

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

Number of in-person PoPP groups delivered between 2013 to December 2021	1,034
Number of families enrolled in groups	6,212
Number of parents/caregivers enrolled in groups	7,143
Number children for whom pre- and post-group SDQs have been gathered	3,302
% 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	60%
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 as such, in-person groups were halted. In April 2020, the Scottish Government provided funding to PoPP as part of a pilot, to purchase codes which enabled families to access the Triple P Online programme. Triple P Online is a self-directed online intervention for parents, aimed at supporting parents to understand their child's behaviour, strengthen relationships and build their child's social emotional and behavioural skills. Triple P Online is comprised of 8 modules, which parents work through independently. Each module takes 30-60 minutes to complete and as one module is completed, the next is unlocked and can be accessed. It is recommended that parents receive additional PoPP Practitioner support, as research shows that parents who are supported through the intervention report greater improvements and complete more of the modules.

Headline PoPP data for Triple P Online

Number of families enrolled in Triple P Online between May 2020 and December 2021	161
Number of children for whom pre- and post SDQs have been gathered	76
% of children in the clinical range at the start of Triple P Online who had moved out of this high risk range on completing the intervention	78%

In September 2020 some PoPP sites started to deliver Triple P and Incredible Year groups remotely, with the number of sites offering this support to families growing over the following year.

Headline PoPP data for remote group delivery (December 2021)

Number of PoPP groups delivered remotely between September 2020 and December 2021	45
Number of families enrolled in remote groups	216
Number of parents/caregivers enrolled in remote groups	255
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	42%