

Parents positive about classes

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Mums and dads are likely to sign up for parenting classes - but only if there is adequate funding, according to new research.

Academics at the University of Warwick have conducted a three year trial to evaluate the success of the classes proposed by the Government. They found that the sessions held were popular with [parents](#), however when funding available to the [providers](#) of the classes was withdrawn there was a sharp decrease in activities and parents' participation.

The CANparent trial evaluation was led by Professor Geoff Lindsay, director of the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Warwick. He said: "The trial indicated that parents are keen to attend classes and those who did were overwhelmingly positive about their experience. However the number of parents participating dropped when the number of providers decreased from 12 to six following removal of funding worth £100 per parent."

The trial aimed to evaluate parenting classes aimed at parents of all children aged 0-5 (later changed to 0-6 years) in three areas: Middlesbrough, High Peak in Derbyshire, and Camden in London. The sessions were offered to all parents and designed to enhance parenting skills and confidence as a parent, stimulate a commercial market for the classes and prevent the need for future expensive support for parents who were struggling.

Held in two phases (2012-14 & 2014-2015) a key factor during phase 1 was the provision of a £100 voucher for each eligible parent to attend a

programme of parenting classes delivered by an approved provider. One of the major changes during the second phase of the trial (2014-15) was the withdrawal of the vouchers.

Professor Lindsay said: "The classes provided during both phases helped improve parents' confidence in their [parenting skills](#). They reported the sessions have led to changes in their behaviour, with positive impact on their children. In addition mothers and fathers said they would recommend them to friends and many have done so. This indicates the importance of gaining and maintaining momentum as a key factor in the successful expansion of the uptake of the sessions. However parents in phase 1 were reluctant to pay for classes."

In addition, whereas phase 1 (2012-14) of the CANparent trial was successful in encouraging providers to deliver the courses, phase 2 saw the number of providers drop from 12 to six, of which only four were active in delivering parenting classes, as they received no direct subsidy available from the vouchers available in phase 1. Due to the lack of classes on offer the number of parents enrolling in phase 2 was just 164 compared with 2956 during phase 1.

The final report of the evaluation recommends that the government at national and local levels should recognise the value of parenting classes as they were found to have a positive impact on parents throughout the trial. It also recommends local government and the local NHS should be open to working with providers to offer support to service users. Finally future [trials](#) should analyse how and when to move from a subsidised phase, such as the use of vouchers, and what support may need to be put in place.

More information: The final report of phase 1 is available [here](#)

The final report of phase 2 is available [here](#)

Provided by University of Warwick

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