

Institution: University of Warwick		
Unit of Assessment: C – Education		
Title of case study: Providing expert advice to local authorities and service providers to support the development and implementation of effective parenting programmes		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Geoff Lindsay Mairi-Ann Cullen Vaso Totsika	Professor; 4 as PI, 2 Co-I Senior Research Fellow; 1 PI, 4 Co-I Senior Research Fellow; 2 PI, 2 Co-I	November 1995 - Present June 2003 – Dec 2020 Oct 2013 – Sept 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Most parents develop parenting skills with informal support (e.g. families, books) but others could benefit from more structured support as part of community provision. The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research's 14-year (£2.45million) research programme has evaluated the effectiveness of parenting programmes and their implementation in order to improve parenting skills thereby preventing or reducing their children's behavioural difficulties, which have prevalence of at least 10% in the UK and are associated with adverse development in adolescence and early adulthood. Over the assessment period, the research has enabled parenting services in 11 local authorities (LAs) to maintain funding of programmes despite austerity; helped service providers identify "what works" and thereby increase parental demand for their programmes; and influenced local and national parenting support policies. The work has directly improved the parenting skills and parent mental well-being of more than 13,500 parents, and the behaviour and well-being of their children.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Parenting programmes comprise <i>universal</i> parenting programmes, developed for and available to all parents, and <i>targeted</i> programmes, for parents whose children are exhibiting or are at risk of developing behavioural problems. Both are forms of <i>early intervention</i> to improve parents' parenting skills, mental well-being, confidence and satisfaction as a parent, thereby improving their children's development and limiting or preventing adverse outcomes, eg delinquency, poor mental health. The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research's (CEDAR) research and collaborative developmental programme has worked with LAs, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and programme providers (2006-20). The research, led by Lindsay, Cullen and Totsika, has investigated programme <i>effectiveness</i> when delivered in the community, henceforth defined as improvements in one or more of: parenting skills (laxness, over-reactivity), parental stress, parental self-efficacy and satisfaction with being a parent, and parental mental well-being; and child behaviour, primarily conduct problems.</p> <p>Two studies, funded by the Department for Education and Department for Health, collectively provide the most substantial UK evidence of the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of targeted and universal parenting programmes. Our evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP): 2006-11, >8300 parents), Phase 1 with three programmes implemented in 18 LAs in a Pathfinder study (2006-08, DfES, £351K), and Phase 2, eight programmes in all 152 LAs in England 2008-11 (DfES, £749K), demonstrated the effectiveness of <i>targeted</i> programmes delivered in the community, in improving parenting skills and mental well-being, and their children's behaviour; their cost effectiveness; and feasibility of large-scale implementation. Children with SEN and their parents benefitted as much as typically developing children and their parents (3.3); improvements were maintained over one year (3.2); and comparable outcomes across the two phases confirmed consistency in the results (3.1, 3.2).</p> <p>Subsequently, CEDAR's evaluation of 12 <i>universal</i> parenting programmes (CANparent trial, 2012-15, DfE £847K, DH £483K) demonstrated: significant effectiveness in improving >3000 parents' satisfaction with being a parent, parenting efficacy, and their mental well-being; that</p>		

parenting programmes were generally not seen as stigmatising; the limitations of funding by vouchers in terms of parents' willingness to pay; and wide variation in cost effectiveness between programmes (3.4). Research with five LAs previously part of PEIP, then funding parenting programmes themselves on the basis CEDAR's evidence of their effectiveness (2011-16, **British Academy £7337**), demonstrated comparable levels of effectiveness to that displayed in formal trials of targeted programmes when delivered in the community (*sustained implementation*: 3.5). Further research demonstrated that the *universal* programme by independent provider Parent Gym (£10K) was effective on the same measures (3.6).

Overall, the research demonstrated:

1. Non-UK origin programmes with evidence of *efficacy* from controlled trials can demonstrate *effectiveness*, indicating suitability for UK implementation in the community (3.1, 3.2).
2. Parenting programmes are regarded positively and not as stigmatising (3.4); and are as effective with parents of children with SEN as parents of children without SEN (3.3).
3. Triple P was consistently the most effective programme, aiding commissioners selecting programmes for implementation (3.1, 3.2).
4. *Targeted* programmes produce larger improvements in parental mental health, parenting self-efficacy, and satisfaction as a parent than *universal* programmes (3.4).
5. Implementation factors that maximise *effectiveness* include organisational variables (LA leadership, management and parent recruitment), and group facilitator characteristics (3.2).
6. LAs can implement programmes effectively as 'practice as usual', outside formal trials (3.5).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The underpinning research is 2* or above, published in international, peer-review journals:

3.1 Lindsay, G., Strand, S. & Davis, H. (2011). A comparison of the effectiveness of three parenting programmes in improving parenting skills, parent mental well being and children's behaviour when implemented on a large scale in community settings in 18 English local authorities: The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP), *BMC Public Health*, 11:962 doi:[10.1186/1471-2458-11-962](https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-962).

3.2 Lindsay, G. & Strand, S. (2013). Evaluation of a national roll-out of parenting programmes across England: The Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP), *BMC Public Health*. 13:972. doi: [10.1186/10.1186/1471-2458-13-972](https://doi.org/10.1186/10.1186/1471-2458-13-972).

3.3 Totsika, V., Mandair, S., & Lindsay, G. (2017). Comparing the effectiveness of evidence-based parenting programs on families of children with and without special educational needs: Short-term and long-term gains. *Frontiers in Education*: 2.7. DOI [10.3389/feduc.2017.00007](https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2017.00007)

3.4 Lindsay, G. & Totsika, V. (2017). The effectiveness of universal parenting programmes: The CANparent trial. *BMC Psychology*, 5:35. DOI [10.1186/s40359-017-0204-1](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-017-0204-1).

3.5 Gray, G, Totsika, V. & Lindsay, G. (2018). Sustained effectiveness of evidence-based parenting programs after the research trial ends. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9:2035 doi:[10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02035](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02035).

3.6 Lindsay, G., Totsika, V. & Thomas, R. (2019). Evaluating Parent Gym: a community implemented universal parenting programme. *Journal of Children's Services*, 14(1), 1-15 DOI [10.1108/JCS-09-2018-0017](https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-09-2018-0017).

Funding for research studies: GBP2,449,887 (DfE, DH, British Academy, Parent Gym).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

During the REF assessment period, our impact strategy focused primarily on *practice level* implementation, having previously focused primarily on national policy. We translated our research into support for the development and implementation of evidence-based parenting programmes through collaborative developments with beneficiaries: LAs, VCSs, programme providers and the government's What works? Centre, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF).

4.1 Sustaining the provision of parenting programmes in 11 LAs during austerity

Once government PEIP funding ended, and with the then government's austerity policy producing major cuts in LA financial support, we collaborated with five varied LAs with whom we had worked during PEIP (**Group A:** East Sussex, Warwickshire, Newham, Blackpool, Essex).

Each LA paid for processing data and reporting. First, LA parent support service leads used our PEIP research as evidence of the effectiveness of improving parents' parenting skills, mental well-being, and their children's behaviour. This persuaded councils to maintain funding for the services. Second, we continued to evaluate these LAs' parenting programmes and provided a bespoke annual report of each LA's results, which was instrumental in maintaining funding. Third, we analysed the aggregated programmes' data of **3706** parents across the LAs to further demonstrate that these significant improvements (large effect sizes) in parenting skills, parental mental well-being, and also children's behaviour were being maintained at comparable levels as during the PEIP trial, with direct benefit to these parents, their children and the LAs (3.5).

The East Sussex LA Practice Manager explained that: *'Due to the robust evidence... we were able to advocate to the Council for funding and demonstrate effectiveness to the parents and children in our service. In a climate of austerity, this was greatly aided with the evidence provided by CEDAR... Between April 2018 until August 2020, we carried out **755 parenting interventions** (all based on a manualised programme with some 1:1 and some group work) with a total count of **3077 participants**.'* (5.1) [in addition to the earlier 3706 above].

CEDAR's (2017) conference to disseminate our parenting research (see **section 4.4** below) resulted in a new collaboration (July 2018 to present) with six **Group B** LAs: Cheshire East, Cheshire West/Chester, Halton/Warrington, Liverpool, St Helens, Knowsley. Lindsay worked with this North West Consortium on the development and monitoring of their parenting support and use of parenting programmes, including advice on appropriate measures and implementing their own data collection and analysis systems. Early collected data (**294 parents** April 2018 to March 2019) indicates 90% of parents completed their programme, 81% had improved parenting skills, 86% mental well-being. Parent appreciation is shown by comments collected by the LAs, eg:

- *'I feel loads more confident and coping better. I'm on top of things in the house now and feel loads better.'*
- *'I used to feel nervous about talking in front of people but after the group I feel I have come out of my shell.'*
- *'The course has improved my parenting massively and would recommend it to anyone.'*

As the Chair of the North West Consortium of LAs testified: *'Lindsay advised the consortium about his research on programme effectiveness [as defined above]. This data was used to persuade the directors of our respective councils to fund parenting programmes, and advice was also given on appropriate evaluation methods, including to parenting lead officers'* (5.2).

4.2 Supporting parenting programme providers and evidence-based practice **Supporting the Early Intervention Foundation in its development of evidence-based parenting programmes**

CEDAR worked with the EIF, now a major What Works? Centre, on a formative evaluation of their early development (2014-17). This comprised, i) a formative evaluation of the 20 Pioneering Early Intervention Places and other stakeholders to examine how far the EIF had achieved its set-up objectives, to enable EIF's government departments to assess EIF's potential and to add further value; ii) evaluation of EIF's early years initiatives provided evidence to support the thinking of staff and Governing Board of Trustees; our wider expertise provided a sounding board to contribute to EIF's organisational planning; and assisted the EIF to focus on specific workstreams to assess their effectiveness in translating evidence and catalyse its use and implementation in practice. This has led to **EIF Guidance** (see **section Family Lives** below).

As the former Chief Executive of the EIF explains: *'Professor Lindsay and Mrs Cullen's research was very helpful when we were laying the EIF's foundations during its early period. Their research and collaborative consultancy helped us to make judgements about the areas in which we should focus in order to develop our services; to demonstrate to policy makers and professionals (eg Government, local authorities and professionals) the high quality of our work; and to provide research support to ensure continuing, and increasing, funding of the EIF.'* (5.3).

Supporting Parent Gym's development and take-up

Lindsay collaborated with Parent Gym, which provides universal parenting programmes, to improve marketing and recruit more parents by having high quality rigorous research evidence. Building on our CANparent research, which included Parent Gym, CEDAR's 2-year quasi-experimental controlled comparison design study ($N = 1320$) provided rigorous evidence on **762** parents who undertook Parent Gym, indicating significant improvements with large effect sizes in parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy compared to the control parents (**3.6**)

As the former Director of Parent Gym has testified, CEDAR's research '*has had a substantial impact on Parent Gym by providing very rigorous evidence of the programme's effectiveness with respect to improved parenting. This has provided research support from a highly regarded research centre, which is very rare among universal parenting programmes. This in turn has enabled us to increase the reputation of the quality of Parent Gym and also to substantially increase interest from schools/centres and parents to run more classes. Over the period Sep 2018-July 2019 over 2000 parents have benefitted from our Parent Gym classes*' [plus estimated **3500-4000** 2016-18] (**5.4**).

Triple P

We also worked with Triple P, one of the most effective and best-known positive parenting systems in the world, disseminating our research, which demonstrated Triple P as the most effective parenting programme in all our comparative studies; important information that has greatly assisted recruitment. Triple P's Chief Executive Officer states: '*We have benefitted greatly from the research evidence both in terms of its high quality and independence. The research has been very helpful in supporting our success in developing Triple P throughout the UK in particular. The evidence has also been used internationally where it has also contributed to the growth of Triple P's use in many countries...an estimated 90,000 parents being supported through Triple P during this time [since 2014]*'. (**5.5**).

Triple P also notes that '*Geoff also worked with us to develop opportunities to use Triple P at scale across the West Midlands*'. We are currently planning a new collaboration with Triple P focussed particularly on parents of children with a range of disabilities including intellectual disabilities and autism and the implementation of evidence-based programmes.

Family Lives

We worked with Family Lives, a leading national family support charity, on the CANparent trial: Family Lives developed, managed and monitored the initiative which CEDAR evaluated. Building on this complementary collaboration we aided Family Lives in supporting the development of the sector, through dissemination and use of our research findings. We provided strong evidence to support Family Lives' development of the CANparent Quality Mark, which persuaded providers of the need for stronger evidence of their programmes' effectiveness and how this could be achieved through research. The accreditation means that stakeholders at all levels can make informed assessments about parenting programme provision, leading to better support for parents and improved quality across the sector. The value of having increased evidence of universal parenting programmes' effectiveness was also recognised in the EIF hierarchy of evidence (<https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/eif-evidence-standards>). Cullen also led the evaluation of the ParentChild+ programme implemented by Family Lives.

Family Lives Deputy Chief Executive states: '*As a leading organisation of parenting support in the UK, we have benefitted greatly from working with CEDAR to support the development and continuous improvement of a diverse sector comprising hundreds of organisations, including establishing the Quality Mark for parenting programme. Family Lives has directly benefitted through the evaluation research of our implementation of the ParentChild+ programme, which led to significant improvements and enabled us to gain further funding.*' (**5.6**)

4.3 Policy development

Lindsay was invited to provide expert research advice, based on the PEIP and CANparent, along with senior officers from VCS parenting organisations providing implementation advice, to

Prime Minister Cameron's Special Adviser at Number 10 Downing Street. This fed into the PM's Life Chances speech (11.01.2016) where he promoted parenting support with the promise to 'significantly expand parenting provision', and stated that, 'I believe we now need to think about how to make it normal – even aspirational to attend parenting classes'. Although the PM changed, government parenting policy continued to evolve. Lindsay was invited to advise the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP, now the lead government department for parenting) on research design for evaluating parenting initiatives and, as part of a DWP expert workshop of researchers, to advise on research-based parent support policy development (16.01.2016).

4.4 Dissemination.

In May 2017, with British Academy funding, we produced a video disseminating the evidence from our study of *sustained intervention* using the Group A data, which was distributed to 80 LAs for whom we had contact details of parenting support officers: 24 LAs responded positively to the video (led by Totsika). Consequently, we organised a conference funded by Warwick's Institute for Advanced Studies *Delivering Results* programme (07.11.2017) to present and discuss with key stakeholders the evidence from the range of our parenting support research, with additional contributions from the Warwickshire parenting coordinator and the EIF. This was attended by 60 senior LA parenting officers, programme providers (eg Triple P), educational psychologists and researchers. This resulted in Lindsay advising the North West Consortium (see 4.1). Lindsay also presented oral evidence to the Parliamentary Enquiry into Parenting and Social Mobility 2015 (5.7) and evidence to the Commons Work & Pensions and Education Select Committees' Inquiry into the Life Chances strategy (5.8). PEIP research was also cited in the report of the government's Science & Technology Committee to support the evidence base for early intervention (5.9) and a review of our parenting research was commissioned by the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (5.10).

Conclusion

The impact of our parenting research has been substantial and wide-ranging. We have worked with LAs to enable parenting support services to continue to be funded and support the professional development of staff; with the EIF to support its early development as a What Works? Centre, which developed guidance on the evidence base of parenting programmes; supported providers to enhance their programme evidence base or modify their programme thereby benefitting, through attractiveness to parents and commissioners, higher recruitment and access to funding; to help the VCS parenting support sector recognise the importance of a sound evidence base, and to develop a Quality Mark system; and we also provided evidence to government through the lead department (DWP), PM's special adviser, and parliamentary committees' inquiries, and wider dissemination. And fundamentally, our research and impact activities have benefited **>13,500 parents** directly, improving parenting skills, mental well-being and their children's behaviour; and contributed to the '*growth of Triple P's use in many countries...an estimated 90,000 parents*' (5.5).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Statement from East Sussex LA
- 5.2 Statement from North West consortium of LAs
- 5.3 Statement from Early Intervention Foundation
- 5.4 Statement from Parent Gym
- 5.5 Statement from Triple P Positive Parenting Program
- 5.6 Statement from Family Lives
- 5.7 The Parliamentary Inquiry into Parenting and Social Mobility APPG Report
- 5.8 The Commons Work and Pensions and Education Select Committees Joint inquiry into the Government's life chances strategy
- 5.9 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2018). *Evidence-based early years intervention Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19*.
- 5.10 BACP Commissioned Review: Lindsay, G. (2019). Parenting programmes for parents of children and young people with behavioural difficulties. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. 19, 3-7. DOI: 10.1002/capr.12192.