



PRESS RELEASE - For immediate release

Parents as Partners group work programme announces impressive outcomes

Innovative group parenting programme reduces parents' psychological distress, improves relationship quality and parenting skills, helping participants and their children

The Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships and Family Action have reported outstanding outcomes for the jointly-run group based parenting intervention, Parents as Partners, at the programme's recent national conference.

Delivered with funding from the Department of Work & Pensions, Parents as Partners is a ground-breaking free programme for parents who are worried that their relationship issues are affecting their parenting. The fresh approach brings couples and co-parents together in a safe space for 16 weekly group sessions, led by trained group workers who work with both parents to foster long-lasting change. The programme is based on a successful model devised by Professors Philip and Carolyn Cowan; their evidence, including randomised controlled trials, has enabled the UK programme to be included in the Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook with a Level 3 rating.

Figures released to mark the end of the second year of delivery showed an array of outstanding outcomes for the participants, improving adult mental health, the co-parents' couple communication and children's well-being. The intervention is one of a limited number of programmes recognised by the Early Intervention Foundation (whose Donna Molloy spoke at the event) as having 'evidence of improving the quality of the couple relationship, fathers' engagement with their children and children's behaviour'.

Parents as Partners' positive results were based on a comparison of pre- and immediate post-intervention questionnaires. Arguably, the most significant impact of the programme was the lowering of risk of harm to children. Of those parents that displayed indications that they may be 'at risk' (of engaging in future abusive behaviours), 31% were no longer considered at risk after completing group sessions. 1

A reduction in the proportion of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties within the 'abnormal' range was another outstanding result.

Other positive effects in the general life arena were evident. Parents as Partners found that the adults who were receiving help in their relationship had a platform to perform better in other walks of life, such as employment. 2

Findings from the programme also suggest that the quality of family life was improved through attendance at the groups, with 70% of parents reporting that their confidence about the future for their family had increased.

The conference heard also of the qualitative effect of group work. Studies have conclusively proved that, in the life-cycle of a couple, relationships deteriorate over time. Parents as Partners attendees have repeatedly reported that relationships have improved and many of the couples, initially sceptical of attending, expressed disappointment that the programme was over, and talked of how it had made them feel happier and more together. "It is a positive, challenging, and rewarding journey", remarked one couple. Another pair went further, calling it a, 'once in a lifetime opportunity'.

Entering its last year, Parents as Partners is looking for more participants, which are recruited via referrals from health and social care, community workers and also by self-selection. Places for the new intake are available by emailing parentsaspartners@family-action.org.uk.

Summarising the impact, TCCR Head of Strategic Development Honor Rhodes said;

"Parents as Partners is changing the way families in emotional difficulties work. TCCR is so proud to be able to make an offer of help that changes parents' conversations, reduces their conflicts and helps their children. Even more than that, the programme seems to be changing the way local authority systems work. We are seeing Early Help teams and social workers asking questions about couple relationship quality after our training on how to use the programme".

David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive of Family Action said:

"We are delighted to be continuing our work with the Tavistock Centre for Couples Relationships on the Parents as Partners programme. We know that providing relationship support to parents can make a real, tangible difference to their ability to co-parent and have a positive impact on the whole family. We are excited about building on the significant achievements of the programme to date, as we move into its next exciting phase".

Ends

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Note to editors

1. Parents as Partners used a number of measures including a Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory (BCAP) both before and after the group sessions
2. Of the 15% of participants who were unemployed at the start of the programme, over half are now in full- or part-time employment. While other events and factors come into consideration

and, it should be acknowledged that this programme does not have a control group, this finding adds credence to the use of relationship work to make major societal savings.

3. To examine the duration of these extremely positive intervention outcomes, TCCR and Family Action are running 6 months assessment after treatment in order to provide richer data regarding longer-term impact.
4. The Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships (TCCR) provides a comprehensive range of affordable counselling services for couples and individuals facing relationship problems. To find out more about the range of services offered visit www.tccr.org.uk or call 020 7380 1975.
5. TCCR also runs a variety of practitioner trainings, ranging from introductory courses to doctoral programmes in couple counselling and psychotherapy.
6. TCCR is recognised in its field as a centre of advanced practice and study, both nationally and internationally. Our ethos is to develop practice, research and policy activities which complement and inform the development of services to couples.
7. Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering innovative and effective services and support that reaches out to many of the UK's most vulnerable people. We seek to empower people and communities to address their issues and challenges through practical, financial and emotional help. Our work is wide-ranging and includes help for parents-to-be, the provision of many Children's Centres in local communities, intensive family support, emotional health and wellbeing services, counselling, mediation and therapies, support in schools and financial grants programmes. www.family-action.org.uk
8. The Early Intervention Guidebook can be found at <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programmes-library/parents-as-partners-in-the-uk>