

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 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.

Table 1: Programmes with evidence of improving parent relationships and child outcomes

EIF has assessed a small sample of programmes that target the interparental relationship and found evidence of impact on child outcomes relating to six of these programmes. **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 2017/18 (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 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	Level of need	Origin of best evidence	Evidence rating	Improved couple outcomes	Improved parent outcomes	Improved child outcomes
Enhanced Triple P <i>Parenting focus</i>	Enhanced Triple P provides additional support for families in addition to the Level 4 Triple P programme. It takes place during 10 sessions of 1 to 1.5 hours each (in addition to the Level 4 Triple P programme). It is delivered by a Family Support Worker with QCF-4/5 level qualifications.	Families with parenting problems and other adult adjustment issues	Targeted selective	Australia	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved child behaviour
Family Foundations <i>Couple focus</i>	Family Foundations is a universal group based programme delivered over 5 sessions to low-to-moderate need couples expecting their first child anytime during the mother's pregnancy. It is designed to teach communication skills, conflict resolution strategies and preparation for parenthood. It is delivered by two facilitators with QCF-6 qualifications.	Couples expecting their first child	Universal	UK	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved relationship quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parental wellbeing Improved parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attachment and early behaviour Improved behaviour
Family Check-Up for Children <i>Parenting focus</i>	The Family Check-Up for Children is a strengths-based, family-centred intervention for moderate to high need parents. It aims to motivate parents to use parenting practices to support child competence, mental health and risk reduction. It is delivered over two phases, a brief three session phase followed by a family management programme. It is delivered by one therapist or social worker. With appropriate support, a paraprofessional may also implement the programme.	Families with toddlers	Targeted selective	US	3+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved maternal wellbeing Improved parent-child relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved behaviour
Incredible Years Preschool <i>Parenting focus</i>	The Incredible Years (IY) Preschool Basic Programme is a group-based programme for low-to-high need families with children aged 3-6 suffering from serious behavioural difficulties. It is designed to help parents manage their child's behaviour more effectively. Parents attend 18 to 20 weekly group sessions where they learn strategies for interacting positively with their child and discouraging unwanted behaviour. It is delivered by two IY co-leaders with QCF-7/8 qualifications.	Families with children with behavioural difficulties	Targeted indicated	UK	4+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parental wellbeing Improved parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved behaviour Improved reading

<p><u>Schoolchildren and their Families</u></p> <p><i>Couple focus</i></p>	<p>Schoolchildren and their Families (SAF) is delivered to couples specifically when their children are making the transition to school, and has been tested on a largely middle class, low risk sample.</p> <p>This intervention is based on the same programme model as Parents as Partners/Supporting Father Involvement.</p> <p>Like Supporting Father Involvement, groups of couples attend 16 weekly two-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 SFI/SAF risk-protective model of family functioning.</p>	<p>Families with children making the transition to school</p>	<p>Universal</p>	<p>US</p>	<p>3</p>	<p><i>Marital focus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less marital conflict • Improved relationship quality • Less marital conflict 	<p><i>Marital focus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parenting • Improved parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic achievement • Improved behaviour
<p><u>Triple P Family Transitions</u></p> <p><i>Parenting focus</i></p>	<p>Family Transitions Triple P (FTTP) Level 5 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.</p>	<p>Families undergoing separation and/or divorce</p>	<p>Targeted selective</p>	<p>Australia</p>	<p>3</p>		<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 shown by EIF to improve child outcomes

The following programmes have not yet been shown to have a positive impact on child outcomes by EIF. They have been identified through the following means:

- They have been identified in the reviews conducted by EIF (2016 and 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 demonstrated impact on child outcomes.

Important note

These programmes have not been assessed by EIF against our standards of evidence, therefore we cannot be sure they are effective. The table 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 the target group, level of need and country of origin of these programmes. However, as 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	Level of need	Country of origin
5 Pillars of Parenting 4-11 <i>Parenting focus</i>	5 Pillars of Parenting is for Muslim parents with a child between the ages of 4 and 11 who would like to improve their parenting skills, learn new parenting strategies, or are concerned about their child's behaviour. There is also a version for parents of children aged 0-3.	Muslim parents	Targeted selective	UK
'4 Rs 2Ss' Family Strengthening Programme <i>Parenting focus</i>	A multiple family group service delivery model for families with children with serious behaviour problems.	Families with children with serious behavioural problems, particularly for child welfare-involved children.	Targeted indicated	US
'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.	Families with children exposed to interparental violence	Targeted indicated	Netherlands
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.	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 couples designed to strengthen their relationship and enhance their cooperation as parents.	Adoptive parents	Targeted indicated	UK
Assisting Children through Transition (A.C.T.) <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.	Separated parents	Targeted selective	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.	Parents during 3 months prior to and following birth of first child	Universal	US
Brief Encounters Relationship Support <i>Couple focus</i>	Relationship support delivered by trained frontline practitioners (including Midwives, Health Visitors, Sure Start Children Centre Workers, and other public sector workers) who work closely with mothers and couples in the transition to parenthood.	Frontline practitioners	Universal	UK
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.	New parents	Universal	US
Building Resilience in Families with Disabled Children	This programme aims to help families of disabled children share, identify the impact of having a disabled child and how this impacts on their relationships, and learn strategies to deal with challenges and pressure points.	Families of disabled children	Targeted selective	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.	Separating or separated parents.	Targeted selective	US
Collaborative Divorce Project (CDP) <i>Couple focus</i>	Voluntary intensive court-based programme aiming to reduce destructive levels of conflict.	Separating or separated families with children aged 6 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.	New parents	Universal	Australia
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.	Low-income families	Targeted selective	US
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.	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.	Couples where one partner has been diagnosed with depression.	Specialist	UK

Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET) <i>Couple focus</i>	Programme that aims to reduce couple/parental relationship stress and improve coping and relationship satisfaction.	For couples with pre-adolescent children & experiencing stress in daily lives associated with bringing up children	Universal	Switzerland
Cultural adaptation of Strong Foundation (adapted from Family Foundations) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Co-ed intervention modified from Family Foundations to be culturally appropriate for use with urban, low income, minority young families.	Urban, low-income, minority expectant teen mothers and their male partners	Targeted selective	US
Dads for Life (DfL) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Programme with focus on improving father-child relationship, and increasing fathers' parenting skills.	Non-custodial fathers	Targeted selective	US
Enhancing Parenting Skills <i>Parenting focus</i>	A one to one home visiting programme to be delivered by health visitors (HVs) to parents of pre-school children with significant behavioural challenges.	Families of preschool children with behavioural difficulties	Targeted indicated	UK
EPL: Ein Partnerschaftliches Lernprogramm für Paare (A Learning Programme for married couples) <i>Couple focus</i>	Cognitive-behavioural programme delivered over a weekend. Focused on problem solving, communication, couple discussions to clarify relationship expectations, and enhancing sexual relations.	Married couples	Universal	Germany
Family Communication Programme <i>Couple focus</i>	Four session intervention aimed at improving interparental and family wide conflict in families with adolescent children.	Families with adolescent children.	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.	Low-income mother and fathers	Targeted selective	US
FOCCUS <i>Couple focus</i>	An individual programme available universally for couples who are entering into 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.	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.	Divorced or separated parents	Universal	US
Getting it Right for Children When Parents Part (GIRFC)	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.	Separated parents	Targeted selective	UK

Handling our Problems Effectively (HOPE) <i>Couple focus</i>	9-hour intervention (HOPE) focusing on communication and conflict resolution.	Recently married couples	Universal	US
Happy Couples Happy Kids (HCHK) <i>Couple focus</i>	4 session programme to improve marital conflict and child welfare for families from community samples.	Parents	Universal	US
Incredible Years School Age (Basic and Advanced) Programme <i>Parenting focus</i>	Parenting programme composed of 17/18 week 2-hour sessions, advanced programme includes dealing with adult relationship difficulties and problem solving.	Parents of school-age children	Basic: Targeted selective; Advanced: Targeted indicated	US; UK
Inspiring Parents Programme <i>Parenting focus</i>	The Inspiring parents programme is a 6 week programme which covers Confidence Building, Managing Defiant Behaviour, Stress and Nurturing the self.	Families	Targeted selective	UK
Integrative Behavioural Couple Therapy <i>Couple focus</i>	Couple therapy designed to improve the couple relationship. Consists of two major phases, an evaluation/feedback phase and an active treatment phase.	Couples	Targeted indicated	US
KEEP (Keeping foster and kinship carers trained and supported) <i>Parenting focus</i>	KEEP is a 16-20 week parenting training group for foster and/or kinship carers of children aged 3-6; 7-11; 12-17 years.	Parents of foster and/or kinship carers	Universal	US
Kids in Divorce & Separation (K.I.D.S.) <i>Couple focus</i>	4-hour programme aiming to help parents improve conflict management and inform them about impact of divorce on children.	Separated parents	Universal	US
Kids Turn <i>Couple focus</i>	Community-based programme designed to lessen interparental conflict, with 6 sessions offered to all members of a divorcing family.	Families undergoing separation	Universal	US
Marriage Preparation (Marriage Care)	A day course ran by two facilitators designed to prepare couples for marriage. It includes sessions on family life, bringing up children and handling conflict in a relationship.	Couples about to marry	Universal	UK
Mentalization Based Therapy-Parenting Together <i>Couple focus</i>	An intervention for separated or divorced parents in entrenched conflict over their children and who are trying to co-parent.	Separated parents in conflict over their children	Specialist	UK
Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) <i>Couple focus</i>	Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) is for families with a child between the ages of 13 and 18 who are experiencing behaviour or substance misuse problems.	13 to 18 year old adolescents who have a clinically diagnosed problem with substance misuse and/or have behavioural problems	Targeted indicated	US

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is for families of young people between the ages of 12 to 17 who have exhibited serious antisocial and delinquent behaviour.	Families of children aged 12 to 17 who have exhibited serious antisocial & delinquent behaviour	Targeted indicated	US
Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) is an intensive treatment for families who have recently been reported to Child Protection Services for physically abusing and/or neglecting a child between the ages of six and 17.	Children aged 6-17 who have been reported child protection services	Specialist	US
Multisystemic Therapy for Problem Sexual Behaviour (MST-PSB) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Multisystemic Therapy for Problem Sexual Behaviour (MST-PSB) is for families with a young person between the ages of ten and 17 who has committed a sexual offence or demonstrated sexually abusive behaviour.	Families with children aged 10-17 which have displayed problem sexual behaviour.	Specialist	US
Parents as Partners <i>Couple focus</i>	This programme, which is based on the Schoolchildren and their Families programme listed in table 1, and on the Supporting Father Involvement programme, aims to help parents who are struggling with conflict and stress in their parenting and relationships, and to support couples as they resolve relationship issues that affect their ability to parent their children effectively.	Couples	Targeted indicated	UK
Power of two Online <i>Couple focus</i>	Internet-based marriage and relationship skills education programme.	New and expectant parents	Universal	US
Preparing Together <i>Couple focus</i>	A group-based programme available for couples who are entering into a long-term committed relationship.	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.	Couples	Universal	US
Supporting Father Involvement <i>Couple focus</i>	16-week intervention with a focus on fathers' strengthening relationship with children, in part by strengthening relationship with mother.	Either couples or fathers individually	Targeted selective	US (Mexican American & European)
Promoting Strong African American Families (ProSAAF) <i>Couple focus</i>	Universal prevention programme for couples with a pre-adolescent/adolescent child. Developed for African American communities.	African American families with children	Targeted selective	US
Reappraisal writing task <i>Couple focus</i>	7-minute intervention (writing task) at 12, 16, and 20 months, to foster reappraisal of marital conflict.	Married couples	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.	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.	Couples	Universal	UK
Relate Family Mediation <i>Couple focus</i>	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.	Separating or separated couples	Universal	UK
Relationship Support Live Chat <i>Couple focus</i>	An internet-based individual counselling service aimed primarily at adults who are experiencing difficulties in their couple relationship and seeking immediate advice and support.	Couples	Universal	UK
Restorative Thinking Parenting Programme (Parenting without Conflict) <i>Parenting focus</i>	The 'Restorative Thinking Parenting Programme (Parenting without Conflict)' aims to help parents and carers to understand their child's behaviour, and consider the reasons which underpin it.	Families of children with relationship difficulties	Universal	UK
Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) <i>Parenting focus</i>	Treatment Foster Care Oregon (formerly known as Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care) is a specialist foster care programme to help foster children manage their behavioural and emotional problems. There are three different TFCO programmes: TFCO-A (11-17 years), TFCO-C (7-11 years) and TFCO-P (3-6 years).	Foster care children	Specialist	USA
Triple P Online <i>Parenting focus</i>	Triple P Online (TPOL) is a web-based parenting programme. It is the web-based version of Level 4 Standard Triple P to be used as an early-intervention strategy or an intensive programme for parents with children up to 12 years with significant social, emotional or behavioural problems.	Parents with children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties	Targeted indicated	Australia
Within my Reach (WMR) <i>Couple focus</i>	Primarily preventative approach for individuals to assist them with making sound relationship choices.	Couples	Targeted selective	US
Working Together programme (WTP) <i>Couple focus</i>	Court-ordered 12-hour group-based co-parenting intervention designed to target specific aspects of conflictual co-parenting.	Separating parents	Targeted selective	US