

PROGRAMME PROVIDER REFLECTION ON “FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE: WHAT WORKS TO SUPPORT PARENT CHILD INTERACTION IN THE EARLY YEARS” REPORT BY THE EARLY INTERVENTION FOUNDATION

The Evidence Journey: Case Study & Testimonial

Programme: Parents as First Teachers (PAFT)

Andrea Lanfranchi, Alex Neuhauser, Simone Schaub, Susan C. A. Burkhardt, University of Applied Sciences of Special Needs Education, HfH, Zurich/Switzerland

Using the Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) programme, parent educators made home visits to support young children in 132 families with social burdens every 2 to 3 weeks for a period of 3 years. The programme targets families who are in difficult circumstances around the time of the birth of the child and who need support with early care and education of their children. ‘Difficult circumstances’ means that the families have burdens and risk factors that make their start of parenthood difficult, such as limited social support, financial distress, unemployment, or family difficulties.

To examine the effectiveness of the early support, the 248 families were randomly assigned to two groups at the outset: an intervention group and a control group of children in 116 families who are not receiving PAFT program support. Comparison of the two groups aims to uncover possible impacts of the early support. For that purpose, after the birth of the child and around the time of the child’s first three birthdays, measurements were conducted at three levels: parents, child, and parent-child interaction. We followed a multi-method protocol including questionnaires, standardised interviews, paediatric testing, experiments and video analyses.

The Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook has been established to assess programme efficacy through the strength of their evidence. We learned from EIF, that an intervention may be judged as effective if it can demonstrate a meaningful impact through a rigorous evaluation. So we carefully planned the research design considering RCT as gold standard for determining causal explanations based on the effects of the programme. The aim is to reach in the next years an evidence standard of 3 (single high quality evaluation with positive impact) and later of 4 (multiple high quality evaluation with consistently positive impact across populations and environments). A replication study in Germany is in preparation and we are in contact with researchers, who may realise a similar replication study in the UK.

The prevention program Parents as Teachers (PAT) is especially well suited for providing effective and long-lasting developmental support to children in families with social burdens. One challenge is correctly identifying families at risk and obtaining and retaining their willingness to participate in the intensive program. Future measurements at starting kindergarten and school will evaluate long-term outcomes of the PAT intervention. Evaluation regarding educational attainment of the

children upon school entry (Follow-up ZEPPELIN 5-9) and with the transition to secondary school (Follow-up ZEPPELIN 12-13) are in preparation. Later follow-ups are also planned at the age of 20, 30 and 40.