

A Short Briefing Paper on the Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP): June 2021

The Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP), developed within NHS Education for Scotland, and funded through the Mental Health Directorate at the Scottish Government, is aimed at improving the availability of the highest quality evidence-based parenting interventions (namely the Incredible Years Preschool and Level 4 Group Triple P) for families of the 10% of 3-6 year-old children who have concerning levels of behaviour problems. Since its launch in 2013, the national implementation of PoPP has been ensuring that these strengths-based interventions are delivered, with fidelity, by the multi-sector wider children’s workforce, incorporating an implementation science framework.

These interventions focus on building strong parent-child relationships, empowering families and supporting parents to promote resilience in their children. They help develop parental behaviour that supports child brain development, most notably in terms of executive functioning and self-regulation, as well as strengthening parental competence and confidence, empathy, understanding and patience in parenting their child, especially during times when it is challenging. This helps to not only improve the child’s behaviour, but positive parenting has been shown to buffer the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES), which will ultimately improve the mental health and well-being of very young children.

Outcome data, in the form of parent responses on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), that is routinely used at the start and end of the groups, continue to show encouraging reductions in behaviour problems for children whose parents attended the groups. Independent analysis of outcomes has confirmed that this initiative is having meaningful positive impacts on the well-being of these children and their families.

Headline PoPP data (June 2021)

Number of face to face PoPP groups delivered between 2013 and June 2021	988
Number of families enrolled in groups	6,063
Number of parents/caregivers enrolled in groups	6,979
Number children for whom pre- and post group SDQs have been gathered	3,244
% of children in the clinical range at the start of groups who had moved out of this high risk range when their parents finished attending a group	61%
Number of Community Planning Partnerships that have adopted the PoPP model	22
Number of multi-sector Early Years practitioners who have been fully trained, equipped and supported to deliver one of the interventions with fidelity	806

The Covid 19 pandemic brought about many challenges in delivering services to families and unsurprisingly, in-person groups were halted. Some of the PoPP sites have, however, opted to deliver groups online.

Headline PoPP data for online groups

Number of online (virtual) PoPP groups delivered between September 2020 and June 2021	35
Number of families enrolled in groups	114
Number of parents/caregivers enrolled in groups	126
Number children for whom pre- and post group SDQs have been gathered. N.B. A large number of families are currently attending groups and have therefore not completed final SDQ's	39