

The West Partnership presents:

Early Years Improvement Team, East Renfrewshire Council Maintaining family support services through COVID19

The storyboard details how the team at East Renfrewshire council adapted to the pandemic in order to maintain their programmes of parental support. We hear how the service remotely delivered their Psychology of Parenting programme during social distancing.

What was the problem?

The Psychology of Parenting programme has run for several years and aims to support vulnerable parents via an evidence-based intervention. Families looking for support to build positive relationships with their children who are displaying severe behaviour problems have benefitted from the programme which is delivered by a multi-agency staff (PoPP) team. The programme usually takes a group form and runs in person over 14 or 8 weeks. The social distancing requirements of the pandemic meant that the in-person delivery of the programme was impossible.



Why is this important?

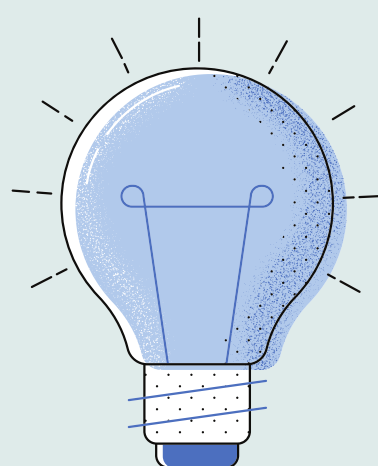
A wealth of research has demonstrated the positive impact that early parental engagement and family support can have on the attainment of pupils. The nationwide Psychology of Parenting programmes aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of both pupils and their wider families. The programme in East Renfrewshire has supported parents who would like help with managing their children's behaviour. Such support has been proven to make a difference to children's life chances.



Aims of the change to practice

The project had a number of aims:

- 1) To continue to reach those most in need who would otherwise have missed out on the service due to ELC and school closures that prevented face to face signposting of the service
- 2) To continue to deliver the Psychology of Parenting programme despite the impact of the pandemic



What did you do?

The team at East Renfrewshire were halfway through the delivery of a programme when the pandemic struck. To adapt to the pandemic, the team contacted the national Psychology of Parenting group (NHS Education for Scotland – NES) to request an online recap of skills learned throughout PoPP training and to support the PoPP team deliver the programme remotely. This included wellbeing resources for the team to support their own wellbeing. Thereafter, online training for the delivery of the programme was offered. A decision was made to focus on the online PoPP resource using the limited PoPP staff that were available. All PoPP practitioners are training in the Solihull approach and in Connecting with Parents, with some trained in motivational interviewing techniques. As the programme progressed it was evident that some parents required support with hardware and connectivity, which was resolved through partnership with other agencies including Connect Scotland and Good Causes Charity. Whilst elements of the programme were placed online, a blended approach which used socially distant walks, phone calls and teams meetings allowed the team to support their parents through the programme.

What happened?

The team believed the online delivery of the programme was experienced differently to in-person delivery. The programme takes on average 8 weeks when delivered in person. The team noticed that parents were often taking closer to 12 weeks to complete the programme. Online delivery had a level of flexibility that allowed participants to complete the programme at their own pace, while also encouraging more than one participant in the household to become involved (i.e partner or grandparent). The team also noticed a lower drop out rate in participants which they put down to the accessibility of the online programme. By February, the team had engaged with 47 parents online and continued to see the programme have a positive impact on parents, demonstrated by the pre and post Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire. Online delivery has produced results akin to face to face delivery, confirming to the team the programme's effectiveness. Formal and informal feedback from parents has also been positive.



What are the key points you have learnt?

The team have identified several key learning points. Firstly, the online delivery of the programme has challenged their assumptions that group learning was most effective. Indeed, some parents preferred individual learning. Secondly, the flexibility of the online programme was also a key factor of the programme's success. The ability of parents to complete the programme at their own pace may have been a factor in keeping parents engaged. Thirdly, the team have reflected on the experience of delivery from the staff perspective. Initially there was some reluctance in moving away from in-person delivery, but staff quickly noticed the benefits of online delivery and were convinced of its value.



What next for the project?

Moving forward, the team will continue using the online approach as a choice for parents to engage with. They also intend to adopt some of the 1-1 elements of the online approach for their in-person delivery, acknowledging that some parents are more likely to engage outside of group situations. The team also intends on collecting testimonies of those who have participated in the online programme.

