

Programmes that directly or indirectly target the couple relationship

EIF has conducted two reviews on couple relationships, identifying many relevant programmes and rigorously assessing a smaller selection of programmes against our standards of evidence. Some of these programmes directly focus on improving the couple relationship and related child outcomes, whereas others are mainly parenting programmes that have an additional component focused on the couple relationship.

Below are two tables describing two different sets of programmes:

- Table 1 lists **programmes that have been rigorously assessed by EIF against our [standards of evidence](#) and which have demonstrated impact on child outcomes**. This is designed to display evidence-based programmes in which we are confident, provided they are implemented in the right way, will be effective in improving child outcomes.
- Table 2 lists **programmes that have been identified by EIF through other means, but either have not yet been assessed by EIF or which have not yet demonstrated impact on child outcomes**. This means that, while these programmes may be effective, they have not yet been demonstrated to be so by EIF by going through our rigorous assessment process. The table is designed to give the reader an idea of the population of available programmes which target the couple relationship.

The interventions included in these tables focus on those identified in our What Works reviews and through our call for evidence on interparental conflict. For this reason, the list is not a comprehensive one, as there are likely to be wider parenting and family therapy programmes that may include couple content but that are not yet included in these tables.

Table 1: Programmes assessed against EIF Standards with evidence of improving child outcomes

The Early Intervention Foundation has assessed a small sample of programmes that target the interparental relationship and found evidence of impact on child outcomes relating to seven of these programmes. **Please note that many of these programmes assessed to date are parenting programmes with an additional component focused on the couple relationship, rather than programmes that directly focus on the couple relationship.** EIF is planning to assess more programmes in 2018 (see table 2 for a list of further programmes identified by EIF).

The evidence rating that was assigned to a rating and the outcomes the programme has had evidence of improving is displayed below.

Notes about programme outcomes:

- The main criteria for including programmes in table 1 was those programmes assessed by EIF with evidence of child outcomes that have a specific component/significant content that explicitly targets the couple relationship.
- The outcomes displayed below originate from the programme's best evidence. This means that a programme may have evidence of improving more outcomes (from less rigorous studies) than is displayed below.
- Some programmes may lack evidence of impact on couple outcomes, but nonetheless include content that works to improve the couple relationship. This is why some of the programmes below are not shown to have improved couple outcomes.

Programme	Programme description	Target users	Classification	Origin of best evidence	Evidence rating	Couple outcomes	Parent outcomes	Child outcomes
Enhanced Triple P <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	Enhanced Triple P (Level 5) provides adjunctive interventions (alongside a Level 4 Triple P programme) to address family factors (such as parental mood and partner conflict) that may impact upon and complicate the task of parenting. The programme is delivered by a practitioner with QCF-4/5 level qualifications, in 3-11 sessions of between 40-90 minutes duration each.	Families with parenting problems and other adult adjustment issues	Targeted selected	Australia	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parenting • Improved sense of parental competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved child behaviour
Family Foundations <i>Couple focus</i>	Family Foundations is a group-based programme for couples expecting their first child. The programme is delivered by two facilitators with QCF-6 qualifications in a helping profession. Parents attend 5 sessions during pregnancy and 4 other sessions after the baby is born, in which they learn communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and how to prepare for parenthood.	Couples expecting their first child	Universal	US	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved relationship quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parenting • Improved parental wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attachment and early behaviour • Improved behaviour
Family Check-Up for Children <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	The Family Check-Up for Children is a strengths-based, family-centred intervention that motivates parents to use parenting practices to support child competence, mental health, and risk reduction. The programme is delivered over two phases; the first is a brief three session intervention and the second is a family management training programme. Family Check-Up is	Families with toddlers	Targeted selected	US	3+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parent-child relationship • Improved maternal wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved behaviour

	delivered by one therapist or social worker who is qualified to QCF-7/8 level. With appropriate support, a paraprofessional may also implement the programme.							
<p>Incredible Years Preschool (Advanced)</p> <p><i>Parenting focus with couple component</i></p>	Incredible Years (IY) Preschool is a group-based programme for low-to-high need families with children aged 3-6 years suffering from serious behavioural difficulties. The programme is designed to help parents manage their child's behaviour more effectively. It is delivered by two IY co-leaders with QCF-7/8 qualifications during 18-20 weekly group sessions. Please note that it is the Advanced Programme that builds on IY Preschool, that includes the content/component on parental relationships and conflict.	Families with children (aged 3-6 years) with behavioural difficulties	Targeted indicated	UK	4+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parenting Improved sense of parental competency Improved parental wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved behaviour Improved reading ability
<p>Incredible Years School Age Basic (Advanced)</p> <p><i>Parenting focus with couple component</i></p>	Incredible Years (IY) School Age Basic is a group-based programme for families with children aged 6-12 years and with concerns about their child's behaviour. Through 12-16 (2-hour) sessions, the programme aims to increase the use of effective parenting strategies, and ultimately to reduce antisocial or criminal behaviour. Much like IY Preschool, the Advanced Programme involves 10-12 additional sessions which focus on the parental relationship/conflict.	Families with children (aged 6-12 years) with behavioural difficulties	Targeted indicated	UK & US	3+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parenting Reduced use of harsh discipline practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved behaviour Improved reading ability Reduced ADHD and ODD symptoms
<p>Schoolchildren and their Families</p> <p><i>Couple focus</i></p>	Schoolchildren and their Families (SAF) is delivered to couples when their children are making the transition to school. The programme is based on the same model as Parents as Partners and Supporting Father Involvement. Groups of couples attend 16 (2-hour) sessions delivered by male and female co-practitioners. Each group meeting begins with an open-ended check-in, followed by an agenda that focuses on one of the five aspects of life in the SAF risk-protective model of family functioning.	Families with children making the transition to school	Universal	US	3	<p><i>Marital focus:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced marital conflict Improved relationship quality and satisfaction Improved communication <p><i>Parenting focus:</i></p>	<p><i>Marital focus:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parenting <p><i>Parenting focus:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved academic achievement Improved behaviour

						• Reduced marital conflict		
Triple P Family Transitions <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	Family Transitions Triple P (FTTP) is a 5-session parenting programme designed for moderate to high need families undergoing separation and/or divorce. It is delivered in addition to the Level 4 Triple P programme, and aims to prevent negative outcomes for children following parental separation/divorce. The programme is delivered by a practitioner with QCF-4/5 level qualifications.	Families undergoing separation and/or divorce	Targeted selected	Australia	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parenting • Improved parental wellbeing • Reduced anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved behaviour

Table 2: Programmes that have not yet been assessed against EIF Standards or are at an early stage of building their evidence/ have not yet been shown by EIF to improve child outcomes

The following programmes have not yet been assessed by EIF or have not yet collected evidence or demonstrated impact on child outcomes. They have been identified through the following means:

- They have been identified in the reviews conducted by EIF: [‘What Works to Enhance Inter-Parental Relationships and Improve Outcomes for Children’](#) (2016) and [‘Inter-Parental Conflict and Outcomes for Children in the Contexts of Poverty and Economic Stress’](#) (2017), but have not yet been assessed against EIF’s standards of evidence.
- They have been identified through one of EIF’s [calls for evidence](#), but have not yet been assessed against EIF’s standards of evidence.
- They have been assessed by EIF and have not yet collected evidence or demonstrated impact on child outcomes.

For this reason, the list is not a comprehensive one, as there are likely to be wider parenting and family therapy programmes that may include couple content but that are not yet included in these tables.

Important note

Many of these programmes have not yet been assessed against EIF’s standards of evidence. Therefore we cannot be sure they are effective. The table below is designed to give the reader an idea of the population of programmes that target the couple relationship.

Some of the programmes below have a direct focus on the couple relationship, whereas others are principally parenting interventions with an additional couple component. This has been highlighted in the table below.

Some programmes identified are may have evidence of impact on couple and parent outcomes, but do not yet have evidence on child outcomes. EIF is currently exploring how best to provide information on these programmes for commissioners and other stakeholders.

Every effort has been made to include accurate information on these programmes' target group, classification, and country of origin. However, as many of these programmes have not yet been assessed by EIF – a process which involves a detailed review of programmes' documentation and evidence – it may be that there are inaccuracies. We welcome feedback from providers.

Programme	Programme description	Target users	Classification	Country of origin
'4 Rs 2Ss' Family Strengthening Programme <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	A multiple family group service delivery model for families with children with serious behaviour problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families with children with serious behavioural problems, particularly for child welfare-involved children 	Targeted indicated	US
Adopting Together – Couple Therapy <i>Couple focus</i>	This is an adaptation of the Couple Therapy programme which aims to improve the couple relationship and improve the alliance between partners as adoptive parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoptive parents 	Targeted indicated	UK
Adopting Together – Group Programme <i>Couple focus</i>	This is an adaptation of the Parents as Partners programme. It is a 16-session group intervention (with additional individual support) for adoptive parents, designed to strengthen their relationship and enhance their co-operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoptive parents 	Targeted indicated	UK
Assisting Children through Transition <i>Couple focus</i>	A programme that aims to (1) reduce stress of a break-up on their children, (2) teach skills to protect children from ongoing effects of conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	US
Becoming a Family <i>Couple focus</i>	Weekly group-support sessions for parents having their first child. Aims to improve quality and stability of relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New parents during 3 months prior to and following birth of first child Intact families 	Universal	US
Brief Encounters Relationship Support <i>Couple focus</i>	The Brief Encounters approach is a form of relationship support delivered by trained frontline practitioners (including Midwives, Health Visitors, Sure Start Centre Workers, and other public-sector workers) to mothers and couples in the transition to parenthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents or couples suffering from relationship difficulties 	Targeted selected	UK

	The programme aims to reduce couple conflict and dissatisfaction, as well as improve relationship quality and parent-child interaction.			
Bringing Baby Home <i>Couple focus</i>	2-day workshop which aims to (1) strengthen couple relationship and prepare new parents for marital difficulties associated with new parenthood; (2) facilitate father and mother involvement; (3) give information about child psychological development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New parents • Intact families 	Universal	US
Building Resilience in Families with Disabled Children <i>Couple focus</i>	This programme aims to help families of disabled children share and identify the impact of having a disabled child and how this impacts on their relationships. It offers strategies to deal with challenges and pressure points, and allows families to link-up with one another for peer-to-peer support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families of disabled children 	Targeted selected	UK
Children in the Middle (CIM) <i>Couple focus</i>	Programme with 1 face-to-face session that focuses on reducing child exposure to destructive conflict, and preventing them being caught in the middle of parent disputes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents. 	Targeted selected	US
Collaborative Divorce Project (CDP) <i>Couple focus</i>	A voluntary and intensive court-based programme aimed at reducing destructive levels of conflict through skills training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated families with children aged 6 years and younger 	Universal	US
Couple CARE for Parents (CCP) <i>Couple focus</i>	Face-to-face workshops aiming to promote positive couple adjustment to parenthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New parents • Intact families 	Universal	Australia
Couple Therapy (Tavistock Relationships) <i>Couple focus</i>	Couple Therapy is a psychodynamic informed clinical service suitable for couples experiencing moderate and high levels of relationship distress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples 	Specialist	UK
Couple Therapy for Depression (IAPT) <i>Couple focus</i>	This is a specialist individual programme of support aimed at couples where one or both partners have been diagnosed with mild-to-moderate depression. It aims to treat existing depression, strengthen the couple relationship, and prevent relapse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples where one partner has been diagnosed with depression 	Specialist	UK
Couple Relationship Education (CRE) <i>Couple focus</i>	In home and group-work programme aiming to help couples increase knowledge about relationships and gain relationship skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income families • Intact families • Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Targeted selected	US

Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET) <i>Couple focus</i>	Programme that aims to reduce couple/parental relationship stress and improve coping and relationship satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For couples with pre-adolescent children, who are experiencing daily stress associated with bringing up children • Intact families • Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Universal	Switzerland
Cultural adaptation of Strong Foundation (adapted from Family Foundations) <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	Co-parenting focused intervention modified from Family Foundations to be culturally appropriate for use with urban, low income, minority young families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban, low-income, minority expectant teen mothers and their male partners • Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Targeted selected	US
Dads for Life (DfL) <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	Programme with focus on improving father-child relationship, and increasing fathers' parenting skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-custodial fathers • Separating/separated families • Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Targeted selected	US
Egokitzen <i>Couple focus</i>	A psychoeducational intervention comprised on 11 weekly sessions that focus on three major themes: (1) separation/divorce, (2) interparental conflict, and (3) parenting style and discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorced/separated parents 	Targeted selected	Spain
'En nu ik..!' ('It's my turn now!') <i>Couple focus</i>	A programme conducted in the Netherlands for families with children aged between 6 and 12 years who have been exposed to interparental violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children exposed to interparental/domestic violence 	Targeted indicated	Netherlands
Enhancing Parenting Skills <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	A one-to-one home visiting programme, delivered by health visitors to parents of pre-school children with significant behavioural challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families of preschool children with behavioural difficulties 	Targeted indicated	UK
EPL: Ein Partnerschaftliches Lernprogramm für Paare (A Learning Programme for married couples)	Cognitive-behavioural programme delivered over a weekend. Focused on problem solving, communication, couple discussions to clarify relationship expectations, and enhancing sexual relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married couples • Intact families 	Universal	Germany

<i>Couple focus</i>				
Family Communication Programme <i>Couple focus</i>	A 4-session intervention aimed at improving interparental and family wide conflict in families with adolescent children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families with adolescent children Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Universal	US
Fatherhood, Relationship and Marriage Education (FRAME) <i>Couple Focus</i>	FRAME is a targeted psychoeducational intervention developed specifically to strengthen the ability of low-income mothers and fathers to reduce conflict, cope with stress and co-parent effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income mothers and fathers Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Targeted selected	US
FOCCUS <i>Couple focus</i>	An individual programme available universally for couples who are entering a long-term committed relationship. It aims to provide education and skills to prevent distress at key relationship transitions with the aim of improving and/or preventing the decline of relationship quality and satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couples about to enter a committed relationship 	Universal	UK
Focus on Kids (FOK) <i>Couple focus</i>	Mandated 2½-hour parent education programme to help divorcing parents learn about effects of divorce on children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separating/separated parents 	Universal	US
Getting it Right for Children When Parents Part (GIRFC) <i>Couple focus</i>	This is a UK-based programme that is based on the Children in the Middle programme from the US. The GIRFC programme is designed to raise awareness of how children are affected by conflict between separated parents and aims to motivate parents to improve communication skills and reduce conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	UK
Handling our Problems Effectively (HOPE) <i>Couple focus</i>	9-hour intervention (HOPE) focusing on communication and conflict resolution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently married couples Intact families (prevention) 	Universal	US
Happy Couples Happy Kids (HCHK) <i>Couple focus</i>	A 4-session programme aimed at improving marital conflict and child welfare for families from community samples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Intact families 	Universal	US
Inspiring Parents Programme <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	The Inspiring parents programme is a 6-week programme which covers Confidence Building, Managing Defiant Behaviour, Stress and Nurturing the self.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families 	Targeted selected	UK

Integrative Behavioural Couple Therapy <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>Couple therapy designed to improve the couple relationship. Consists of two major phases, an evaluation/feedback phase, and an active treatment phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples • Intact families 	Targeted indicated	US
Kids in Divorce & Separation (K.I.D.S.) <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>A 4-hour programme aimed at helping parents improve conflict management and inform them of the impact of divorce on children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Universal	US
Kids Turn <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>Community-based programme designed to lessen interparental conflict, with 6 sessions offered to all members of a divorcing family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Universal	US
Mentalization Based Therapy-Parenting Together <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>An intervention for separated or divorced parents in entrenched conflict over their children and who are trying to co-parent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated parents in conflict over their children 	Specialist	UK
Mother plus Child Programme <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	<p>This programme is a version of NBP (see below) for single parents. It is a 12-session intervention, focused on skills training, that targets five putative mediators: (1) quality of the mother-child relationship, (2) discipline, (3) negative divorce events, (4) contact with fathers, and (5) support from nonparental adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents • Single parents 	Targeted selected	US
New Beginnings Programme (NBP) <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	<p>This is a 10-session programme designed to promote effective parenting following family separation or divorce. It is a skills training intervention that helps parents create positive and warm relationships, employ effective discipline, use open communication with children, and keep them out of the middle of conflict between parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	US
Parenting Co-ordination <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	<p>Parent Co-ordinators (PCs) are designated by judges through court orders to deliver this parenting intervention, which helps to resolve pre- and post-divorce/separation issues relative to the new family dynamics. The intervention is designed to assist high conflict parents through mediation and counselling skills by teaching them how to adhere to their parenting plan and co-parent in the best interest of their children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected / Targeted indicated	US
Parents as Partners <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>This programme (also known as Supporting father Involvement in the USA) is based on the Schoolchildren and their Families programme model listed in Table 1. It aims to help parents who are struggling with conflict and stress in their parenting and relationships,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples 	Targeted indicated	UK

	and to support couples as they resolve relationship issues that affect their ability to parent their children effectively			
Parents Plus – Parenting when Separated <i>Couple focus</i>	This intervention has been specifically designed for an Irish context. It is a psychoeducational intervention that comprises of 6 sessions that target the following topics: co-parenting, conflict management, coping as a live-away or resident parent, coping in the long-term, and helping your children cope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	Ireland
Power of Two Online <i>Couple focus</i>	Internet-based marriage and relationship skills education programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New and expectant parents Intact families 	Universal	US
Preparing Together <i>Couple focus</i>	A group-based programme available for couples who are entering a long-term committed relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couples entering a long-term committed relationship 	Universal	UK
Prevention & Relationship Enhancement (PREP) <i>Couple focus</i>	PREP is designed to teach couples effective communication and conflict management skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couples Intact families (prevention) Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Universal	US
Promoting Strong African American Families (ProSAAF) <i>Couple focus</i>	A prevention programme for couples with a pre-adolescent/adolescent child. The programme has been specifically developed for African American communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African American families with children Intact families 	Targeted selected	US
Reappraisal Writing Task <i>Couple focus</i>	A 7-minute intervention (writing task) at 12, 16, and 20 months, to foster reappraisal of marital conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Married couples Intact families 	Universal	US
Relationship Counselling (Marriage Care) <i>Couple focus</i>	A universal intervention for couples or individuals experiencing relationship distress which aims to reduce couple conflict, improve communication, reduce relationship distress, and rebuild commitment between the couple.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couples experiencing relationship distress 	Universal	UK
Relationship Counselling (Relate) <i>Couple focus</i>	This is available for couples and individuals who have concerns arising from their relationship. The mode of delivery is most often face-to-face, but can also be via telephone or webcam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couples 	Universal	UK

Relate Family Mediation <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>This is a conflict/dispute resolution method offered by a neutral third party – the family mediator – to families and couples on an individual basis who are in the process of separating, or who have already separated, so that they can agree on future arrangements in respect of their children, finances, and child maintenance payments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	UK
Relationship Support Live Chat <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>An internet-based individual counselling service aimed primarily at adults who are experiencing difficulties in their couple relationship and seeking immediate advice and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples 	Universal	UK
Respite Care <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>Respite care is an external form of care offered to the parents of a life-limited or life-threatened child. Such care offers parents a short period of rest or relief during especially difficult periods of caring for their child's unique needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of a life-limited or life-threatened child 	Targeted selected	UK
Restorative Thinking Parenting Programme (Parenting without Conflict) <i>Parenting focus with couple component</i>	<p>This programme aims to help parents and carers understand their child's behaviour, and consider the reasons which underpin it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families of children with relationship difficulties 	Universal	UK
Within my Reach (WMR) <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>A primarily preventative approach to assist individuals in making sound relationship choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples • Intact families (prevention) • Families facing poverty/economic pressure 	Targeted selected	US
Working Together Programme (WTP) <i>Couple focus</i>	<p>A court-ordered 12-hour group-based co-parenting intervention, designed to target specific aspects of conflictual co-parenting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separating/separated parents 	Targeted selected	US