

# **Evaluation of the STOP (Supportive Programme for Parents) group programme delivered by CAMHS**

**January – April 2017**

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## **Background to STOP**

The STOP Programme was originally developed as a specialist group programme for parents with children who are difficult to manage, young offenders, or those at risk of offending or exclusion. However, over the last 10 years the programme has been implemented and been found to be an effective preventative programme at a more universal level.

In 2016 in line with “Wiltshire’s transformation plan for children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing” the Ministry of Parenting (a Community Interest Company) were commissioned to enhance early intervention and prevention by increasing the provision of evidence based parenting programmes available across the county by training a range of professionals that work with children, young people and their families. The aim being, to address a local gap in support for parents/carers of teenagers with social, emotional and mental health needs. CAMHS are leading the co-ordination, delivery and evaluation of the programme.

## **Underpinning theory and philosophy**

We know that some parent child interactions are more likely to exacerbate problems rather than promote or develop positive relationships and good mental health. The STOP group programme aims to support parents to improve those interactions and also better understand their teens.

The development of the STOP programme was greatly influenced by the work of Carolyn Webster-Stratton and her Incredible Years programmes, as it follows the same nurturing, collaborative and empowering ethos but is aimed at the parents of adolescents.

Over the course of the 10 week programme the parents are supported to strengthen the core relationship with their teenager, develop positive parenting skills to manage confrontations and difficult behaviour, and gain a greater understanding and awareness of teenage development and expectations.

This is a report on and evaluation of the first STOP group programme to be delivered in Wiltshire.

## **Practical issues and content**

The STOP group ran over 10 weeks (27/01/17 – 07/04/17 with a break for half term) with each session lasting 2 hours (10am to 12pm).

The group ran at the Canberra Children’s Centre in Melksham. Thanks were given to Spurgeons and the staff at the Centre for allowing us to use it free of charge and making us and the parents feel very welcome.

Refreshments were provided at a cost of approximately £10 per week. Refreshments are very important in any group programme and it is strongly suggested (by the programme developers) that refreshments be treated with a great deal of respect, initiative and creativity. Our aim was that the refreshments reflect to the parents our desire to make each parent feel very welcome, respected and valued.

In addition to refreshments, small reward items were purchased and used to encourage and reward parental engagement particularly in the home activity set each week.

Sessions topics were as follows: Making the Change (1), Missing the Hook (2), Listening (3), Praise and Encouragement (4), Problem Solving (5), Setting the Limits (6), Living as a Parent (9) and Putting it all together (10).

Sessions 7 and 8 were optional sessions when the parents were given a choice of topics which included: Drugs, Alcohol, Conflict and Aggression, Sexual Health and Relationships and Screens (technology issues). The parents chose Drugs and Conflict and Aggression. For the session on Drugs we invited Motiv8 to come to speak with the parents and were grateful for their support in doing this.

### **Recruitment and referral process**

The group was promoted within CAMHS (Primary CAMHS, Tier 3 and OSCA) and Wiltshire Council's Early Help and Intensive Family Intervention Service.

16 referrals were received: 2 from the CAMHS access co-ordinator, 6 from PCAMHS, 2 from OSCA, 1 from Tier 3 CAMHS, 2 from Early Help CAMHS practitioners and 3 from the Council's Intensive Family Intervention Service.

Of those 16, all were either, spoken with on the telephone, met in the clinic or visited prior to the start of the group. The rationale for this was that in my experience a professional referring a parent to a group does not always guarantee attendance. Engagement with the referred parents prior to the group is key in order to establish what the barriers might be to their attendance (anxiety, fear of being labelled a bad parent, childcare, transport, geographical location, timing etc) and if possible to overcome those barriers. Or if the barrier cannot be overcome perhaps because the group is running in a location or at a time not convenient to parents then to put the parents on a waiting list for a group more convenient for parent.

Of the 16 referrals received 9 resulted in 12 parents being offered places on the programme. 5 of the remaining 7 referrals requested they be put on a waiting list for an evening group.

### **Parents**

12 parents attended and 12 completed the programme. It is important to note that it is rare to have a zero drop-out rate.

Of the 12 parents that attended 6 were biological mothers; 1 was an adopted mum and 1 was a 'step-Mum'. 4 were fathers, 1 was a single parent, and the other 3 were partners of the mothers attending. Between them the parents had 20 children under 18.

The children/young people whose parents were referred to the group ranged in age from 12 to 15 and attended a number of different schools (*see appendix 1*). The children were presenting with a range of complex and enduring difficulties including significant emotional and mental health issues, ASD, ADHD, special educational needs, and behavioural difficulties with violence and aggression.

### **Quantitative Evaluation:**

2 Pre and post group questionnaires were completed by all of the parents, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) and Parental Stress Scales (PSS).

The SDQ measures the parent's perception of their child's behaviour. The SDQ can be used to indicate the level of risk that a child has an emotional, behavioural or concentration problem severe enough to warrant a diagnosis. Scores of 14-16 represent a borderline or medium risk, scores of 17 – 19 indicate a high risk and 20-40 denote very high risk.

At the start of the group all but 2 of the referred children fell in to the Very High Risk category with 1 falling in to the High Risk category and 1 in the close to average category.

At the end of the group, the level of risk for 2 of the children had reduced from Very High to High and the child in the High Risk category had reduced to the Borderline or Medium Risk category (*see appendix 2 for SDQ data*).

The PSS measures the stress experienced by the parent in relation to their parenting role.

The PSS data shows a reduction in stress in 8 out of the 12 parents who attended the group (*see appendix 3 for PSS data*)

It is important to note (as mentioned above) that the parents who attended the group were the parents of children/young people with very complex and enduring difficulties and not necessarily the target audience, therefore any positive outcomes are very significant.

### **Qualitative evaluation**

All parents were asked to complete a weekly evaluation form which assisted us in ensuring the group was meeting the needs of each parent week by week. The weekly evaluation asked the parents to rate how they found the session to be i.e. not informative, neutral, quite informative and very informative and how they felt that the group facilitators were i.e. not supportive, neutral, quite supportive, very supportive. It also included the opportunity to say whether they would have liked more information on anything in particular, to offer any further comments on the session and to request a telephone call to discuss something in more detail. (*see appendix 4 for weekly evaluations*)

All parents also completed an overall evaluation at the end of the group and gave very positive feedback (*see appendix 5 for summary*).

In addition to the feedback from parents, we received encouraging feedback from professionals involved with the referred child/ren (*see appendix 6*)

## **Conclusions**

The quantitative data and qualitative information provided by both parents in their evaluations and by professionals involved with the families reinforces the views held by the facilitators that all of the parents found the group worthwhile (also as evidenced by their continued attendance) and benefitted from attending the group in some way. In our final session parents reported having noticed differences in themselves and each other and had seen improvements in their children's behaviour and their relationships with their children.

All of the parents commented on how much they valued other parents input, learning from each other as well as learning from the programme and facilitators. Group work is not only a cost effective way of addressing parenting issues with families but it can also create a supportive environment for parents to share their ideas and build their confidence in their skills as parents. The group were keen at the end of the 10 weeks to stay in contact and were planning on setting up a Facebook group and meeting up.

One of the limitations of a 10 week programme is that it is just the start of an on-going process towards behaviour change and improved relationships within families. Further professional support to the parents of young people in these particularly high risk categories would be beneficial for continued reinforcement of the techniques learned and to encourage positive and appropriate responses. This may be a consideration for the future.

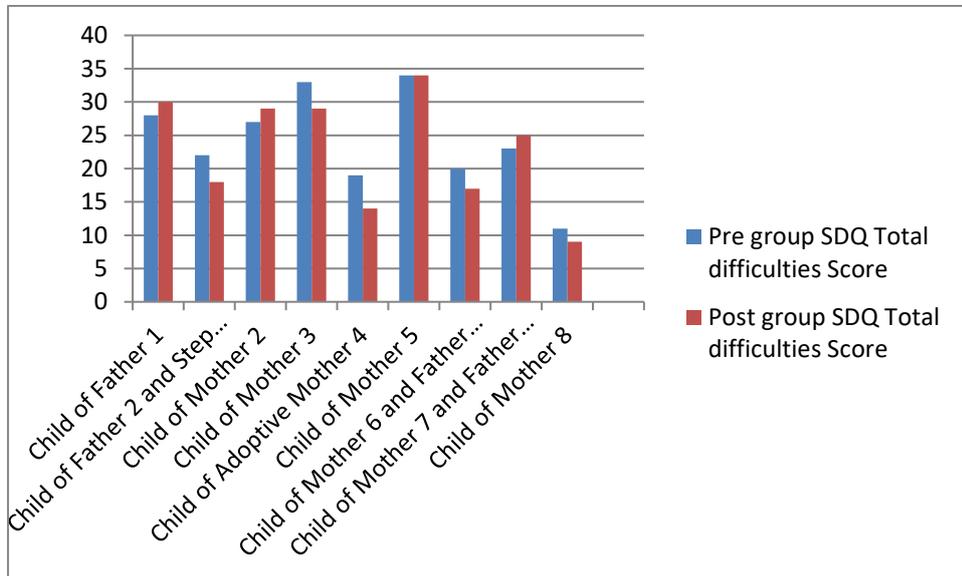
***Linda McCann  
Wiltshire Wellbeing Transformation Team  
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust  
April 2017***

## Appendix 1

Parent	Referred by	Age and gender of child/ren (referred child in bold)	School attended by referred child
Father 1 (WH)	CAMHS OSCA	<b>15 (female)</b> 11 (female)	John of Gaunt
Father 2 (SJ) Mother (step) 1 (VJ)	PCAMHS	<b>14 (female)</b>	John of Gaunt
Mother 2 (SD)	CAMHS OSCA	<b>15 (female)</b>	Farringdon Centre
Mother 3 (DS)	CAMHS Tier 3	14 (male) <b>13 (female)</b> 9 (female)	Melksham Oak
Mother (adopted) 4 (SP)	PCAMHS	<b>12 (female)</b> 14 (female)	Hardenhuish
Mother 5 (KM)	Early Help (CAMHS)	16 (female) <b>14 (female)</b> 10 (male)	Matravers
Mother 6 (TC) Father 3	PCAMHS	<b>13 (male)</b> 17 (female)	Writhlington
Mother 7 (RC) Father 4 (SC)	Intensive Family Intervention Service	<b>13 (female)</b> 10 (female) 7 (male)	Three Ways
Mother 8 (RC)	Intensive Family Intervention Service	<b>15 (male)</b> 9 (female) 4 (male)	Not known

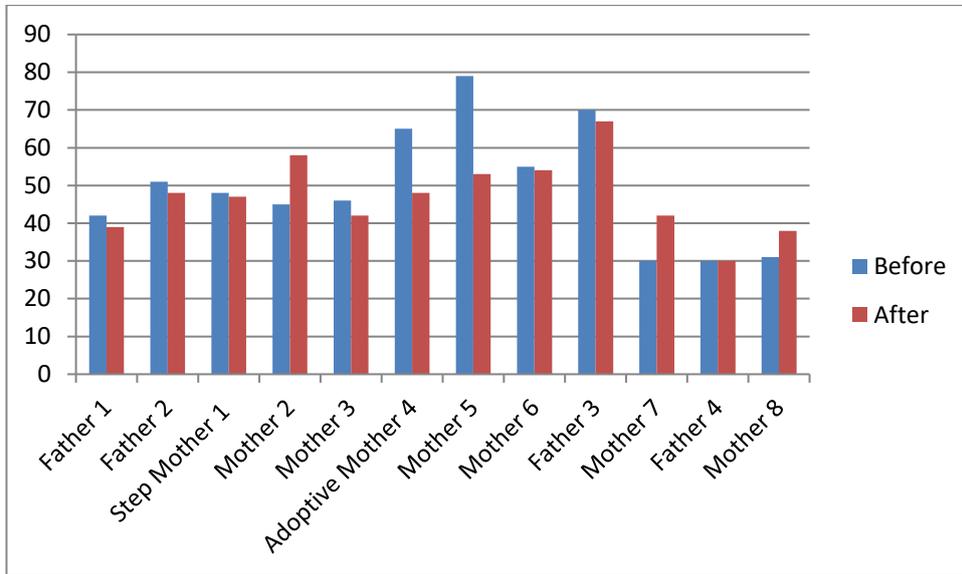
## Appendix 2

### Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire data



### Appendix 3

#### Parental Stress Scales data



## Appendix 4

### WEEKLY FEEDBACK

	Not information	Neutral	Quite Informative	Very informative
<b>Session 1</b>				
I found this session to be		1	2	7
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				10
<b>Session 2</b>				
I found this session to be			5	4
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				9
<b>Session 3</b>				
I found this session to be			2	7
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
			1	8
<b>Session 4</b>				
I found this session to be				9
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				9
<b>Session 5</b>				
I found this session to be			2	7
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				9
<b>Session 6</b>				
I found this session to be			1	11
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				12
<b>Session 7</b>				
I found this session to be				11
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				11
<b>Session 8</b>				
I found this session to be:			4	6
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				10
<b>Session 9</b>				
I found this session to be:			1	9
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
			10	10
<b>Session 10</b>				
I found this session to be:			1	11
I feel that the group facilitators were	Not supportive	supportive	Quite supportive	Very supportive
				12

## Appendix 5

### End of Group evaluation feedback from parents

Overall Group Evaluation	Yes	No
<i>Was the time of the session ok?</i>	11	1* "should be longer"
<i>Was the number of sessions ok?</i>	11	1* "should be more"
<i>Did the group meet your expectations?</i>	12	
<p><i>What, for you, was most useful about the group?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided better understanding of teenagers and parental strategies</li> <li>• Meeting other parents, open frank discussions, support, advice which works!</li> <li>• Learning to step back, let kids make mistakes etc</li> <li>• The people and sharing info</li> <li>• All of it</li> <li>• The parents who attended/brain puzzle and knowledge of development</li> <li>• Group interactions, sharing experiences/feelings</li> <li>• Talking, sharing, trying different strategies</li> <li>• Talking collectively about our problems</li> <li>• Discussing different situations, learning different tools</li> </ul>		
<p><i>What, for you, was least useful?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A it has all been useful</li> <li>• N/A</li> <li>• None</li> <li>• Nothing</li> <li>• Nothing identified</li> <li>• N/A</li> <li>• Tug of war role play didn't really work for me</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Are there other topics/issues that would have been useful to look at?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police representation re: aggression</li> <li>• Child exploitation</li> <li>• Police involvement</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• The multi choice that we didn't cover</li> <li>• None</li> <li>• N/A</li> <li>• no</li> </ul>		
<p><i>How has the group changed you as a parent?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given hope</li> <li>• Made me look at myself and the mistakes I was making</li> <li>• Relaxed more/expect there will be setbacks etc</li> <li>• New ways of handling and looking at things</li> <li>• Many ways – consistency, think/allow myself time</li> <li>• Less stressed, more confident and coping better</li> <li>• More thought before answering</li> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Calmer, listen more, don't helicopter in so much</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a new parent, understanding how important it is being consistent is to ensure security to the young person</li> <li>• Made me aware of not picking up the hook and more appreciative of brain development in teenagers</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Has the group made any difference to your teenager's behaviour? If yes, please describe or explain the change:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meltdowns seem shorter</li> <li>• My child is less reactive</li> <li>• Seems calmer, she knows I have expectations but that I will still always be there for her</li> <li>• Absolutely! Less time in conflict. Acceptance of their behaviour</li> <li>• Less angry</li> <li>• Unsure but time will tell as you only see smaller episodes of tantrums</li> <li>• My approach has changed her reaction to situations</li> <li>• Shorter bouts of anger, whole household seems calmer</li> <li>• Maybe tries not to get me in longer arguments</li> <li>• I have learnt not to take the hook meaning that the house is a lot easier to live in</li> </ul>	12	
<p><i>Has the group made any difference to your relationship with your teenager? If yes, please describe or explain the change:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are closer</li> <li>• I feel able to just "be together" rather than always trying to parent/correct/teach</li> <li>• Closer, she talks to more more knowing I won't judge so much</li> <li>• Not to get involved in conflict – not personal</li> <li>• We sometimes talk now</li> <li>• Talk more</li> <li>• We long to communicate better</li> <li>• We talk more, just keeping in mind the brain isn't fully formed</li> <li>• Try to listen more and walk away from the argument</li> <li>• My relationship is much more positive. Not so many arguments while achieving boundaries</li> </ul>	11	1
<p><i>What was the best moment of the group?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whole experience was excellent</li> <li>• The honesty of the people, sharing reality, laughing</li> <li>• All</li> <li>• Experience of sharing</li> <li>• Meeting other parents</li> <li>• All of it</li> <li>• Honest reflection of feelings</li> <li>• Lovely group of parents, all willing to listen and be listened to</li> <li>• Realising that I'm not the only parent that has negative feelings about their child</li> <li>• Reflections and learning from others. We aren't alone!</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Did you feel supported in the group by the group leaders?</i></p> <p>Not supported 0  Unsure 0  Supported 0  Very Supported 12</p>		
<p><i>Any other comments about the group leaders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best parenting course presenters ever!</li> </ul>		

- Excellent support, well facilitated meetings, openness by group as a whole has been very effective, feel better equipped as a parent
- Their ability to relax the group from day one was key to the success everyone now feels
- Perfect – Alice’s flapjacks and milk tart amazing!
- Welcoming/calm/freedom to speak/non-judgemental/generally fabulous
- Keep up the good work
- Excellent facilitation by Linda and Alice
- Alice and Linda are very understanding, listen and are supportive
- This group has been so helpful in making me understand my role as “mum”. I now realise how important that stability is. Linda and Alice have been really great, supportive, very clear, understanding while at the same time being firm so to get through the course content

*Any other comments about taking part in the group:*

- Valuable experience
- Most effective parenting course attended (out of 3 in total). Very glad to have had the opportunity to attend
- Very worthwhile learned lots
- Probably the best group I’ve attended and made real bonds with everyone
- I would recommend to all
- Would strongly recommend its continuation for other parents, extremely helpful and will prevent escalation of events
- Feel sad and anxious about the course ending. It’s been something to look forward to at the end of each week to almost recharge the batteries for the week ahead
- Found the group to be collectively very supportive and friendly. Again a problem aired and shared
- I would recommend this to other parents. Well done to everyone involved

## Appendix 6

### Feedback from professionals

Dear Linda

I wonder if you could let me know where I might find details of forthcoming STOP programmes?

I have a parent in Trowbridge who may find it very beneficial.

My Calne family who are currently attending your Melksham group have told me how interesting and useful it is – they particularly like the way the focus is on understanding the teenage brain rather than being given strategies.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Jackie Chisling

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Received from Lisa Williams 22/02

This morning I received some feedback regarding the STOP programme and the facilitators that I wanted share.

XXXXXX, who is enrolled on the course, spoke about how she had unfortunately missed two appointments due to her daughters health (she is a full time carer to xxxxxxx - a longstanding patient with us in OSCA) she spoke about how Linda had made the time to meet with her and helped her to catch up on the previous sessions and she was able to attend the third session and felt welcomed. xxxxx has attended many parenting programmes, with the local authority previously including Triple P and Swap. She said within one session she knows this will be the best course she has been on - she said was 'totally impressed at the brilliant facilitators and engagement from the whole group'. She said she had spoken to another parent who had commented on the huge difference the group has made already to her personally.

She shared her views on this within a child in need meeting with other agencies and was happy for me to feedback these views.

Well done Linda, not only does this parent really need this supportive space this programme offers but she has been working with services and professionals for around 5 years, having had many interventions and has often expressed feelings of being let down. She has said for the last year that CAMHS have helped her in a way that has been above and beyond other services, and have finally moved her family forward. This programme for parents has added to her very positive view of the service.

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Received 28<sup>th</sup> Feb from Annabelle Gilham

Dear Linda and Alice

Thank you for the update Linda.

Just wanted to give you some feedback from xxxxxx, whom I saw today. She said that she is so glad she is going to the group and thinks it is extremely helpful, both your facilitation and also the other group members. Well done, sounds like you are both doing an amazing job!

Best regards

Annabelle

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Hi Linda

xxxxxx reports an increase in her confidence in parenting all the children,

She talks about recognising the learning from the programme when she listens to herself talking to the children. She is planning and engaging in more activities with them. Examples include going to Chippenham on the bus, taking a friend up on an offer to go to the park in Bath, playing football in the garden with the children.

She enjoyed being with the other parents and likes to be part of the group on Facebook they have set up afterwards. She has made new friends, finds them really supportive; this has significantly increased social opportunities, she is less isolated. Quite an Ambassador !

Many thanks again

BW

Jacqui

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Hello Both

Feedback from STOP

W tells me has found the course really helpful, he feels he has benefited from the content and the sharing of experiences with others, he speaks very positively about the group. Feels it is collaborative and not judging him 'real relationships'

From my perspective-he has found easier to hold things to discuss things in the group and this has reduced his contact with me significantly, which has enable me to focus on YP mental health. He has increased his ability to stop and think his response through and not just respond on emotion. More willing to negotiate middle ground and to hold boundaries around safety in a compassionate rather than what could have been perceived as punitive. When he has contacted me he has seemed much

more reasoned about what he needs-has rung for some 'coaching', so more effective than ringing up only to share his concerns.

W is clearly very passionate about being the best he can for his children-for me what has really shifted is the compassion that he is now advocating for them- my impression this is because he feels better supported.

W has been doing this alongside Family Therapy, so the joint enterprise has enable him to feel confident to make some changes.

Stephanie Stacey  
Wiltshire OSCA