%)
- 54% were aged 8-13 years, the original target age for PEIP (37% aged 0-7, 8.5% were 14+)
- 12% had a statement of SEN (compared with about 3% nationally)
- 31% were receiving extra support in school
- 49% were entitled to free school meals, three times the national average of 16%
- 58% had substantial behaviour problems compared with the 9.8% national norm, i.e. about six times as many as the national average

In summary, the parents and children have the characteristics expected for the target population of the PEIP. They are also, on average, very similar to the parents and children in the Pathfinder, indicating that the LAs implementing the PEIP were maintaining an appropriate targeting strategy in identifying parents who are socio-economically disadvantaged, with high levels of need.

2.3 Programme completion versus drop out

Not all parents that start a parenting programme will complete it. There may be personal circumstances that preclude continuing but drop out may also indicate parents' views about the programme. Drop out is therefore an important measure when evaluating the effectiveness of parenting programmes. We asked all group facilitators to record the reasons why any parent did not complete the post-course questionnaires.

Of the 3320 parents who completed pre-course questionnaires, 1777 (54%) returned post-course questionnaires. However, according to the monitoring forms completed by the facilitators, only 11% of parents failed to complete the course (Table 2).

Table 2: Completion of post-course questionnaires

	Frequency	%
Parents that responded	1777	54
Parents that did not complete course	369	11
Parents that declined to complete the questionnaire	41	1
Other reason	88	2
Facilitator did not specify a reason	382	12
Whole group non-response	663	20
Total	3320	100

Of the remaining non-returns, the facilitators did not specify a reason for 12% of the parents. For 104 of the parenting groups that were held, there was no return at all from the facilitators involved, which amounts to 20% of parents. Based on this, it seems likely that this is down to issues of administration at the group level, rather than the choice of the individual parent not to complete the questionnaires. This is discussed further in Appendix 2. In summary, drop out is likely to be in the range 11% (known dropouts) to 23% (known dropouts plus parents for whom no reasons were provided). This upper estimate is similar to that seen in the Pathfinder (27%).

Analyses comparing pre- versus post-course measures were therefore conducted on 1772 parents (54% of pre-course sample). These parents completed the questions for at least one of the outcome measures. Similar returns were made for each of the five PEIP

programmes. However, as the FAST provided low numbers of parents ($n = 32$), only the other four programmes' data have been analysed.

2.4 Overall improvement averaged across all programmes

The main focus of this evaluation is to assess the effect of PEIP implementation on outcomes for parents, irrespective of the parenting programme undertaken. Local authorities were therefore able to select one or more programmes to implement according to their local priorities as there are differences as well as similarities between programmes (see Introduction, p.9). In this section we report the evidence of improved outcomes for parents who attended one of the four parenting programmes for which we have sufficient data (i.e. the results from all four parenting programmes are combined)⁸.

The main questions addressed in this section are:

- Are there significant improvements in measures of parent well-being and parenting style or child behaviour associated with attending a PEIP parenting course? If so, what is the scale of this improvement?
- Are there any significant associations between parent or child characteristics and improvement: is PEIP more effective for some types of parents / children than others?
- Are there any differences in the degree of improvement between different PEIP programmes? While all the main programmes have strong evidence base (including randomized control trials), were they equally effective when rolled out on a large scale and implemented at local authority level in the context of the national roll out of PEIP?

The results present *improvements*, shown as the size of changes in the parenting and child measures across the PEIP as a whole. As all the improvements are statistically highly significant⁹ we use the *effect size* as our measure of improvement as this gives a measure of the *scale* of change: an effect size of 0.2 is considered a small improvement, 0.5 a medium improvement and 0.8 is considered a large improvement.

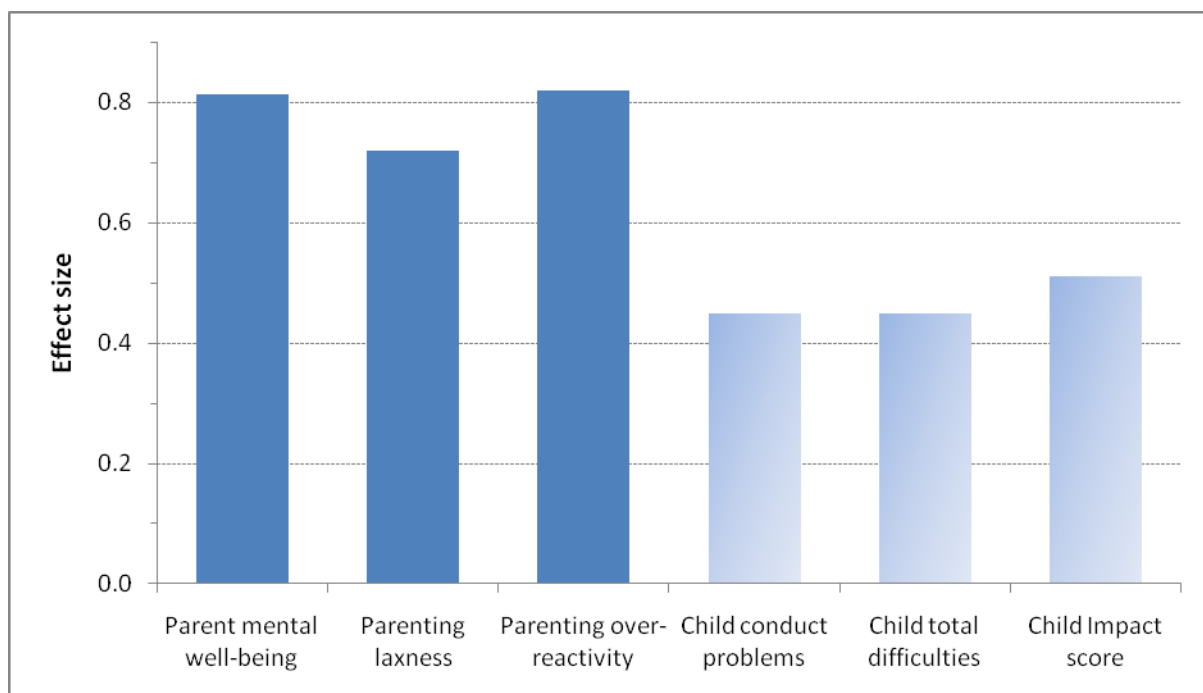
⁸ Details of the analysis are presented in the Technical Supplement where the rationale and justification for the analysis used are given.- <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cedar/peip/>

⁹ $p < .001$, indicating that the likelihood of this being a chance result is less than one in a thousand

Parents

Figure 2 shows the improvements on the parent and child measures. All are statistically highly significant. Improvements are particularly large over the period of the parenting programme for the three parent measures, shown by effect sizes of about 0.8: 79% of parents showed an increase in mental well-being, 73% showed a reduction in laxness and 74% showed a reduction in over-reactivity¹⁰.

Figure 2: Improvements in parenting and child outcomes



Note: Effect size: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, 0.8 = large improvement

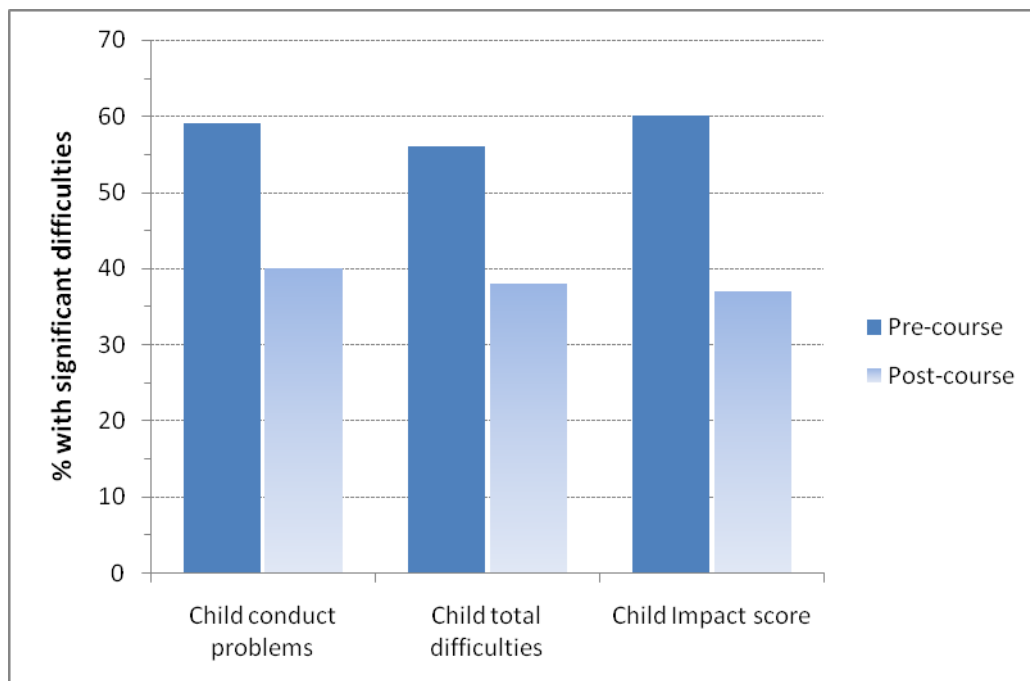
¹⁰ Research has shown that some parents may produce higher scores on the second completion of questionnaires even if they do not attend a parenting course. These effect sizes should therefore be regarded as upper estimates.

Children

Figure 2 also shows improvements in the children's behaviour as rated by their parents, represented by three measures: conduct problems, the total difficulties score, and impact. Again, all improvements are statistically highly significant. The scale of the improvements associated with the parents completing the programmes is in the small to medium range (about 0.4 to 0.5). Figure 3 shows the pre- and post-course percentages of children rated as having significant behavioural difficulties with respect to our three measures: i) children's *conduct problems*; ii) an aggregate measure (*total difficulties*) of conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and emotional symptoms; and iii) the *impact* of the child's behaviour problems.

- The percentage of children with significant behaviour problems overall (total difficulties) fell from 56% to 38%, a reduction of about a third.
- There was a similar reduction for the specific area of conduct problems (59% to 40%) and impact (60% to 37%).

Figure 3: Percentage of children rated by their parents at pre- and post-parenting course stage as having significant behavioural difficulties.



2.4.1 Is PEIP effective for the full range of parents and children?

To address this question we examined whether a range of parent and child characteristics impacts on the scale of improvements shown. The results indicate that:

- Improvements on the measures had no association with parents' relationship to the child (i.e. biological parent or other relationship), parent gender, family composition, child gender or whether the child was eligible for free school meals.
- One or more outcomes were related to the five demographic variables: parent housing status, educational qualifications and ethnic group, and child age and whether the child had special educational needs. However these variables explained only a small part of the improvement in the measures (between 3-7% of the variance).

In summary, most demographic variables were unrelated to change, or where there were significant relationships the patterns were inconsistent across outcomes and explained only a small proportion of the improvement. We therefore conclude that the PEIP programmes were broadly effective on our measures for parents and children across the full range of demographic variables.

2.5 Differences in improvements between programmes

The primary objective of the evaluation is to evaluate the PEIP as a whole as all programmes have prior evidence for their effectiveness. Nevertheless, a comparison of the effectiveness of each programme when rolled out as part of the PEIP is important, although any differences must be interpreted carefully. Only those four programmes with substantial numbers of parents (93% in total) were included in analyses of programme effectiveness. These programmes are: Incredible Years; Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 (SFP10-14); Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC); and Triple P¹¹.

- All four programmes were effective in improving both parent and child outcomes.
- There are some significant differences in the effectiveness of these four programmes on our measures but overall these were relatively small and they explain only a small proportion of the change in scores.

¹¹ Full details of the analysis are available in the Technical Supplement <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cedar/peip/>

2.6 Parents' views of their group experience

At the end of their parenting programme (post-group) we also asked parents to complete a questionnaire about their group experience. Table 3 presents the results for the PEIP as a whole, showing that on 10 items, over 95% of parents rated their experience positively, with strong positive ratings predominating for five of these.

Table 3: Parents' responses to the 'How was your group?' questions (% of parents)

Question	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>Group facilitator style</i>					
The group leader(s) made me feel respected	1745	1	1	24	74
The group leader(s) understood me and my situation	1738	1	1	29	69
The group leader(s) worked in partnership with me	1735	1	1	34	65
I felt I had control over what happened in the group	1723	1	6	54	39
I felt I could be honest about my family	1743	1	1	33	65
The group leader(s) made me feel good about myself	1728	1	1	38	60
The group leader(s) were interested in what I had to say	1739	1	1	28	71
<i>Programme helpfulness</i>					
The parenting group has been helpful to me	1734	1	1	32	66
The programme helped me personally to cope with the problems I had	1724	1	4	44	51
The programme has helped me deal with my child's behaviour	1717	1	3	48	49
I have fewer problems than before coming to the group	1698	2	12	50	36

The 11 items form two groups (see Appendix 4). The ratings for Group facilitator style were generally very positive, for example 74% of parents agreed strongly that the group leader made them feel respected. Ratings for Programme helpfulness were less strongly positive but 66% agreed strongly that the parenting group had been helpful to the parent.

These positive findings applied to all four programmes. Although there was a difference in parents' views between the programmes, this was relatively small. The overall finding is that

parents across all four of these PEIP programmes rated their group experience very positively.

2.7 Key points from the outcome measures

This section has provided evidence from 3320 parents who started a parenting group in one of the 39 LAs. Results from 1777 parents indicate that:

- All four programmes for which we had sufficient data demonstrated substantial improvements on all measures.
 - Parents' mental well-being increased and two forms of inappropriate parenting behaviour, laxness and over-reactivity, reduced.
 - Their children's behavioural difficulties also reduced.

In addition:

- Parents rated their experience of attending the group sessions highly, both the programme's helpfulness and the facilitator's style when running the group.

3. IMPLEMENTING PEIP

In this section we explore factors that are associated with effective implementation of the PEIP. Our evaluation of the Pathfinder (2006-08) examined in depth the three programmes (Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities). Consequently, while exploring the implementation of PEIP overall, Section 3 provides a particular focus on the two new programmes: FAST and Strengthening Families Programme 10-14.

This section draws on evidence from an extensive series of interviews with 52 parents and 126 professionals with different responsibilities to implement the PEIP drawn from across both Wave 2 and Wave 3 LAs: LA Strategic Leads, PEIP Coordinators, Parenting Experts, group facilitators, parent support adviser (PSA) lead officers, and school representatives (who were often facilitators also). This analysis builds on findings which were presented in the 1st Interim Report. A number of key issues will be discussed here; the final report will present a fuller account of the complete range of issues identified over the evaluation as a whole.

3.1 Parents' views

The majority of parents interviewed had attended either FAST or SFP 10-14 groups. This was because interviews with parents of the other three programmes have previously been reported¹². Most interviews were held at the time of the group but some parents were interviewed or gave follow up interviews 3-6 months later, allowing a longer term perspective on their experience. Interviews confirmed the very positive views of their group experience found from the questionnaire (Section 2.6), indicating this was common across all five programmes.

- The parents we interviewed (most of whom had attended FAST or SFP 10-14) were very positive about their group experience, both the facilitator's style and the programme's helpfulness.
- The parents felt comfortable in their groups, appreciating the 'relaxed' atmosphere that characterised sessions, fostered by facilitators' approachability and

¹² Lindsay, G., Davis, H., Strand, S., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S., Hasluck, C., Evans, R., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2008). *Parenting early intervention pathfinder evaluation DCSF-RW054*. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW054.pdf>

professionalism. As one parent said, 'Although they're very highly skilled and very trained, they don't preach to you. They get the group involved.'

- Parents valued the opportunity to share experiences and to realise that other parents had similar challenges and had successes and failures: 'I could sympathise with them. It was nice to know you weren't the only one and the support was there as a group.'
- Some valued features were specific to the SFP 10-14 and FAST programmes, for example, the shared meals cooked in turn by FAST group members – identified as a neglected feature of their family lives at home by some parents – and the family session in SFP 10-14.
- Group compatibility was generally good although the challenge of engaging children with a wide age range was identified as requiring particular skills.

3.1.1 *Families' levels of need*

- Most of the parent interviewees undertook their programme following the suggestion of a professional such as health worker, social worker or parent support advisor (PSA) because of difficulties in dealing with their children's behaviour, or a problematic relationship with their children.
- At the higher end of need, strongly represented in our interview sample, difficulties might involve a near complete breakdown in the parent/child relationship, threat of exclusion from school, and/or the child coming to the attention of the police.
- Evidence from our parent interviewees (also referred to by professionals – see Section 3.2) emphasises the importance of the careful assessment of parents' level of need and determination of the compositional makeup of groups of parents and children, in order to maximise positive outcomes.
- In some cases difficulties are of such an obdurate nature that other interventions need first to be put in place, or perhaps offered alongside or following a (carefully chosen) parenting programme.

3.1.2 *The programme material*

- Overall, parents viewed the materials used for each programme (FAST and SFP 10-14) positively.
- The materials were also judged appropriate by parents of children with special needs other than behavioural difficulties, as long as there was a flexible approach to programme delivery.

3.1.3 Programme outcomes

Parents from all the programmes gave many examples of how the sessions had made them aware of unhelpful facets of their own behaviour that they were now correcting (most of the time), with corresponding improvements in their children's behaviour.

- Changes noted in parents' own behaviour included:
 - Setting boundaries and applying them consistently
 - Giving more praise
 - Keeping calm and not shouting
 - Giving instructions to children in clear terms so they understand what is required
 - Spending more time in talking to their children
 - Having more 'family time'
- Positive changes seen in children's behaviour included:
 - Increased confidence
 - More consideration towards other people's feelings
 - Calmer and more open
 - Improved attitude towards parents and siblings
 - More often compliant when asked to do things
 - Improved school attendance
- The mutuality of these changes often signalled improved communication between parent and child leading to improvements in the overall relationship, with the parent having regained control as the adult in the relationship.
- The majority of parents interviewed shortly after programme completion had been introduced to new strategies for dealing with their children that they found helpful.
- Overall, parents who gave follow-up interviews, or whose initial interview took place more than three months following programme completion, reported continuing success in applying strategies they had learned from their programme.

Case study 1: A parent's mental health and self-development

A mother described a very successful outcome from attending her parenting programme with her son Josh, aged 11 and diagnosed with ADHD and depression: '...He's gone from a very naughty child, disobeying, stealing...he gets his ups and downs, but he knows not to bow to peer pressure no more. He'll go off after an argument with me, then he'll come back and apologise and oh, my God, I didn't think I'd ever have him doing that. And if it weren't for that group I don't think I would have got as far as I have with him now...'

This parent, severely beaten as a child, was keen to find an alternative approach to parenting her own children, and attributed the change in her son largely to her success in applying the behaviour control strategies suggested in the parenting programme. She planned to repeat the programme with her ten year old son. Following a prison sentence for 'doing drugs', a still born child and the departure of her boy friend, the father of two of her six children, this parent had suffered from depression alongside severe osteoarthritis, illnesses that had confined her largely to her home. Following treatment for her depression, the experience of attending the parenting programme and gaining confidence as a parent had encouraged her to seek out further routes to self-development, including learning to read and write and taking a course in art at the local junior school.

The parenting programme had enabled this mother to make more contacts among other parents, as well as staff, at the school and she was now comfortable in being there, joining other parents in putting their art work on the school walls. With regard to adult literacy, as with the parenting programme: 'I know I've got to go each week because I don't want to let myself down and to let other people down, because if I let it go it makes the group smaller.'

3.1.4 Varying need for follow on support

- Many parents, especially those with higher levels of need, and ongoing challenging life circumstances, require follow up support in order to maintain and develop the benefits derived from their parenting programme. PSAs who are also facilitators are often well placed to do this as part of their ongoing support for the family.
- Follow on support was welcomed by parents but access varied, even when this was built into the programme. Not all FAST groups succeeded in running the parent-led FASTWORKS sessions afterwards and not all SFP 10-14 groups had the opportunity to attend the four optional follow-on sessions. For example, one mother wanted 'an

evening of reminders of strategies, of things that you could do.’ Six months on from her (SFP10-14) programme, she had contact details for her facilitator and had met one or two other parents by chance but had no ongoing dialogue to reinforce the programme’s strategies.

- Other parents attending groups without integral follow-on sessions continued to receive support from their facilitator. A minority said they would have felt abandoned in the absence of this continuing support. For example in a family experiencing continuing family conflict: ‘if she’d just left us to it, we’d be still trying to work a programme out’.
- Follow on sessions required organisation. Most groups had worked well together within the context of the programme and there were some examples of friendships forged during the programme. However, parents were unlikely, irrespective of their level of need, to arrange to meet up following completion, unless for a formal, organised follow up session.
- High level need parents require careful monitoring by referring agencies post programme to guard against any misplaced assumption that the family’s problems have been ‘fixed’ by attending a parenting programme and to consider what direction any further professional involvement should take.
- However, some parents with initial low level needs and whose difficulties had been addressed felt no need for any follow on from their parenting programme, though welcoming a contact number for their facilitator ‘just in case’.

3.1.5 Context for programme outcomes

It is important to emphasise that the impact of any parenting programme is set in the context of a range of factors in individual families’ lives that change over time, as reflected in interviews at various post-programme stages. The following examples give a flavour of some of these factors:

- One family reported benefits from the Triple P programme but also from the fact that their two children had recently moved from an inner city school, where their SEN needs were reportedly not met, to a special school where both were thriving and their behaviour improving.
- In addition to positive outcomes from a SFP 10-14, a single mother reported also that a move from inadequate housing had enabled her warring twins to have separate bedrooms: ‘that helped as well and, with some of the strategies we had, it does make it easier to implement as well’.

3.2 The views of the professionals

3.2.1 *Setting up and running PEIP*

The time needed to set up the infrastructure to deliver PEIPs varied between LAs, resulting in differential time lags before parenting groups started. By July 2010, 22 of the 23 Wave 2 LAs had delivered at least one group; of the 24 Wave 3 LAs, 17 had started at least one group and the remaining seven were preparing to run their first groups.

- Some time lag is inevitable – for example, when this time is used to plan coordinated delivery in line with strategic goals, to recruit and train facilitators, and to engage parents. Some variation is to be expected because of the different starting points of LAs in relation to provision of evidence-based parenting programmes and the different operational demands of the five PEIP programmes, including a great deal of ground work with school and community partners. However, other factors could perhaps have been avoided with improved planning and management at national and local level. For example, there were inefficiencies around access to training for facilitators.
- Locally, contextual LA factors played a major part in the development of an effective implementation of the PEIP. Those most frequently cited as problematic concerned PEIP leadership: delay and uncertainty about role remits because of LA restructuring, poor working relationships with other managers necessary to the delivery of PEIP, unfilled absences due to illness, compassionate leave and maternity leave.
- PEIP senior staff reported that the lack of national conferences limited the development of a sense of shared enterprise and reduced the number of networking opportunities with other LA staff and DfE officials, both of which were found to be helpful in the PEIP Pathfinder.
- Overall, though, the variation in LA effectiveness in delivery outputs (and the variation in parents' experiences of the programmes) related most to the degree to which the DCSF *Guidance for Local Authorities* (July 2008)¹³ based on the findings from the Wave 1 evaluation, was or was not followed. The guidance, based on the evaluation of the Pathfinder, set out very clear expectations about the service development, fidelity and quality assurance issues to be considered in planning and implementing PEIP.

¹³ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/localauthority/fundingforparents/>

3.2.2 PEIP as service development

When planned and managed effectively, the funding of PEIP enabled unprecedented LA-wide delivery of coherent, coordinated, accessible, targeted, evidence-based parenting support.

- As one PEIP operational lead commented:

'The PEIP has enabled us to develop clear and robust quality assurance processes, a framework to deliver the parenting programmes and a way of achieving equality of access to parents, and more accessible service delivery and better value for money because we're targeting the provision where we're evidencing a need [and] monitoring referrals properly.'

- Operational level leads also highlighted the benefits of the funding, emphasising the increase in capacity to deliver evidence-based parenting programmes that were proving their value, for example:

'[...] evidence-based parent programmes have gone on before we had PEIP, not to the extent that it's been able to happen since the funding came in. I think the impact that's had on parents in [this LA] and the affirmations we've had and the comments we've had have just been really strong and powerful. I don't think we could have got that had we not had this funding and the opportunity.'

- The PEIP was also valued for enabling more accessible delivery through funding to provide childcare, transport and refreshments (integral to delivery and intended outcomes), as well as one to one support prior to groups, where needed. This also enabled better targeting of high need families. One facilitator commented:

'[PEIP] is getting the people there that wouldn't have come otherwise. I think we probably got a lot of nice middle-class families coming along who probably didn't need to be there in the beginning [before PEIP]. With the [PEIP] funding, it can help you nurture the families that need to be there.'

- The National Academy of Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) worked with LAs i) to help them select a PEIP programme suited to the priority needs identified locally; and ii) to commission a package of training and post-training support from the five PEIP

programme providers. Liaison with NAPP worked much better for Wave 3 than Wave 2 – see our earlier report for a discussion of Wave 2¹⁴.

- However, the new system of accessing facilitator training places via the national training offer was criticised by strategic leads as unnecessarily complex and inefficient. Difficulties in accessing training places at the appropriate time led to LAs making local arrangements with the programme providers, or delays in starting to deliver parenting groups.
- Where the national training offer system worked well it was appreciated, as was the support and guidance of NAPP regional representatives. Since April 2010, responsibility for the training function has moved to the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC). This change meant the loss of the NAPP regional support structure for LAs around PEIP training and had the unintended effect of leaving late-implemented Wave 3 LAs uncertain about how to access appropriate training for PEIP practitioners.

3.2.3 Implementation of PEIP

Parenting strategy

In the majority of Wave 3 LAs, the PEIP was viewed as integral to the overall parenting strategy, by providing the means to increase the parenting workforce and therefore to increase the capacity to deliver quality programmes, and by providing an opportunity to introduce complementary programmes. The following strategic factors are important for LAs to take into account in order to optimise implementation of the PEIP:

- For evidence-based parent training to be effective in a large-scale roll-out, LAs need to ensure coherent, accessible service delivery, programme fidelity and quality assurance with respect to programme implementation.
- Where there was a strategic coherence between PEIP and other parenting support, initiatives gained added value by avoiding isolated work on the one hand and duplication on the other. In terms of ‘other parenting support initiatives’, our evaluation focused on parent support advisers (PSAs), parenting experts, extended schools/services, Family Pathfinders, Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), and the

¹⁴ Lindsay, G. Cullen, S., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Strand. S. (2010). *Evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme: 1st Interim Report*. London: DCSF <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR193.pdf>

Think Family policy agenda which was becoming embedded in strategic planning in many LAs.

- The role of schools as strategic partners in the delivery of parenting support was less obvious than their role at operational level, perhaps explaining why PEIP Wave 3 leads generally found that a great deal of groundwork was necessary to stimulate and retain the commitment of head teachers to the PEIP.

Leadership

The *Guidance for Local Authorities* (DCSF, July 2008) emphasised the Pathfinder evaluation finding of 'the importance of clear strategic leadership and the need for a skilled coordinator on a day to day basis' (p.6). Comparing Wave 3 LAs with Wave 2 LAs, it was much less common to have a single PEIP coordinator. Instead, coordination was devolved to sub-LA areas. Depending on the size of the LA, this meant up to five people involved. Practitioners valued a single operational level lead: conversely, practitioners were concerned by the lack of coordinated leadership where this role was missing.

3.2.4 Ensuring quality delivery of PEIP

The delivery of a quality service depends on many factors including the programme content, facilitator skills as well as the organisational factors discussed above.

Training and supervision

Our report of the Pathfinder highlighted the challenge to a programme's capacity to train facilitators when a large scale roll out required large numbers of new training places. This became evident in Waves 2 and 3 with a minority expressing concerns about the thoroughness and overall quality of some training provided.

- The selection of practitioners with appropriate knowledge, skills, qualities and experience, factors crucial to the effective delivery of groups and resulting outcomes for parents and young people, varied between LAs.
- The quality of initial practitioner training on the programmes needs to be maintained through rigorous quality assurance and accreditation systems embedded by programme originators/developers.
- As the most widely used programme, capacity to train was a particular issue for Triple P but there were some initial criticisms also of SFP 10-14 training not responding appropriately to issues regarding use of the programme with a targeted

PEIP population. By Wave 3 views were much more positive although concerns were expressed by a minority of facilitators about the level of experience required to become a SFP 10-14 trainer, which was perceived to be too limited.

- The FAST programme was new to England when accredited by NAPP but has gradually received more interest from LAs. It has a different approach, with a strong focus on community development through schools, with families rather than parents as central to its operation (SFP 10-14 also includes both parents and their children). Anglicisation and adaptation to England have been undertaken carefully to maintain fidelity with the original US programme. The main concern was that the training did not always convey clearly the underpinning rationale for particular activities, the centrality of table-based coaching and the roles of different team members.
- Both the level of supervision and whether it happened at all varied for programmes and between LAs. Appropriate supervision should be provided systematically if the benefits found in the present study are to be maintained with future parenting groups.

Targeting and recruitment of parents

Group dynamics are important. The relative proportion of parents with different levels of need is relevant to and potentially in conflict with seeking to offer parenting training to the most needy, as revealed here and previously in the Pathfinder.

- Uniquely among the PEIP programmes, FAST is designed to be non-targeted, aimed at whole cohorts of parents. Open recruitment was judged useful in encouraging the engagement of the hard to reach parents.
- Both Wave 2 and 3 facilitators were learning from experience, suggesting, for example, that SFP 10-14 worked best when the group was made up of about 70% 'normal teenage issues' and 30% higher end need.
- The role of PSAs in recruiting/referring families that were suitable for and ready to engage with the PEIP programmes was emphasised and seen to be based on the PSAs' existing relationship with and knowledge of the family.
- There was limited evidence of father-specific recruitment. The low numbers of fathers involved was, generally, accepted as the norm and the fact that there were any fathers attending groups was seen as positive.
- Facilitators reported that most fathers involved had attended the sessions as part of a couple. In some LAs, evening groups, Saturday groups and fathers-only groups were part of a strategic commitment to involving fathers and were successful in doing so.

Case study 2: Fathers and their families

Two fathers who were experiencing similar difficulties in their relationships with their children were referred to a PEIP parenting course by their respective social workers. In one case, the father had been asked to leave his family home as a result of child protection concerns. In both cases, the fathers explained that their domestic lives were characterised by chaos and a lack of boundaries. One father explained that, 'it was just like a free-for-all, really, in my house. Kids were doing what they wanted, not listening when you tell them to do something.'

Both fathers were sceptical of the value of attending a parenting course, but after only a few sessions they realised that they were learning techniques and approaches that were, in fact, effective in improving their relationship with their children. Underlying this success was a realisation that the parenting course had enabled them to stand back from situations that they found themselves in with their children and take an objective view of the issues leading to family difficulties. One of the fathers commented: 'it is a fascinating course, because you don't realise that children are doing that until you watch these ... we watch them vignettes, and you think, my god, my kid's done that.'

Both fathers had changed their own behaviour - 'I ignore all the bad behaviour, picking up on the good behaviour' - and had been able to institute effective boundaries. As a result, they reported that their family homes were now much calmer places, and that their relationship with their children, and the behaviour of their children both in and outside the home, had markedly improved. They both placed great value on the parenting course, with one of the men having taken it twice, while the other had signed up for a second parenting course.

Further, the two fathers had, with the assistance of a community worker, established a successful fathers and kids group in the area where they lived. This group was active, ran an information service and a website for fathers, and organised trips for the fathers and children. The group was directly inspired by the parenting course: 'since we've been coming to the parents group ... that's how we've got involved with all of this, through the parenting course,... we've made loads of new friends, and now a few of us have got together, and we've put a group together, and we're starting running groups to encourage other dads to start playing with their kids.'

Engaging parents to attend

Overall, there was a high level of awareness of the need actively to engage parents to attend and of the work involved in this. The ability to use some PEIP funding to do one-to-one work to engage families and to prepare them to attend groups was welcomed. Personal contact with parents and young people (SFP 10-14) prior to the group was widespread practice – for example, phoning to make sure parents referred understood what the programme was about, writing to invite them to an information or ‘taster’ session, doing a home visit and keeping in touch by phone or text until the group started.

Retaining parents

The management of group dynamics, the creation of a friendly, welcoming, safe environment and the quality of the delivery – the usefulness of the learning, the enjoyment of the session, the respect shown through nurturing and modelling, the supportiveness of the group to its members – were viewed as key to retaining parents and families. Offering transport and childcare and food helped too, as did the use of incentives and lottery prizes. In some cases, all families were phoned between sessions as a matter of routine. Where parents or a family missed a session, a catch up session was offered.

- Overall, there was a high level of awareness of the need to engage parents in order to encourage and facilitate their attendance and of the work involved in this. The quality and usefulness of the experience for parents/families was seen as the key to retention.
- Accepting only parents/families with levels of need appropriate to group work was also seen as helping retention – where parents or young people struggled to manage being in a group, this could have a negative effect on the retention of that family and other parents/families.

Follow up and ongoing support

There was awareness in principle of the structured follow-up integral to FAST (22 weeks of FASTWORKS parent group activity) and SFP 10-14 (four monthly booster sessions beginning 4-6 weeks after the end of the programme) but this was not always delivered in practice.

- For SFP 10-14, reported barriers included the perceived difficulty of retaining the team of facilitators, of getting the families together again and of not having budgeted and planned for this from the start.

- For FAST, reported barriers included the difficulties in finding a venue for this length of time, particularly if the original host school could not provide this.
- It may be that the importance of the follow-up sessions as an integral part of these two programmes, and in maintaining change, needs to be re-emphasised during initial training of facilitators.

Sustainability

All the interviewees wanted to see the PEIP programmes continue, convinced by their evidence-base of effectiveness, outcomes for local families' involved and perceived cost-effectiveness of sustaining high quality delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes. This was based on their experience of working with families in crisis, and of in care and/or embedded in patterns of offending behaviour.

- All LA interviewees wanted PEIP parenting groups to be sustained. Overall, Wave 3 LAs were clear about the need to think about sustainability after the ending of the PEIP funding but questioned whether it would be possible to continue to deliver on the scale and to the quality and level of accessibility to hard to reach families that PEIP funding had enabled.
- The de-ring fencing of the Think Family grant raised concerns, particularly in Wave 3 LAs where PEIP implementation had been delayed. The wider post-March 2011 climate of funding uncertainty and expectations of large cuts in LA staff and services made it difficult for PEIP leaders to plan ahead and there was concern that it would compromise delivery of high quality parenting groups in a coordinated and accessible manner. In one LA, for example, the whole PSA service had been cut and only those individually funded by schools were to be retained.

APPENDIX

A1. METHODS

The evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme 2008-11 comprises a combined methods study investigating *outcomes* for parents who attended parenting courses; *outputs* for LAs in terms of number of parents supported; *processes* and *structures* within LAs that support or present barriers to the implementation of the PEIP; and the *cost effectiveness* of the PEIP. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are being used. This appendix describes those applicable to this report; a full description will be provided in the final report to be produced in March 2011.

Local Authorities

All 23 Wave 2 LAs (funded from April 2008) and a sample of 24 of the remaining Wave 3 LAs (funded from April 2009) were selected for study.

Initially, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, now the Department for Education, DfE) funded the LAs to implement one or more of five approved parenting programmes: The Incredible Years, Triple P and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) were studied in depth during the Pathfinder (Wave 1: 2006-08); the two additional programmes were Families and Schools Together (FAST) and the Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 (SFP 10-14). Data were collected from all LAs in the sample, but for interviews with parents, facilitators and school representatives there was a focus on those engaged with the two new programmes.

This report draws on i) all data that local authorities returned by 31 July 2010 from parents attending parenting groups, and ii) interviews conducted during the period autumn 2009 to summer 2010 with the following Wave 3 professionals: 24 PEIP Strategic lead officers, 6 PEIP coordinators, 19 Parent Support Adviser leads, and 20 Parenting Experts (although they used different titles). In addition, 45 group facilitators and 12 school representatives (who were often facilitators) were interviewed (12 Wave 2, 12 Wave 3 LAs).

Parents

Interviews were conducted with 52 parents from 12 Wave 2 and 12 Wave 3 LAs. By the end of July 2010 a sample of 3320 parents from the Wave 2 ($n = 2676$) and Wave 3 ($n = 644$) LAs had provided pre-course data, of whom 1777 had also provided post-course data.

The Measures

Semi-structured interviews comprising main questions and probes were used for all interviews. Three questionnaires were completed by parents at the start and end of their parenting course.

The Parenting Scale¹⁵

This is a 13 item 7-point scale which examines two dimensions of parenting, Laxness and Over-reactivity, each comprising six items (range for each scale 6-42). For example, a parent responds to this laxness item 'If my child gets upset when I say "No"' by choosing on a 7 point scale from 'I back down and give in to my child' (1) to 'I stick to what I said' (7). The 13th item on monitoring contributes only to the total score.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)¹⁶

This is a 14 item 5-point scale which assesses mental well-being (range 14-70). It includes items such as 'I've been feeling useful', 'I've been feeling good about myself'. This scale was selected as it is worded positively: its focus is positive (well-being) rather than illness-oriented (e.g. depression).

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)¹⁷

This is a 25 item measure of the parent's views of the behaviour of the target child. Each item has a 3-point scale (Not true, Somewhat true and Certainly true, scored 0-2). It comprises four scales, each of five items that assess levels of problems: Emotional symptoms, Conduct problems, Hyperactivity, and Peer problems (range for each scale 0-10). These can be summed to produce a Total difficulties score (range 0-40). An example of the Conduct problem scale is 'often fights with other children or bullies them'. In addition, the SDQ impact scale comprises five items concerning the impact of the child's behaviour.

Demographic data were collected from parents at pre-course and a questionnaire '*How was your group*'¹⁸ comprising 11 items, each scored on a 4- point scale, was completed at post-group (range 11-44).

¹⁵ Irvine, A.B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., & Ary, D.V. (1999). The value of the *Parenting Scale* for measuring the discipline practices of parents of middle school children. *Behavioural Research and Therapy*, 37, 127-142

¹⁶ Tennant, R., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2006). *Monitoring positive mental health in Scotland: validating the Affectometer 2 scale and developing the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale for the UK*. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland

¹⁷ Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: a research note. *Journal of child Psychology and Psychologists*, 38, 581-586. See also the web access <http://www.sdqinfo.com/b1.html>

¹⁸ Developed from the Pathfinder (Wave 1) study

A2. NON-COMPLETION OF PROGRAMME

Pre-course data were drawn from a total of 474 PEIP groups (average group size was 7.0, $SD = 3.3$, range 1-22). Facilitators returned post-course questionnaires for 53% of these parents (Table 2). Post-course questionnaires and facilitator forms were received for all parents in 227 groups and from one or more parents in 143 groups. A total of 11.1% of parents were reported not to have completed (dropped out). Reasons were given for non-return of questionnaires for 3.9%, but for 11.5% of parents the facilitator did not give a reason. There were also 104 groups (20% of parents) where no post-course questionnaires at all and no facilitator form were returned. This suggests a substantial proportion if not all of that non-response (20%) is due to administrative issues at the group level rather than parent drop-out.

A3. PRE-COURSE TO POST-COURSE CHANGE

Table A.1 presents the mean scores (*SDs*) for pre- and post-course parent and child measures for the PEIP sample (all four parenting programmes combined) and the effect size (Cohen's *d*) for changes. Negative effect sizes indicate that improvement is indicated by reductions on that measure. In all cases the changes represent improvements. The magnitude of the effect is as follows: above 0.2 an effect size is small, above 0.5 it is moderate and 0.8 is large.

Table A.1

Measure	Occasion	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Effect Size ^a
Parent Measures					
Mental well-being	pre-course	43.5	1689	10.6	
	post-course	51.7	1689	9.5	0.81
Parenting laxness	Pre-course	21.5	1650	7.2	
	Post-course	16.6	1650	6.4	-0.72
Parenting over-reactivity	Pre-course	22.4	1666	6.8	
	Post-course	17.1	1666	6.4	-0.82
Parenting total score	Pre-course	46.6	1636	12.0	
	Post-course	36.0	1636	11.9	-0.89
Child measures					
SDQ Conduct problems	Pre-course	4.4	1673	2.5	
	Post-course	3.3	1673	2.3	-0.45
SDQ Total difficulties	Pre-course	17.8	1613	7.3	
	Post-course	14.5	1613	7.5	-0.45
SDQ Impact score	Pre-course	3.0	1613	2.9	
	Post-course	1.6	1613	2.4	-0.51

^a Cohen's *d*

A4. HOW WAS YOUR GROUP?

The 11 items in the *How was your group?* measure were examined to explore whether they formed a smaller number of groups of items measuring similar dimensions of the group experience. We analysed the data using factor analysis¹⁹. This shows that those 11 dimensions group into two main factors: Group leader style (main factor with 57% of the variance) and programme helpfulness (11%).

¹⁹ Factor analysis examines the inter-relationship of items in order to produce groups of items that measure common factors.

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