# Guidance on how to measure parenting programme effectiveness

**What does it do and who is likely to benefit from this guidance?**

• This guidance is for anyone who is commissioning or planning to de-commission a parenting programme. It should also be used when developing an “in house” programme or when seeking to improve an existing programme. It has been put in place to set down the minimum levels of effectiveness expected and to provide a way of analysing relative cost.

• This provides practitioners and commissioners with the tools to assess existing practice and ask appropriate questions to future programme providers.

• This guidance does not discourage local programme development or commissioning but is intended to help ensure that what is developed or commissioned can be planned and assessed with effectiveness in mind. Local developers or practitioners should use it to plan how they could ensure their programme meets minimum standards.

**Why is this necessary?**

• There are a large amount of parenting programmes delivered and commissioned across Nottinghamshire for a range of issues and levels of need. Partners across the county both develop and commission programmes.

• The Nottinghamshire Family and Parenting Strategy commits to ensuring that families benefit from the best quality programmes that we have available but without a clear idea of “effectiveness” this is very difficult. It can often be trial and error, especially when concepts of effectiveness differ.

• In addition, we often develop programmes or invest resources without being clear that we are getting good value for our money. Some programmes come with high delivery costs, others are more reasonable but to ensure that we have long term benefits, and that public money is wisely spent, commissioners and practitioners will be required to plan their commissioning and programme development with this in mind.

• For information- the majority of structured parenting programmes delivered in Nottinghamshire have already been badged through the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) assessment process as “evidence based”.

In the main this relates to:

- Strengthening Families  
- Incredible Years  
- Family Nurse Partnership

However, we do recognise that providing evidence that certain programmes can improve outcomes over time is an expensive and long-term process. Not all programme developers have been able to adopt this practice to evaluate their outcomes. We also recognise that practitioners will develop programmes locally using a “pick and mix” approach and that adaptation will be made to existing programmes for ease of delivery. This can reduce effectiveness of the programme despite proven evidence base of programme sources.

**The Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook**

This database should be consulted in the first instance, when planning to commission a programme or when thinking about developing or adapting a programme. Please see http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/

The Guidebook is a searchable database of parenting interventions designed to provide information and guidance for commissioners, service managers and programme developers on the quality and effectiveness of parenting programmes/approaches.

Each programme is rated on a 4 point scale (where 4 is high and 0 is low) on 4 main elements common to high quality programmes.

These are:

1. They clearly specify their targeted population and include explicit processes to ensure that appropriate families (as determined by their level of need or risk) can be recruited into and participate in the programme.
2. The content (what information parents learn) and processes (how information is delivered to parents) of the programme are based on an explicit and sound theoretical framework.
3. They have carefully considered and detailed the training, supervision and implementation procedures that will allow the programme to be readily set up and implemented in new and independent settings.
4. They have robust evidence that participation in the programme results in positive, substantial and long-lasting gains for parents (and/or their children).

Using these criteria, commissioners will want to ensure that programmes are EIF rated and have a high score (3 or 4) in terms of evidence of positive, substantial and long lasting gains for parents and their families.

# The Nottinghamshire Minimum Standards of Effectiveness for Parenting Programmes

The Nottinghamshire minimum standards should be used before commissioning or decommissioning parenting programmes and when assessing “home grown” programmes. The types of programmes they would most likely be used for are

* A parenting programme that does not appear on the EIF's parenting toolkit.
* When a programme has been assessed by the toolkit but scores low on evidence base. (Often this can be due to lack of funds to invest in robust evaluation).
* When a new programme is developed in Nottinghamshire or to review existing programmes or courses.
* When approached by an external provider.

The “standards for effectiveness” were originally developed in the report “Delivering cost- effective parenting programmes in Kent.” by Kim Robertson.

Please see below for a list of standards and where they originate.

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| **Standards for effective parenting interventions** | **Based on** |
| Structured and manual-based content | National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance |
| Curriculum informed by principles of social learning theory and includes relationship- enhancing strategies | NICE guidance |
| Based on knowledge and evidence of what works | NICE guidance |
| On-going evaluation using standardised measures | NICE guidance |
| Offers sufficient number of sessions to enable change, with optimum of 8 – 12 | NICE guidance |
| Delivered by appropriately trained and skilled practitioners, backed up by good management and support | What works in parenting education? Moran et al. 2004 |
| Flexibility to adapt to meet different needs and enable parents to identify their own parenting objectives | NICE guidance  Feedback from local parenting programme providers |
| Includes and retains the most vulnerable families through relationship-building and accessible delivery methods | What works in parenting education? Moran et al.  Feedback from local parenting programme providers |
| Retention rate | Percentage completion is one indication of the programme’s ability to engage and retain parents |
| Includes intensive engagement activities to reach vulnerable families e.g. personal contact, home visits etc | What works in parenting education? Moran et al. 2004.  Feedback from local parenting programme providers |
| Crèche or childcare support offered | Local providers have found that providing childcare increases programme’s uptake by vulnerable families. |
| Mix of individual and group support | What works in parenting education? Moran et al. 2004 |
| Holistic whole family approach including parallel work with parents and children | What works in parenting education? Moran et al. 2004 |
| Multi-agency approach | Feedback from local parenting programme providers |
| Embedded within other services who have on-going relationship with family | Feedback from local parenting programme providers |
| Opportunities for follow-on support to continue learning | Feedback from local parenting programme providers |

**How to use the assessment criteria:**

* Attached to this report there is a Parenting Programme Cost- benefit scoring sheet
* Using the weighting system set out in both the effectiveness and cost weighting table, results can be tallied together against the scoring system provided.
* There is also a form for recording additional information. This enables programme deliverers to describe what they did and why and to add context to the scores. The questions are there to act as a prompt, you do not need to answer all of them, but any information that you give will be helpful to the panel.
* In order to fully assess the programme, any evidence of its impact, data collected and measurement tools used should be included (as appendices if necessary).
* Users of the scoring tool should email their conclusions to [rachel.clark@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.clark@nottscc.gov.uk)
* Programme effectiveness can change over time, both positively and negatively.   
  Therefore we would recommend that local programme providers are encouraged to self-assess themselves yearly.
* This tool does NOT replace the need for programmes to have clear and robust evidence of impact. Whilst it gives us a clear picture of the quality level that we are starting from (and working towards a minimum standard of effectiveness is key to this), commissioners will need to consider this alongside evidence of impact.
* The questions in the scoring sheet can be used as a discursive tool with providers to gauge initial information about a programme.
* This tool should be used as part of a clear process to determine the quality of our offer to parents. This guidance forms part of a suite of tools that are being developed to improve the quality and sustained impact of parenting programmes in Nottinghamshire. Following on from this will be Guidance for Commissioning parenting programmes and a Parenting Outcomes framework.

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| **Criteria for effectiveness** | **Strongly meets the criteria**  **Allocate THREE points** | **Partially meets the criteria  Allocate TWO Points** | **Does not meet the criteria**  **Allocate ONE point** |
| Structured manual-based content | Yes | Provides set of flexible resources | No |
| Evidence-based curriculum & relationship-enhancing strategies | Yes: theoretical underpinning draws on evidence-based content | Relationship-enhancing strategies without evidence- based theoretical underpinning | No |
| Based on knowledge and evidence of what works | Rating of 3 or 4 on EIF Guidebook | Rating of 2 on EIF Guidebook | Not widely tested |
| On-going evaluation using standardised measures | Pre- and post-questionnaires using standardised measures | Pre- and post-questionnaires designed for programme, with no use of standardised measures | End of course evaluation forms used to gather parent feedback |
| Sufficient no. sessions to make a difference, with optimum for most programmes of 8-12 | Yes | Offers sufficient sessions, but concerns about depth of content | Offers fewer than 8 sessions |
| Delivered by well-trained and supported practitioners | Practitioners receive specific training, on-going support for programme delivery and regular supervision | Practitioners receive specific training, but no regular support or supervision for programme delivery OR practitioners have teaching background but no specific training for work with parents | No training or support provided for programme delivery |
| Flexibility to meet different needs and parents’ own objectives | Yes | Programme offers some flexibility | No |
| Includes and retains the most vulnerable families | Yes | To some extent | No |
| Retention rate | Over 90% | 70 – 89% | Under 70% |
| Intensive engagement to reach vulnerable families | Engagement is an explicit element of programme delivery, usually including home visits | Engagement takes place as an integral part of existing outreach services | No |
| Crèche or childcare support offered | Yes | Sometimes | No |
| Mix of individual and group support | Yes – as an integral part of programme delivery | Some opportunities for individual support as part of programme | No |
| Holistic whole family approach inc. parallel work with parents and children | Yes – as an integral part of programme delivery | Some opportunities for work with children as part of programme | No |
| Multi-agency approach | Yes – joint delivery of programme by staff from different backgrounds/ agencies | Delivered in multi-agency settings, but not joint delivery | No |
| Embedded within other services who have on-going relationship with family | Yes | To some extent or depends on setting | No |
| Opportunities for follow-on support to continue learning | Yes – specific links to other support and learning are built into programme delivery | No specific links, but may be available depending on setting | No |
| MAXIMUM SCORE | 48 | 32 | 16 |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Points total** | **Shading** | **Degree to which meets criteria linked to effective parenting interventions** |
| 41 and over |  | Meets almost all the criteria |
| 35 - 40 |  | Meets many of the criteria |
| 34 and under |  | Meets some of the criteria |

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| **Cost implication** | **High: Allocate THREE points** | **Medium: Allocate TWO points** | **Low: Allocate ONE point** |
| Length of training to deliver programme | 4 or more days | 1 – 3 days | Apprentice model or uses staff with existing teaching qualification |
| Follow-up training days | 2 or more days | 1 day or provided as part of CPD/ supervision group | None |
| Training to run groups as well as induction to programme? | Not included | Some coverage of group skills through modelling and discussion | Explicitly included |
| Training can be cascaded locally to other practitioners | No – training has to be externally purchased | Yes- via local delivery of training for facilitators | Yes - via apprentice model |
| Cost of training per practitioner if it cannot be cascaded locally | Over £500 per practitioner | Up to £500 per practitioner | None or N/A |
| Certification/ support costs | Over £100 per year or one-off fee of over £300 per practitioner | Up to £100 per year or one-off fee of up to £300 per practitioner | None or included in training cost |
| Cost of training materials | Over £500 | Up to £500 | None or included in training cost |
| No. facilitators for programme delivery | 3 or more | 2 | 1 |
| Min qualification of lead facilitator | Level 6 or above | Level 3 or 4 | N/A |
| Min qualification of co-facilitator | Level 6 or above | Level 3 or 4 | N/A |
| No. sessions (2 hrs) | 12 or more or 8 or more if sessions over 2hrs | 8 – 1 | Up to 7 |
| Time commitment per session for prep and supervision | 5 or more hrs | 3 – 4 hrs | Up to 2 hrs |
| Time per course for admin, set- up and outreach | 4 or more days | 2 – 3 days | Up to 1 day |
| Cascading to other settings | Additional costs to cascade to other settings | No additional costs or N/A | No additional costs or N/A |
| Av. no. parents/ families per course | 7 or fewer participants | 8 – 12 participants | 13 or more participants |
| No. rooms required for delivery | 3 or more | 2 | 1 |
| Cost of learning materials per programme | £151 or more | £51 - £150 | Up to £50 |
| Accreditation costs per programme | £151 or more | Up to £150 | None |
| Cost of other resources per programme | £201 or more | £101-£200 | Up to £100 |
| Crèche provided | Yes | If provided in kind or funding for parents to arrange own childcare | No |
| Transport provided | Yes | Occasionally if required | No |
| Additional support costs e.g. signing, interpreting | Yes (required) | Would if required | No |
| MAXIMUM SCORE | 66 | 44 | 22 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Overall indication of cost based on total points** | **Shading** | **Factors affecting cost of programme** |
| 34 and under |  | Lower end cost implications |
| 35 - 40 |  | Medium cost implications |
| 41 and over |  | Higher end cost implications |

# Parenting Programme Cost- benefit scoring sheet

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| **Name of programme** |
| **Developer/Company** |
| **Contact Details** |
| **Level of need (e.g. Universal, targeted) Age range of programme** |
| **What needs does the programme address?** |
| **Do you know of any similar programmes running locally?** |

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| --- | --- |
| **Criteria for effectiveness** | **Score** |
| Structured manual-based content |  |
| Evidence-based curriculum & relationship-enhancing strategies |  |
| Based on knowledge and evidence of what works |  |
| On-going evaluation using standardised measures |  |
| Sufficient no. sessions to make a difference, with optimum of 8 – 12 |  |
| Delivered by well-trained and supported practitioners |  |
| Flexibility to meet different needs and parents’ own objectives |  |
| Includes and retains the most vulnerable families |  |
| Retention rate |  |
| Intensive engagement to reach vulnerable families |  |
| Crèche or childcare support offered |  |
| Mix of individual and group support |  |
| Holistic whole family approach inc. parallel work with parents and children |  |
| Multi-agency approach |  |
| Embedded within other services who have on-going relationship with family |  |
| Opportunities for follow-on support to continue learning |  |
| **TOTAL** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cost implication** | **Score** |
| Length of training to deliver programme |  |
| Follow-up training days |  |
| Training to run groups as well as induction to programme? |  |
| Training can be cascaded locally to other practitioners |  |
| Cost of training per practitioner if it cannot be cascaded locally |  |
| Certification/ support costs |  |
| Cost of training materials |  |
| No. facilitators for programme delivery |  |
| Min qualification of lead facilitator |  |
| Min qualification of co-facilitator |  |
| No. sessions (2 hrs) |  |
| Time commitment per session for prep and supervision |  |
| Time per course for admin, set-up and outreach |  |
| Cascading to other settings |  |
| Av. no. parents/ families per course |  |
| No. rooms required for delivery |  |
| Cost of learning materials per programme |  |
| Accreditation costs per programme |  |
| Cost of other resources per programme |  |
| Crèche provided |  |
| Transport provided |  |
| Additional support costs e.g. signing, interpreting |  |
| **TOTAL** |  |

**SCORING YOUR ASSESSMENT**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Effectiveness Point total** | **Category** |
|  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Degree to which meets criteria linked to effective parenting interventions** | **Category** | **Points total** |
| Meets almost all the criteria | Good | 41 and over |
| Meets many of the criteria | Medium | 34 and under |
| Meets some of the criteria | Poor | 35 - 40 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Factors affecting cost of programme** | **Category** | **Points total** |
| Lower end cost implications | Low | 34 and under |
| Medium cost implications | Medium | 35 - 40 |
| Higher end cost implications | High | 41 and over |

**Please note:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cost points total** | **Category** |
|  |  |

*It should be noted that the number of criteria for effectiveness a programme meets is broadly an indication of the intensiveness of the intervention. Interventions that meet almost all the criteria are by definition more expensive. Universal programmes, designed to reach greater numbers of parents at lower levels of need, would be expected to be less expensive and meet less of the criteria for effective parenting interventions than programmes delivered at Tiers 2 and 3 of need.*

# Supporting evidence

Context and rationale Background details to your example

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| **Describe your idea:** What was your idea? What did you want to do? Why did you choose your specific programme? Why was the programme needed?  **Describe your knowledge base:** Which published research evidence or local practice informed the development of your programme?  **The aims:** State your aims and what you planned to achieve clearly (what difference were you trying to make to your identified cohort of children and young people or families?  **The programme:** Describe your programme clearly (i.e. overview of the content, method of delivery, duration, type of staff who can deliver it, other agencies involved etc).  **The procedure:** Describe your referral process, including inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, and referral pathway following completion of the group. |

**Evidencing that your practice has made a difference to children, young people and families**

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| --- |
| **Performance measures:** What were your *actual* performance measures, i.e. how you measured the success of your programme? Include qualitative (children and young people, parents and professionals’ views) and quantitative (statistical) data. [These can be included as appendices to the form]  **Data:** What data demonstrates the difference made to your cohort of young people or families before and after the intervention?  ***Please provide evidence***, through the data collected, to show the impact the intervention has made (e.g. please attach relevant case studies / attendance figures / retention rates / reports etc. to this form)  **Feedback:** Have you encouraged any feedback from children, young people and their families? This could include children, youth or parent feedback surveys, other surveys/data, and anecdotal evidence. [Examples can be included as appendices to the form]  **The difference made:** What now happens differently for the services involved? Have the results changed the way the intervention or related services are delivered? How do your findings compare to others implementing similar practices?  **Keeping the practice going:** Do you have any guidance or tips that would be useful to others? Did you experience any challenges or barriers? How did you overcome them? What would you do the same and differently in the future? |

Please email this form to rachel.clark@nottscc.gov.uk when completed.

Thank you