

Project Summary

The Family Links Nurturing Programme: strategic research and development

Commissioned by Family Links (2013-2014)

Policy and practice background

The Family Links Nurturing Programme (FLNP) is a structured, manualised 10-week group-based interactive programme promoting emotional health and mental wellbeing, relationship skills and positive behaviour management strategies for parents/carers and their children. It was developed by the UK-based charity Family Links from a model that originated in the United States (Bavolek, 2000). The UK Programme is well-respected, and very popular with commissioners, practitioners and parents. It has been delivered in the UK for over fifteen years and is presently available in over 50 local authorities around the country, delivered both as a universal (open access) programme and also as an intervention for parents with additional needs, sometimes in combination with one-to-one work. Training to become an accredited FLNP Parent Group Leader involves a four-day training course based around the programme manual (Hunt with Mountford 2003) and regular supervision and re-accreditation.

Background to the project

Family Links has from its inception been a strong advocate for learning from research and other evidence, and there is already a substantial, mixed-method research base on the Programme. The Colebrooke Centre was commissioned in 2013 to contribute to a process being carried out by Family Links as part of their work to plan for future research and evaluation activities. One of our recommendations was that before new research strategies and methods were selected, strategic planning should include a re-examination and re-validation of both the content, and the implementation and delivery aspects of the programme. This would ensure that future evaluations of effectiveness were resting on solid foundations and accurately reflected the programme's intentions and implementation realities. The present project therefore involves a review of existing research knowledge, to clarify what is already known about the programme; a review of

monitoring and evaluation data collected by Family Links itself from local providers; a process undertaken in partnership with Family Links to explore and update the 'theory of change' for the programme; and an examination of appropriate outcomes for the programme. A final stage will also undertake work to develop and test an overarching measure of impact to use as a future evaluation tool, based on a recently developed method (Ghate and Moran 2013).

Project design

This implementation research and support project is designed in stages:

Stage 1

- review of the existing knowledge base for FLNP and a workshop with expert stakeholders to agree findings and discuss implications

Stage 2

- review of existing in-house monitoring and evaluation activities
- co-constructed work, undertaken with FLNP stakeholders and content experts, to review the theory and mechanisms of change for the programme: that is, to review the content of FLNP; the intended purpose of the programme (what it is expected to change); the logic of why it is expected to work for parents; and how it is delivered on the ground.
- work to map and re-validate the theory of change against the most relevant, up to date research, and clarify the most appropriate target outcomes
- recommend appropriate future research strategies

Stage 3

- development and testing of an overarching measure of impact tailored to FLNP with a cohort of parents completing the programme during 2014

Publications and outputs

The main output will be a report to Family Links, with recommendations for future development of the programme.

Contact

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See also: <https://www.familylinks.org.uk/>

References:

Bavolek S.J (2000) *The Nurturing Parenting Programs* OJJDP Bulletin November 2000

Ghate D. and Moran P. (2013) *Development of an overarching measure of impact for Home-Start UK: a feasibility study*. Executive Summary <http://www.cevi.org.uk/publications.html>

Hunt C. with Mountford A. (2003) *The Parenting Puzzle* Oxford: Family Links

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