

Early positive approaches to support for families of young children with intellectual disability: the E-PATs feasibility RCT

Elinor Coulman,¹ Nick Gore,² Gwenllian Moody,¹ Melissa Wright,¹ Jeremy Segrott,¹ David Gillespie,¹ Stavros Petrou,³ Fiona Lugg-Widger,¹ Sungwook Kim,³ Jill Bradshaw,² Rachel McNamara,¹ Andrew Jahoda,⁴ Geoff Lindsay,⁵ Jacqui Shurlock,⁶ Vaso Totsika,⁷ Catherine Stanford,⁵ Samantha Flynn,⁵ Annabel Carter,² Christian Barlow¹ and Richard Hastings^{5*}

¹Centre for Trials Research, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

²Tizard Centre, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

³Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

⁴Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

⁵Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

⁶Challenging Behaviour Foundation, Chatham, UK

⁷Division of Psychiatry, Faculty of Brain Sciences, University College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author R.Hastings@warwick.ac.uk

Declared competing interests of authors: Nick Gore reports payment to train study site facilitators in the Early Positive Approaches to Support (E-PATs) intervention from the Royal Mencap Society during the conduct of the study; and payments to the University of Kent (Canterbury, UK) for training facilitators in the delivery of the E-PATs intervention at other sites not involved in this research from the Royal Mencap Society, Université du Québec à Montréal (Montreal, QC, Canada), Mencap Northern Ireland (Belfast, UK), Mencap Leeds (Leeds, UK), Mencap Wales (Aberaeron, UK), Child and Family Psychological Therapies Service (Newport, UK), Cerebra (Carmarthen, UK), Mencap Carlisle (Carlisle, UK) and the Norwegian Health Services (Stavanger, Norway) outside the submitted work. In addition, the intellectual property for the E-PATs intervention is held by the University of Kent, deferred to Dr Nick Gore. The E-PATs materials are copyrighted in this regard also. The E-PATs intervention has been developed through leadership from Nick Gore. A non-commercial (free) licence to deliver E-PATs is provided to organisations where facilitators have completed E-PATs training licensed to University of Kent. Jill Bradshaw reports other from the Royal Mencap Society, during the conduct of the study; other from the Royal Mencap Society, Université du Québec à Montréal, Mencap Leeds, Mencap Wales and Cerebra, outside the submitted work; and personal fees from Child and Family Psychological Therapies Service, outside the submitted work. Jacqui Shurlock reports that the organisation in which she is employed, the Challenging Behaviour Foundation, was involved in the initial development of the E-PATs intervention. Richard Hastings reports that he has collaborated with both Nick Gore (E-PATs intervention developer) and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (Chatham, UK; a charity that contributes to the development of E-PATs) on other research.

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Plain English summary

The E-PAtS feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

We developed a parenting programme called Early Positive Approaches to Support (E-PATs) for parents of young children (1.5–5 years of age) with an intellectual disability. The E-PATs programme is co-delivered to a group of parents by a professional facilitator and a parent of a child with disabilities. Parents are given practical strategies over an 8-week period to help them to look after themselves and to support them with their child's development.

We recruited 74 parent carers of young children with intellectual disabilities to take part. They were assigned, by chance, to attend an E-PATs group or to receive their usual support only. All parents, whether or not they attended the E-PATs group, were asked to complete some measures of things that might change during the E-PATs programme. The most important measure was changes in parents' psychological well-being. Other measures included parents' mental health, positive perceptions, approaches to parenting, relationships with their child with intellectual disability, relationships with their partner (if they had one), the positive and problem behaviour of brothers or sisters, sibling relationships and how much the family accessed a variety of services (especially social care and health services).

This study was a feasibility study. We were checking whether or not the research worked well so that a much larger study could be planned in the future. Among other things, we found that parents were willing to take part in the research, attended most of the E-PATs sessions and completed the research measures, and organisations that delivered parenting courses expressed an interest in taking part in a larger study.

We also interviewed parents, the facilitators (i.e. those delivering the E-PATs programme) and people from the organisations that delivered E-PATs. People enjoyed being part of E-PATs groups and were positive about taking part in the study. We are now ready to go on to a larger study.

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