

## **The Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP): a briefing paper**

Sept 2015

### ***Introduction***

The Psychology of Parenting Project, developed within NHS Education for Scotland (NES), is aimed at improving the availability of high-quality evidence-based parenting programmes for families with young children who have elevated levels of behaviour problems. The Early Years Taskforce has approved a national roll-out of the PoPP model and commitments relating to it are included in the Mental Health and National Parenting Strategies. The plan aligns with the public service reform agenda by promoting cross-sector, cost-effective early intervention and offers evidence-based outcomes that particularly match the workstream 3 aims of the Early Years Collaborative. The model also chimes with the GIRFEC framework as it places children at the centre of services, and values the assets of the families and communities in which they live.

Funding to help sites “front-load” the adoption of the PoPP model is being made available. This funding is aimed at initiating long-term capacity-building in relation to selected parenting programmes, and at ensuring that local areas can embed these programmes in a high quality and sustainable manner, as part of routine service delivery.

### ***The PoPP plan***

The PoPP plan targets 3 and 4 year-olds with elevated levels of behaviour problems. Effective interventions are needed for these children because:

- Approximately 10% of preschool children display atypical and persisting high levels of behaviour problems (aggression, non-compliance and poor temper control) that are strongly predictive of a host of poor outcomes such as school exclusion, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and mental health difficulties later in life.
- By their late-twenties, children with these difficulties are set to cost the public purse ten times more than their normative peers.

Positive parenting practices mediate these outcomes. Decades-worth of top-quality research has produced attachment and cognitive social learning theory-based parenting programmes that are:

- Efficacious: research trials repeatedly demonstrate that the best of these programmes are capable of helping up to 2/3rds of affected children leave their risk-laden developmental trajectories.
- Effective in real life settings: these programmes have been successfully implemented in real-life settings in the UK, including rural and urban communities when delivered by both statutory and voluntary sector agencies.
- Cost-effective: economic analyses have shown these programmes to be cost-effective in the here and now and to offer lucrative long term savings. The potential public sector savings over 25 years are estimated to be between 2.8 and 6.1 times the intervention cost.
- Valued and appreciated by parents: parents participating in the groups are helped to encourage good behaviours and to build their children's social and emotional competence. They are also coached to manage undesirable behaviours, in non-violent ways that are sensitive to their child's developmental needs. Qualitative research shows that parents appreciate this strength-based approach and that they will successfully engage with the intervention when delivered in ways that are sensitive to their needs and goals.

Programmes of this nature are most effective for this target group of children and parents when delivered in a group format in the pre-school years. The most robustly-evidenced parenting programmes suitable for these children and their parents have been identified. Two programmes, **The Incredible Years® Preschool BASIC** and **Level 4 Group Triple P** have been selected for further dissemination.

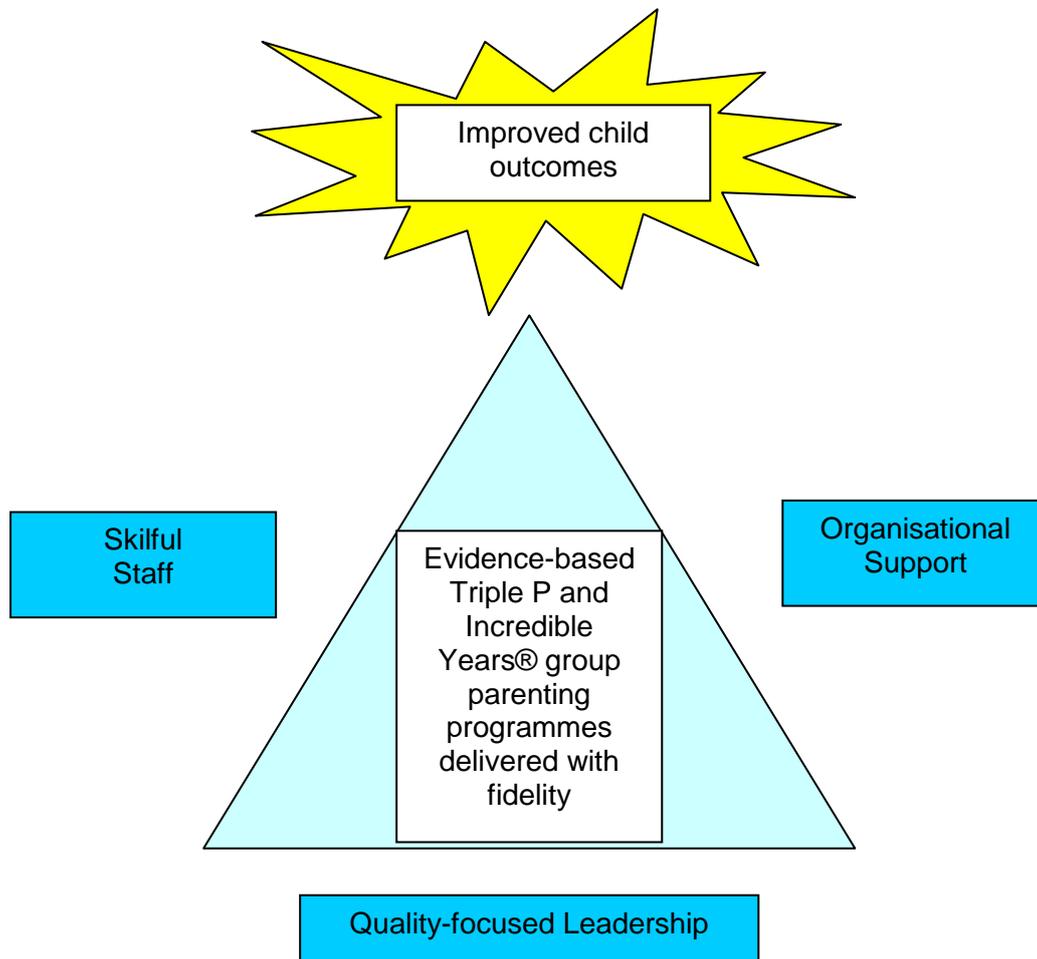
#### Key aspects of the Incredible Years® Parenting Programme

- Part of a suite of strength-based parent, child and teacher programmes covering various age ranges over the 0-12 age span.
- Each session lasts for approximately 2 hours over 14-18 weeks for up to 12 parents.
- Topics covered include play, praise, rules and routines, limit-setting and consequences.
- 2 group leaders facilitate group discussion using video-clips to help parents identify key principles of strong relationships and effective parenting practices. The approach emphasises collaborative experiential learning, social support and incorporates role-play, behavioural rehearsal and the use of home-based activities between group meetings.
- Further information can be found at [www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)

#### Key aspects of the Level 4 Group Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme)

- Part of a public health model multi-level system of parenting interventions.
- 2 facilitators administer the programme to up to 12 parents, over 8 weeks (with 5 weekly meetings lasting 2 hours and 3 weekly structured phone calls that last up to 30 minutes).
- Topics covered include providing a safe, engaging and positive learning environment, assertive discipline, realistic expectations and parental self-care.
- Uses a self-regulation framework and active skills learning processes within which parents follow a workbook, observe and discuss clear video examples of positive parenting, practice techniques within the group and flexibly select their own goals and preferred strategies to use at home.
- Further information can be found at [www.triplep.net](http://www.triplep.net)

The PoPP plan sets out a quality-improvement focused implementation plan designed to address the barriers that are inevitably encountered when evidence-based programmes of this nature are to be scaled up and delivered, with fidelity, in real-world settings. The framework is structured around three principal drivers: skilful staff, organisational support and adaptive leadership.



Within this framework, the PoPP plan outlines detailed arrangements for:

- the training and educational infrastructure required to deliver these evidence-based parenting programmes with fidelity.
- the local organisational supports required to complement this training. The plan promotes a changing working practices approach that makes the most of the existing workforce skill base by strengthening its capacity to deliver programmes of proven benefit.
- the local and national leadership frameworks and support required to oversee the quality management of this initiative. Data driven decision-making and problem-solving are core aspects of this support.

Together these elements aim to address the necessity of combining effective programmes with effective implementation methods to achieve sustainable improved outcomes for children, families and services.

Funding to support the adoption of this model in the first year of implementation is available to cover

- all training costs for a sufficient number of practitioners to offer groups to all parents who have 3 and 4 year olds with significantly elevated levels of behavioural difficulties. This training will build capacity in local areas so that two thirds of parents of these high risk children can have access to an 8 week Triple P group, while the remaining one third will be able to access the more intensive 14 - 18 week version of the Incredible Years® programme.
- all supervision and fidelity-maintaining costs.
- all manuals, DVDs, workbooks and reading materials associated with delivering the programmes with fidelity.
- assistance with transport, crèche and refreshments.
- a quality improvement-focused implementation-monitoring system.

## **Progress**

In the early months of 2013, the PoPP team invited Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to note interest in adopting their implementation model. Working partnerships have now been established with fourteen CPPs (West Lothian, Falkirk, Stirling, Clackmannanshire, Fife, Argyll and Bute, Perth and Kinross, Edinburgh City, East Lothian, Scottish Borders, Highland, North Ayrshire, Aberdeenshire and East Renfrewshire).

To date, 380 practitioners from the existing Early Years' workforce, have been trained in one of the selected programmes. Approximately 220 groups have been delivered (or are currently being delivered), to parents of at least 1357 children.

The outcome data that are being routinely collected show encouraging reductions in behaviour problems for children whose parents have attended the groups. Consistent results across sites, indicate that 80% of children whose parents have participated in PoPP groups (and who have completed pre and post measures), have experienced a reduction in behaviour problems. In addition, about 60% of the children whose behaviour was rated by their parents to be in the clinical range when they started attending a group, have moved out of this high-risk range by the end of the group.

Long term follow-up studies indicate that changes of this magnitude should lead to meaningful changes in the life chances of these children and translate into lucrative public sector cost-savings.

## Summary PoPP outcome data : September 2015

	Total
Number of PoPP groups delivered ( or currently being delivered )	220
Number of families enrolled in groups	1,357
Number of parental caregivers enrolled in groups	1,673
% of children who had an improved score when a standardised assessment tool ( SDQ ) was completed by parents before and after the intervention.	80%

The bespoke PoPP database shows that the workforce capacity created through this initiative is currently being underused in all CPPs where the model has been adopted. Improvement work has therefore been initiated, particularly in relation to helping services to reach more parents.

For further information, please contact [psychology@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:psychology@nes.scot.nhs.uk) or access a short animation on PoPP using the following link <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/psychology/multiprofessional-psychology/psychology-of-parenting-project.aspx>