

Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme Training Success in Essex

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Abstract

This article is an evaluation of The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme that has run in Essex in 2008. The programme was developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton and has produced significant research that suggests that parenting programmes are both highly effective and acceptable to children's careers. In Essex two Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes have taken place, which 22 parents were referred to. This evaluation looks at 11 of those parents who completed self completion questionnaires after the group. Results show very positive feedback, showing that parents rated all areas of the programme as being positive or very positive. This shows that The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes that ran in Essex in 2008 were a great success.

Introduction

A parenting programme is a complex process of raising awareness about parenting by participating in a series of group sessions, run by a facilitator, which may include group discussions, feedback, videos, role play and homework, to help parents find ways to improve their parenting or to affirm their own parenting methods.

Research in this area is of high interest and there is a lot of evidence which suggests that these parenting programmes are very successful at promoting mental wellbeing and reducing risk (e.g. neglect, abuse, criminal and anti-social behaviour) in early childhood. Professionals from the mental health sector recommend group-

based parent training programmes as the best way to manage children's emotional and conduct disorders and to prevent them developing further. This is done by teaching parents good parenting skills, strengthening parent management skills and improving timing of parental skills by modifying parent-child interactions. This in turn, will increase children's pro-social behaviour and decrease child oppositional or anti-social behaviour. The main aim of the programmes is to teach the parents to change their behaviour, which in turn changes their children's behaviours (social learning theory).

The Incredible Years Series developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, is a series of these parent training programmes that have been developed over the last 30 years. It focuses on strengthening parenting skills (monitoring, positive discipline and confidence) and fostering parent's involvement in children's school and home experiences in order to increase children's academic and social skills and reduce problems. The Incredible Years series has produced extensive research which suggests that these programmes are both highly effective and acceptable to children's careers. Improvements have been found in parent and child interactions, parental discipline strategies, parent's involvement in child's education, child conduct problems (at home and in school) and child social competence, which has been maintained overtime. The whole Incredible Years Series is aimed at parents, teachers and children; however this report will focus on The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes that have run in Essex in 2008, which focuses on parents and their babies.

The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme supports parents and their babies aged 0-12 months. It is a six part program focusing on helping parents learn to observe and read babies' cues and signals, to understand babies as intelligent learners, to learn how to provide them with nurturing and responsive care, to understand brain development and babies' development of object and person concept, to learn the importance of providing a physical and tactile environment, to understand the importance of finding time for oneself to renew the energy for parenting and to learn about visual and verbal stimulation and communication.

Due to the success of the Incredible Years Series itself and The Incredible Years BASIC Parent Training Programmes in Essex, the first Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme was run in Essex in June 2008. This article aims to evaluate the success of the first and second group, looking at the self completion evaluation form completed after the groups had taken place.

Aims

The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme has six main objectives:

- Getting to know your baby (0-3 months).
- Babies as Intelligent learners (3-6 months).
- Providing physical, tactile and visual stimulation.
- Parents learning to read babies' minds.
- Gaining support.
- Babies emerging sense of self (6-12 months).

The aim of this article is to evaluate the success of The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes that have run in Essex in 2008. This includes 11 parents who completed the self completion questionnaires.

Method

Participants

Below figure 1 gives a snap shot of the Incredible Years Baby Group population

Figure 1

	Group 1	Group 2	Total
No. of Parent and Baby groups that have taken place in Essex	1	1	2
No. of referrals	12	10	22
No. of parents who started the group	10	6	16
No. of parents who didn't show up to the group	2	3	5
No. of parent who dropped out	3	1	4
No. of female parents	6	6	12
No. of male parents	4	0	4
No. of parents with learning difficulties	1	0	1
No. of parents who completed self completion evaluation forms	6	5	11
No. of parents who refused to complete an evaluation form	1	1	2
No. of male parents who completed the evaluations	1	0	1
No. of female parents who completed the evaluations	5	5	10

Design

All information was collected by self completion questionnaires. All families were asked to provide information about the overall programme (including bonding, bonding methods, feelings about developmental processes, helping with personal

problems, expectations, enhanced development, recommendation of the group, confidence, management of future problems and overall achievement of goals), the teaching format (including content, demonstration, discussion, role play, buddy calls, book and CD, practicing skills at home, weekly handouts, and phone calls), the specific parenting techniques (including infant development, providing stimulations, language development, child-directed play, coaching, praise, rewards, routines, ignoring, discipline, baby proofing and overall evaluations) and an evaluation of the group leader (including teaching, preparation, concern, helpfulness and personal feelings) on a scale from 0 to 6, with 0 being very negative and 6 being very positive. Parent were also asked to provide comments on the overall programme including the following four questions, what part of the programme was most helpful to you, what did you like most about the programme, what did you like least about the programme and how could the programme have been improved to help you more.

Analysis/procedure

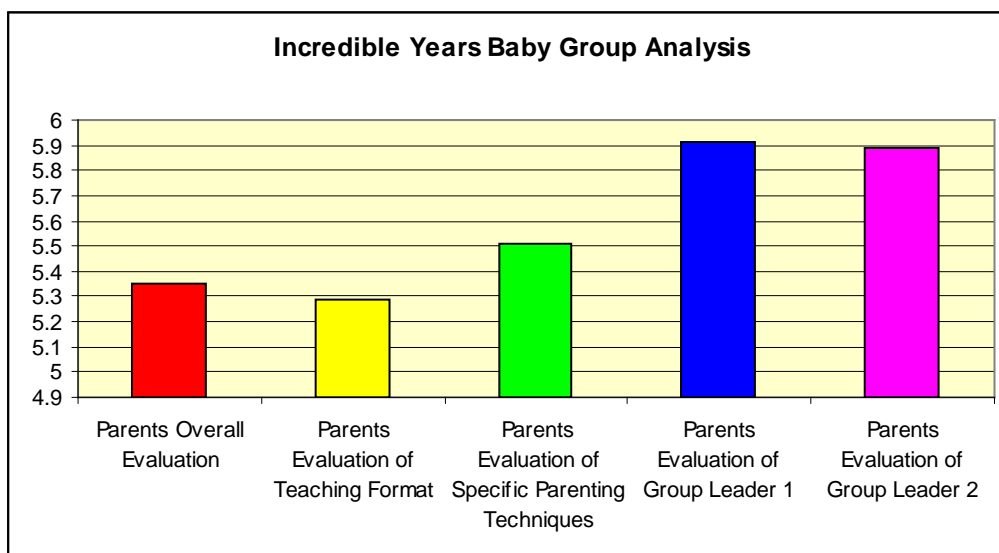
All parents attending the group filled in the self completion questionnaire after the group. All participants were kept anonymous by being coded with an I.D. number held locally and the data collected was entered into Microsoft Excel.

Results

The results are split so they follow the same format as the self completion questionnaires. This includes parents overall evaluation, parent evaluation of teaching format, parent evaluation of specific parenting techniques, parent evaluation of group leader one and group leader two.

Figure 2

Measure	Result
Parents Overall Evaluation	5.35
Parents Evaluation of Teaching Format	5.29
Parents Evaluation of Specific Parenting Techniques	5.51
Parents Evaluation of Group Leader 1	5.91
Parents Evaluation of Group Leader 2	5.89



Results show that all elements were rated positively above point 3 which is neutral. The parents overall evaluation total was 5.35, showing that parents rated the overall group as being positive to very positive. The parents overall evaluation total of the teaching format was 5.29, showing that again parents thought the teaching was positive to very positive. The parents overall evaluation total for the specific parenting techniques was 5.51, showing again that parents thought that techniques were positive to very positive. The parents overall evaluation of group leader one was 5.91, showing that parents thought the group leader was positive to very positive. And finally, the parents overall evaluation of group leader two was 5.89, showing that parents thought that the group leader was positive to very positive.

Discussion

The results show that all areas of the evaluation form were rated as positive to very positive, this included overall evaluation of the group, overall teaching format, overall specific parenting techniques, and the overall evaluations of the group leaders (leader one and leader two). This shows that The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes that ran in Essex in 2008 were very successful, providing additional evidence to support the existing research that suggests that The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme is a successful intervention tool. The results also support the fact that parenting groups are able to fully engage with families working on children's behaviour.

The self completion questionnaire also provided parents with a overall evaluation section where they could leave comments addressing these following four

questions, what part of the programme was most helpful to you, what did you like most about the programme, what did you like least about the programme and how could the programme have been improved to help you more. Parents found playing with the baby, talking in groups, exchanging ideas and visual aids most helpful. Parents found having the babies in the group, the relaxed atmosphere, the group, the discussion and Jeannie as the bits of the programme they liked the most. Parents said that what they liked least about the group was that it was too short and there were not enough sessions. Parents suggested that the group could have been improved by providing more in depth sessions where more could be learnt and to include more about feelings and guilt.

This evaluation has produced some very positive findings which suggest that the Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programmes have been a success in Essex. However with any investigation there are always limitations. The main limitation for this programme is the evaluation form. The evaluation form is very limited, parents can only provide a limited amount of information and feedback and this needs to be improved. It has therefore been suggested to review the evaluation document to include areas where the parents can fill in demographic information so that the similarities and difference between the groups can be measured and to include pre and post evaluation questions so it can be analysed to see if the behaviours themselves have changed significantly after the group.

In conclusion it is clear that the Incredible Years Parent and Baby Groups that ran in Essex in 2008 were a success as all four areas of the evaluation showed that parents felt the group was successful, helpful, useful, and positive and that the parents have seen many areas of their life improve after taking part in the group. It is therefore very clear that the group was a success for the parents, children and the wider community.

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