

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

Provider: Family Links



This case study outlines the steps taken by Family Links to improve and evaluate the 10 Week Nurturing Programme over the last five years in response to the findings of a Randomised Control Trial conducted on the programme from 2008-11.

What did Family Links learn from the RCT and how was the programme improved?

The findings of the RCT (Simkiss et al., 2013) were taken very seriously by Family Links, and improvements were made to the programme and future research plans. Programme improvements included revisions to the programme content and manuals, and also the introduction of further follow-up training for practitioners as standard. Family Links also commissioned the Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation to conduct a major review of the programme, its implementation model and delivery. This review has now culminated in the following positive outcomes:

- Programme content has been reviewed against the literature on effective family and parenting support, and is currently being updated in light of that research evidence.
- For the first time a detailed and evidenced theory of change has been articulated and shared.
- Our research provides evidence that the 10-week Nurturing Programme is primarily designed to be used as a selective prevention, and is generally offered within a universal modality.
- Testing of overarching impact measures of family relationship quality, positive use of parenting strategies, and perceptions of coping and self-efficacy all showed statistically significant improvement.

Why does the 10 Week Nurturing Programme still represent an important offer?

Reflections from Programme Providers for the Early Intervention Foundation's “*Foundations For Life*” report

The Family Links 10-week Nurturing Programme is a cognitive relational programme, with some behavioural components and much of its content deals with general principles of healthy relationships in families and with aspects of parenting confidence and self-efficacy. This focus makes the 10 Week Nurturing Programme different to most other parenting programmes which have a more behavioural emphasis. Commissioners recognise the value in providing a menu of provision for parents in their area. Emerging research indicates that programmes which aim to build strong, warm family relationships may have a ‘slow burn’ impact on families, being harder to measure in the immediate but possibly having greater long term benefits. The challenge is for evaluators to establish causal connection between such programmes and positive outcomes for children and families. Family Links’ next step is to address this challenge.

What further evaluation and development is underway and might report over the next year?

With the rich learning from four years of intensive work with the Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation, Family Links is now conducting a consultation on commissioning a further major study on the effectiveness and impact of the 10-week Nurturing Programme – including a focus on implementation and training quality. We intend to begin data collection for this study in mid-2017, and expect to have preliminary findings later in the year.