Early Years, Parenting and Family Relationships

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An independent charity and a ‘What Works’ Centre: we support effective early intervention so every child can fulfil their potential.

From conception to young adulthood

Generate knowledge & evidence
Communicate & disseminate
Secure Adoption

Early Years Evidence Seminar, 8th February 2017
Missing piece of the jigsaw
What Works to enhance the inter-parental relationship and improve outcomes for children

Review with Professor Gordon Harold, University of Sussex, EIF and the DWP

Looked at the scientific evidence and 15 interventions in the UK to support relationships between parents to improve child outcomes
It is the quality of the inter-parental relationship which matters

- How parents relate to each other (whether together or separated) is a primary influence on children’s mental health and life chances.

- Children exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved inter-parental conflict are at risk of a range of negative outcomes.

- Parenting interventions in the presence of frequent, severe and unresolved inter-parental conflict – without addressing that conflict – are unlikely to be successful in improving child outcomes.

- Implications are that interventions need to support couple (adult) relationship functioning

- Consider the importance of mother-child, father-child, co-parenting relationships
Supporting adoption of the IPR evidence

Percentage of respondents who feel support for inter-parental relationships is included in the following areas:

- Midwifery and HV: 8%
- Health and Wellbeing: 11%
- Family Information Service: 15%
- Early Help Strategy: 19%
- Children’s Centres: 19%
- Troubled Families: 27%
- Parenting support: 28%
- Percentage of respondents: 30%

- How to apply evidence in the review
- Particular focus on families who are in or at risk of poverty. Partnership with JRF
- Shifting the culture in services, equipping practitioners to target aspects of adult/couple/partner functioning to improve child outcomes
‘Foundations for Life’

“Foundations for Life: What Works to Support Parent Child Interaction in the Early Years” is a groundbreaking assessment by the Early Intervention Foundation of 75 early intervention programmes aimed at improving child outcomes through positive parent child interactions in the early years.
Parents matter

• Focused on these 3 overlapping outcomes

• These dynamic interactions during the first five year have important impacts on children’s future development
One size does not fit all!

How can “What Works” inform policy?
Programme Assessment

Effectiveness
Evidence from at least two high-quality evaluations* demonstrating positive impacts across populations and environments lasting a year or longer. This evidence may include significant adaptations to meet the needs of different target populations.

Efficacy
Evidence from at least one rigorously conducted evaluation* demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.

Preliminary Evidence
Evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample using validated instruments.

Logic Model
Key elements of the logic model are being confirmed and verified in relation to practice and the underpinning scientific evidence. Testing of impact is underway but evidence of impact at Level 2 not yet achieved.

No Effect
A finding of no effect on measured child outcomes in a high quality impact evaluation.* The next step is to return to the verification and confirmation of the logic model.

75 Programmes!

*High-quality evaluations do not need to be randomised control trials if a relevant and robust counter-factual can be provided in other ways.
Attachment Security

How can “What Works” inform policy?
Attachment Security

The majority of parents are able to support attachment security in their children. A minority will struggle.

- Infant behaviours elicit a response from caregivers
- Sensitive parenting increases a secure attachment relationship
- A child’s secure attachment fosters positive expectations of him or herself and others
- Children are more likely to mature into adults who foster attachment security with their own children

Factors which can interfere:
- Social Disadvantage
- Single Parenthood
- Unwanted pregnancy

Age
- Relationships problems
- Mental health
Attachment Security

Specialist

Targeted-Indicated

Targeted-Selective

Universal

13 1

12 1

5
Attachment Security

High need for targeted interventions that support infant and children’s early attachment relationship starting during the perinatal period and infancy

5 interventions with good or established evidence were identified

- 3 Targeted-Indicated (Child/parent psychotherapy)
- 1 Targeted-Selective (Family Nurse Partnership)
- 1 Universal (Family Foundations)

Programmes with no effect suggest that programmes are likely to be more effective for highly vulnerable families if offered for a longer period of time to most vulnerable families.

Effective programmes tend to be high cost, but can provide high impact – including increased attachment security, reduced risk of child maltreatment and improved parental mental health.
Behavioural self-regulation

Noncompliant behaviour in the early years

How can “What Works” inform policy?
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**Behavioural self-regulation**

- Young children behave in aggressive and non-compliant ways
- Parents reinforce these behaviours through coercive cycles
- Parents learn effective strategies for encouraging compliant behaviour
- Children’s behaviour improves, children can be regulate their own behaviour

Factors which can increase likelihood of difficulty:
- Child temperament
- Language delays
- Coercive parenting behaviours
Behavourial self-regulation

- Specialist
- Targeted-Indicated
- Targeted-Selective
- Universal

12 4 1 12
10 interventions with good or established evidence were identified

- 8 were available at the Targeted-Indicated level. One of these programmes had good evidence of improving children’s behaviour for ten years or longer
- 2 were available at the Targeted-Selective 1
- 2 Universal interventions had evidence of no effect on any measured EIF child outcome

Non-compliant behaviour problems may be difficult to prevent. This may be because not all children will remain non-compliant and parents likely need to practice effective strategies

Effective programmes tend to be low to low-medium cost. These programmes appear to have good short term impact, but longer term impact remains unknown.
Cognitive development

All children have a cognitive ‘zone’ in which they can learn new concepts.

Parents support or scaffold learning within this zone through the simplification of tasks.

Effective parental scaffolding improves children’s understanding, language and executive functions.

These skills better prepare children for school and future learning.

A strong and persistent gap exists between lower and middle-income families in children’s early learning.

Language delays are also apparent in children in lower, middle and upper middle income families.
Cognitive development

- Specialist
- Targeted-Indicated
- Targeted-Selective
- Universal

Home visiting interventions also had evidence of improving early learning outcomes

3

12

3
Cognitive development

• 2 interventions with good evidence were identified. Both were Targeted-Selective interventions for children living in disadvantaged communities.

• Both interventions made use of home visiting lasting a year or longer. Three other home visiting interventions were also identified with good evidence of support children’s early language.

• Effective programmes tend to be medium to high cost.
Headline findings

- There are a range of effective and proven programmes
- More evidence for programmes to address to behavioural development. Age 2.5 important point for intervention.
- Less evidence on attachment, maternal mental health critical
- Gap in Early Learning programmes, need to compliment work in settings
- Overall, the evidence is strongest for programmes that target based on early signals of risk in child development.
- Need to test and learn
EIF National Conference 2017
Putting evidence into action
11th May 2017

http://www.eif.org.uk/