

## **The Ministry of Parenting; Incredible years report 2014**

### **Abstract**

This article is an evaluation of The Incredible Years Parent Training Programmes that have been implemented by the Ministry of Parenting in Essex from 2013 to current date. The programme, developed by Professor Carolyn Webster-Stratton, had produced a significant level of research to suggest that it is the best way to treat early onset conduct disorders by teaching parents' to change their behaviour which in turn changes their child's behaviour (social learning theory).

Since 2009 the Ministry of Parenting has been running, termly, Incredible Years groups. Some of the groups have been delivered from our office base and others in partnership with other services. Every group parents are asked to complete pre and post self-completing questionnaires. Our data shows that there are improvement in all of the following areas; family life, parent-child relationship, level child problem behaviours, frequency of child problem behaviours, strengths and difficulties, parental stress and general health. This shows that the Incredible Years Parent Training Program is a success.

This report focus on the process and data on our current Incredible Years' project

### **Introduction**

A parenting program is a complex process of raising awareness about parenting by participating in a series of group sessions, run by a facilitator, including group discussions, feedback, videos, role play and homework, to help parents find ways to improve their parenting or to affirm their own parenting methods.

Research in this area is of high interest and there is much evidence that suggests that these parenting programs are a great success. Research has shown that in early childhood the most effective way to promote mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of abuse for children is good parenting skills. Parental skills and parental education lead to long term benefits in reducing neglect, abuse, criminal and anti-social behaviour in young adults, as well as improving maternal mental health, education and employment outcomes. Professionals, especially from the mental health sector, have recommended that group-based parent training programmes are the best way to manage children with conduct disorders. This has been supported by the NICE guidelines (Conduct disorders in children and young people; reference number CG158)

A conduct disorder is an age inappropriate disruptive and antisocial behaviour, including high rates of oppositional, defiance and aggression. In school years it includes violations of classroom rules and adult authority, including lying and cheating and in adult years it includes violations of the law or community authority. Family and contextual factors influence the rates of conduct disorders, higher rates are found in families with a single

parent, frequent changes in parental figures, parental psychopathology, parental substance abuse, family criminal activity, marital problems, socio-economic disadvantage, school experiences and poor parenting skills. Left untreated conduct disorders can have a poor prognosis both for the short term (unhappiness, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, lack of social skills and rejection from peers) and the long term (aggression leading to antisocial and criminal behaviour, violent offending, drug abuse and depression). Conduct disorders have huge financial implications for families, individuals and society, and these disorders are on the increase. The poor parenting skills linked to the development of conduct disorders include, nagging, ineffective commands and punishments. However, these could be eliminated with the use of parent training interventions and these have been found to be the most available treatment and prevention for conduct disorders.

These parent training programs are of high importance as recent figures have shown that antisocial behaviour is on the increase. There are more problems in the home, where parental stress levels and child behaviours are linked, in the community and in schools, as higher levels of conduct disorders have led to an increase in drug and alcohol abuse and negative behaviours that impact on society as a whole.

The aim of these parent training interventions is to reduce conduct problems by strengthening parent management skills and improving timing of parental skills by modifying parent-child interactions; this, in turn, will increase children's pro-social behaviour and decrease child oppositional or antisocial behaviour. The main aim of the program is to teach the parents to change their behaviour, which in turn changes their children's behaviours.

Over the last 30 years The Incredible Years programme is one of these parent training groups that have developed much research. It has produced extensive research that shows the programme is both highly effective and acceptable to children's carers. Success is thought to be achieved due to best results being gained when services are provided in local community settings (which The Incredible Years Programme is), increasing the likelihood of reaching families.

The Incredible Years Parent Training Programmes focuses on strengthening parenting skills (monitoring, positive discipline and confidence) and fostering parent's involvement in children's school and home experiences in order to increase children's academic and social skills and reduce conduct problems. Research has shown improvements in parent-child interaction, parental discipline strategies, parent's involvement in child's education, child conduct problems (at home and in school) and child social competence, which is even maintained overtime.

Additional research has also suggested that conduct disorders and ADHD may develop due to the interaction between the child's emotional deregulation, parent's rejecting and

coercive parenting. This shows how important these parent training programmes are and how important it is that they are implemented.

The Incredible Years Series was developed by Professor Carolyn Webster-Stratton over the last 30 years. The Incredible Years Program is based on the principles of social learning theory, the idea that people learn by observing others. It hypothesises that negative reinforcement develops and maintains children's deviant behaviours, so changing parent's negative behaviours by teaching them more appropriate and positive problem solving discipline strategies will lead to the parent's children developing more positive social interaction, more social competence and a reduction in aggressive behaviour, both at home and in the school setting. The program focuses on play, relationship building, praise, rewarding positive behaviour, instruction giving, problem solving and effective limit setting strategies for handling misbehaviour including ignoring, time out and natural and logical consequences.

The national RCT outcomes of The Incredible Years Program has resulted in a reduction in antisocial behaviour and education problems in the children themselves, and has fostered access to more satisfying relationships between the parent and child.

Evidence has found that The Incredible Years Parent training program has a positive effect both for the family and the child, this includes;

- Increases in parent's positive effect such as praise and reduced use of criticism and negative commands.
- Increases in parent's use of effective limit setting by replacing spanking and harsh discipline with nonviolent techniques and increased monitoring of children.
- Reduction in parental depression and increases in parental confidence.
- Increase in positive family communication and problem solving.
- Reduced conduct problems in children's interactions and increases in their positive affect and compliance to parental commands.

Due to this success The Incredible Years Parent Training Programme is viewed as an essential component to early intervention and the reduction of conduct disorders.

From 1997 to 2008 the author of this report was actively involved in the implementation of the Incredible Years Parent Training Programs in Essex, through the delivery of group programs every academic term and hosted by CAMHS. Over this time the programs regularly supported hundreds of families and many more families have been supported indirectly through on going Incredible Years programme training in Essex.

In Essex the parenting groups have been very much in demand and this very positive.

## **Our project**

The implementation of the Incredible Years group programs with the Incredible Years home-coaching programme and information workshops. Provision of this programme is delivery by experienced practitioners who have reviewed the evidence base; looked at NICE guidance, quality standards and examples of best practice. The growth of the program has been in partnership with local services, user feedback and evaluations to design an interactive, practical, and engaging parent education package.

## **Aim**

To provide a range of evidence-based parenting programs for parents of children with ADHD or ADHD traits/behaviour problems, living in Colchester.

**Key objective:** Delivery of the Incredible Years parent training programs; pre-school (3-5 years), school age children (6-12 years) and Advanced Parenting Programs

The parent programs focus on strengthening parent-child interactions and attachment, reducing harsh discipline and fostering parents' ability to promote children's social, emotional, and language development. In the early years and school-age programmes parents also learn how to encourage school readiness skills and are encouraged to partner with teachers so that they can promote children's academic, as well as social skills and emotional literacy. The programmes have protocols for use as a prevention programme or treatment for children with conduct problems and ADHD. The long term goal is ultimately to reduce school drop-out, delinquent behaviours, and to promote academic success

## **Intervention**

- 1) Parental engagement; to ensure appropriate support is provided/to ensure access to the programmes to parents who may find commitment to professional support uncomfortable due to stigma, past experience with services, or low self-esteem
- 2) Focused workshops; to increase parental and professional understanding of ADHD and issues related to ADHD
- 3) The Incredible Year's parent training programmes School Aged program; to strengthen parenting skills, competencies, nurturing and support networks. Prevent and reduce aggression in young children. Strengthen children's social and emotional competence, problem solving and academic readiness
- 4) The Incredible Years Advanced parent training programs for parents who have attended the school-aged ADHD group; this will support parents to communicate effectively with adults (including schools) and children, give parents problem solving skills for themselves and their young children. To improve and maintain healthier family life/relationships.

Improve parent to teacher relationship and communication. Raised self-esteem to whole family

#### 5) The Home Coaching programme

#### **Rationale for the Incredible Years parent training programs delivery**

The Incredible Years parent training programmes have over 30 years evidenced research showing the effectiveness of working with children with conduct disorders. The author has also adapted specifics of the programme to support the parents of children with ADHD. This will target specific video-clips and video-tape modelling techniques for these parents to help support them in managing their children with these difficulties.

#### **Need in Essex**

In the year ending 2013, the crime rate in Colchester was higher than the average crime rate across similar areas. Locally, the district health profile of Colchester indicates that 36% of secondary aged young people said that they often lose their temper or get angry. ADHD is currently one of the most common reasons for referral to child mental health services with prevalence estimated to range from 3% to 6% in school-aged children. That means that in the Colchester area approximately 1,749 to 3,498 children aged 0-16 will have been diagnosed with the condition. We are aware that families with children with ADHD or ADHD traits struggle with managing and following through with behavioural boundaries, managing conflict and communication. They report pressure placed on adult-to-adult relationships resulting in marital and partnership breakdown and external family conflict. Our hypothesis is that by strengthening protective factors such as positive parenting skills, family communication and effective behavioural management support for these parents, we will be able to reduce risk factors such as neglect, abuse, isolation and will therefore increase family harmony and functioning.

Implementation; we were aware that effective targeting of the project for children with behavioural problems is critical. Without it, the most vulnerable children risk missing vital opportunities to improve their outcomes (Social Research Unit, 2011a). We held the belief in the importance of effective partnership working as the foundation for successful identification and referral of parents and children most likely to benefit from the project. We built on our current multi-agency network, undertook systematic networking and promotional work with potential referrers to support the referral process, used a clear and user friendly referral system and attended local relevant forums

#### **Target population**

Parents of children aged 3-12 yrs. where there is one or more of the following;

- Concern by one or more services on the child's behavioural presentation

- Child in assessment process or recent diagnosis i.e. ADHD, High functioning Autism, Asperger's.
- Child on school action plan or statement
- Parents own mental health is affecting the child's behaviour

### **Numbers of people**

**2010-13;** 132 parents offered the Incredible Years School Aged program, 23 the school readiness program and 165 information workshops.

**2013-14;** 108 parents offered the incredible Years School Aged group/ the Incredible Years Basic home coaching/combination of group and home coaching

**2014-15;** 12 parents per program, 6 programs per year totalling 72 places. 6 workshops totally 84 places. 58 parents will undertake both the School-aged and Advanced program We then estimate that we will be able to offer the whole of North-East Essex the additional workshops of ADHD information to a further 40 individuals.

### **Process;**

- Referral forms accessed by email, web site and phone
- Multi-agency referral pathway
- Self-referral pathway

### **Pre intervention**

- Telephone contact
- Introduction session
- Pre assessment visit/form

### **Post intervention**

- Letter to referrer
- Recommendation of further support
- Option to repeat intervention
- Phone support through project life

### **Current costs**

For group programmes 2014-15 is £24,801. Funded through a county voluntary sector grant.

Home coaching is offered at approx. £45 per session

## **Barriers**

The funding trajectory for the programmes implementation and development has been sporadic so we have widened our income pathway and developed the commercial side of the business by providing the Incredible Years parent training programs trainings and are currently considering a more in-depth contingency plan against public-sector funding cuts and limited grant opportunities

## **Effectiveness of impact**

Data processed by Warwick University continues to show our the Incredible Years parent groups rating highly for parents feeling respected and understood, 79% of case improvement in parent's mental well-being and a reduction in parenting laxness and parent over-reactivity. 100% of parents stating that they had fewer problems after the group programmes.

## ***Outcomes for parents***

- 1) Increases in parent's positive effect such as praise and reduced use of criticism and negative commands
- 2) Increases in parent's use of effective limit setting by replacing spanking and harsh discipline with non-violent techniques and increased monitoring of children
- 3) Reduction in parental depression and increases in parental confidence
- 4) Increase in positive family communication and problem solving.

## ***Outcomes for children***

- 1) Raised self-esteem
- 2) Reduced behavioural problems
- 3) Improved relationships within the home
- 4) Reduced conduct problems in children's interactions
- 5) Increases in their positive affect and compliance to parental commands.

## ***Outcomes for funder***

To provide outcomes for beneficiaries and quantify value for money;

2012-13 108 people benefited from the interventions - £274.94 per family.

### **Parent's comments 2012-13**

What message would you like to give to funders about the group?

*This course is really good for parents who feel insecure about their parenting skills/ Please continue to fund it, it has helped me and my family tremendously and I am really grateful to have been able to have been a part of the programme/If it wasn't funded I wouldn't have been able to have afforded to attend/I've had great time with laughter and lots of family learning /Very useful, I've learnt how to do with my child more appropriately in difficult situations and realised other parents not just me have problems with their children/Thank you so much for all your help/Fantastic group, really worth it- well appreciated by parents/Fantastic course loved so much and helped so much that I have attended twice, the people running the groups are amazing and truly do a wonderful job helping and supporting as much as they can*

### **Key learning points**

We credit our strong evidence base of success to the implementation of the groups with fidelity. This involves;

- Collective actions through a project lead to ensure individual responsibility and a sense of obligation
- Feedback; we have been so lucky to have rich feedback from the parents we have worked with who have guided us in ensuring we have a practical, functional and realistic vision. We are involved with our Parents Advisory Group (users group) to develop information to parents including self-referring to the intervention.
- Following programme training, coaching and support infrastructure i.e.; attending accredited training with regular and robust supervision, this includes videotaping session's regular peer review and self-reflection on DVDs of weekly sessions/ meeting with mentor for DVD review of group sessions with goals defined/ attending consultation days with peer mentors and programme author
- Maintaining Programme protocols i.e. delivery of author recommended number of sessions and appropriate planning infrastructure
- Accessible to the local community. Sessions are offered day or evenings depending on demand so we can cater to fathers and working parents. For families with literacy, communication or cultural barriers we use friendly technology and alternative methods of capturing feedback. We provide high quality refreshments, course hand-outs and provide each family with the Incredible Years parent book.

## Challenges

- Networking, we have had a number of inappropriate referrals so have increased time allocation of networking
- We had to improve our assessment forms to include genogram/ego map and re-designed our pre and post evaluation forms to ensure appropriate data for funders
- On-going funding and resources to implement the programme with full fidelity

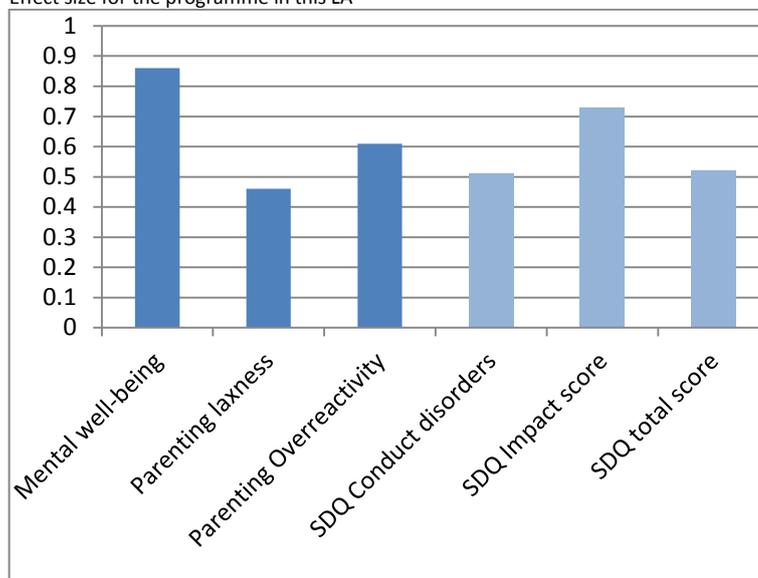
**Table 1 – Warwick Report 2013**

Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP3):

Summary data 2.9.2013

Outcome measure	Pre-course (N = 101)		Post-course (N = 45)		N	Change			Programme average (All LAs)			
	Mean score	SD	Mean score	SD		Mean change	% cases improving	Effect size	N of cases	Mean change	% cases improving	Effect size
<b>Parent outcomes</b>												
Mental well-being	38.5	11.5	48.1	10.5	39	9.6	84.6	0.86	1562	8.6	80.6	0.83
Parenting laxness	19.2	5.2	16.6	6.1	38	-2.6	60.5	0.46	1563	-5.6	77.0	0.81
Parenting Over-reactivity	22.1	6.0	17.9	7.6	41	-2.2	70.7	0.61	1571	-6.3	80.1	0.94
<b>Child outcomes</b>												
SDQ Conduct disorders	5.8	2.8	4.4	2.7	40	-1.4	62.5	0.51	1559	-1.2	63.6	0.53
SDQ Impact score	6.1	3.2	3.8	3.1	33	-2.3	69.7	0.73	1500	-1.4	56.7	0.55
SDQ total score	22.9	8.3	18.4	9.1	38	-4.5	65.8	0.52	1496	-3.6	71.5	0.52

Effect size for the programme in this LA



**Notes**

The effect size expresses the mean change in score in relation to the typical variability in scores (as measured by the pooled standard deviation (SD) from the pre-course and post-course scores). Effect sizes are conventionally described as small, medium or large as follows:

- 0.2 – 0.5 = Small
- 0.5 – 0.8 = Medium
- 0.8 or above = Large

Only parents with both valid pre-course and post-course scores are included in the analysis. For parenting laxness and over-reactivity and for child behaviour problems effect outcomes are represented by reductions in scores.

The programme average data is drawn from all LAs using that programme as reported in the PEIP Final Report

*University of Warwick, Centre for Educational Development, Appraise and Research (CEDAR)*

**Report author**

Jeannie Gordon

Organisation name: The Ministry of Parenting CIC

Address: Colchester Business Centre,

Town: Colchester

County: Essex

Postcode: CO1 2JS

Website: [http:// www.theministryofparenting.com](http://www.theministryofparenting.com)