Parents’ or carers’ experiences of the Incredible Years Baby Programme

Service–Related Project

Becky Ashton
Lancaster University Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
Outline

- Background
- Research aims and questions
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
Background literature

Importance of early relationships

- Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969)
- Neglectful or abusive care in the first 12–18 months – parts of a baby’s brain does not develop effectively due to stress hormone cortisol (Gunnar & Donzella, 2002)
- Too much cortisol in hippocampus leads to reduced number of receptors (Caldji, Diorio & Meaney, 2000)
- Infants who were insecurely attached at 18 months showed different neural responses in pre-frontal cortex at 22 years of age compared to those securely attached (Moutsiana et al., 2014)

Parenting programmes

- Effective intervention (McCart, Priester, Davies, & Azen, 2006)
- Government support for early intervention
  - *1001 critical days* (Leadsom, Field, Burstow & Lucas, 2013)
  - *Early intervention: the next steps* (Allen, 2011)
Incredible Years (IY) baby parenting programme

- Developed by Carolyn–Webster Stratton (Webster–Stratton, 1981; Webster–Stratton, 1982)

- Baby programme aimed at parents of babies 0–1 years

- Content includes: becoming a new parent, developmental milestones, temperament differences, safety proofing, and parenting approaches that build a positive parent–child relationship

- Research trials of the IY baby programme in Norway, Denmark and Ireland (White & Webster–Stratton, 2014)

- A pilot study in Wales has shown positive feedback from families (Jones, Hutchings, Erjavec, & Hughes, 2012)
Current study

- North West of England, in which certain areas have been considered to have the highest ranking for child poverty in the UK (White & Webster–Stratton, 2014).
- The groups were run for 8 sessions between February – December 2015 – 6–8 parents attending each programme
  - First time service were delivering baby programme

- The aim of this research was to explore parents’ and carers’ experiences of the IY baby parenting programme
- Research questions:
  1. What was valued by the parents and carers attending the programme?
  2. What were the challenges presented by the programme as experienced by parents?
Method

- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Recruitment via three-month follow-up or post
- Nine parents from three different baby IY courses
- Semi-structured interviews:
  - Positives of the course
  - Experience of course leaders and other parents
  - Challenging aspects of the group
Three main themes: A shared journey, course delivery and positive outcomes
A shared journey

Safe foundations

“I was a bit apprehensive at first about going but...but yeah when I got there it was...fine” (Linda)

“This group kind of, because it was such a safe place for us, it kind of ...help me to build a relationship with them” (Pauline)

In it together: Normalisation

“I think it was nice meeting other mums ... just having them there to talk about the joy of lack of sleep or various things that go wrong when you’ve had a baby” (Jasmine)

“It's easy talking about the things that you're good at and stuff like that but it's a lot harder to talk about your fears and you know what you fear you're struggling with especially when a baby is concerned” (Derek)
Course delivery

- **Course leaders**
  “I think the organisers were lovely, really, really friendly and genuine people” (Jasmine)
  - Health visitors

- **Back to basics**
  “It was the way they encouraged us with the little things we do every day and how important they are like the way we talk and sing to the baby, touch the baby how important those things are for the baby’s development” (Pauline)

- **Varied delivery**

- **Less helpful aspects of the course**
  Less culturally relevant videos, more free discussion, expectations of the group and challenges of having young babies
Positive Outcomes

- **Parent**
  “I feel happy and confident…. just ‘cause they was constantly reassuring me telling me what a good mum I was …and saying that that was down to me like ‘cause I'm his mum” (Holly)

- **Baby**
  “The most important thing is it's made a positive difference to (baby)'s life I'm a better parent than I was before I started the course erm and I think (baby) is happier, you know, as a direct result of what we've learnt” (Derek)

- **Partner and family**
  “I used to, every week that I learnt something, he used to ask me and I used to tell him... so yeah it helped my family even though I was doing it. They learnt a lot too.” (Wendy)
Discussion

- Supported by previous literature reviews (0–7 years) (Barlow, Parsons & Stewart-Brown, 2005; Kaminski et al., 2008)

- Parents found the experience to be overwhelming positive:
  - Valued non-judgmental support and felt safe (Levac et al., 2008; Polansky et al., 2006)
  - Normalisation
  - Self-stigma – negative self-perceptions based on societal stigma regarding mental health and therapy is internalised
Service recommendations

- **Group format**
  - Clear with purpose of the group and the need to go ‘back to basics’
  - More free discussion (Ruddle, Livingstone, Huddy, Johns, Stahl & Wykes, 2012)
  - Use of culturally relevant videos

- **National recommendations**
  - Roll-out delivery across UK and worldwide
  - Universal delivery of group – New parents receive little preparation for their role (DeGraaf et al, 2008)
    - *Early intervention: the next steps and 1001 critical days* (Allen, 2011; Leadsom et al., 2013)
Thank you for listening!

Questions?
References

References