

# Could scale-up of parenting programmes improve child disruptive behaviour and reduce social inequalities? Using individual participant data meta-analysis to establish for whom programmes are effective and cost-effective

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## Plain English summary

### Parenting programmes to improve child disruptive behaviour

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## Plain English summary

**B**ehavioural problems in children are a major and costly public health issue. Parenting programmes that aim to reduce these problems, such as Incredible Years® (IY), have been found to be effective in the UK and elsewhere. However, little is known about whether or not the most socially disadvantaged and troubled families benefit from these programmes, and whether or not they are cost-effective. Up to now, trials and systematic reviews of parenting programmes have mostly been too small to answer these questions. This study combined individual child and parent data from all of the high-quality (i.e. randomised controlled trial) evaluations of the IY parenting in Europe into a single data set. This was then large enough to answer important questions about who benefits from this parenting programme, in terms of reduction in child behaviour problems, whether it narrows or widens social inequalities in these problems, whether or not it has other benefits (or harms) and whether or not it is likely to be cost-effective. The study pooled data for 1799 families, from 14 trials of IY in the UK, the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Portugal. It found that for families who are socially disadvantaged or from an ethnic minority, the programme is just as likely to be beneficial. However, for the most distressed families, including children with marked behaviour problems and depressed parents, it was more beneficial than for average families. It was just as effective for older as younger children. The data could not address potential inequalities in programme access. In addition, the programme appears to have wider benefits, improving parenting and child attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and is likely to be cost-effective.



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