

**Parent Network Scotland
Final Evaluation Report
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Measuring the Effectiveness of the Parent Network Scotland Parenting Programmes: An Innovative Combined Approach to Self-Evaluation, Improvement and Measurement of Impact Guided by External Consultation

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Summary

Parent Network Scotland (PNS) is a registered charity aiming to help parents develop and improve parenting skills via group training. The organisation commissioned external evaluation in 2013 which was predominantly qualitative and based on self-report. Results from this study were strongly positive. However, recommendations from this report highlighted the need to improve the rigour of measurement of the effectiveness of the parent training offered by PNS and to focus on demonstrating the impact of parent training.

This current report outlines the processes and outcomes in an evaluation and improvement focussed study supported by external consultation. The study tackles the issues of capacity building and practitioner reflection within the organisation to support evidence based self evaluation and the development of tools and understanding to guide rigorous internal measurement of impact. The approach is innovative and is based on the application of evidence based frameworks derived from Audit Methodology and Implementation Science. The approach involved dual objectives underpinned by continuous collaboration with the PNS Board and facilitators. These objectives were first, the exploration of key aspects of the theory, design and implementation processes supporting PNS parenting programmes and the careful consideration of these in relation to evidence on which approaches support effective implementation and impact. Research evidence increasingly supports the idea that delivery and implementation are closely linked to impact and outcomes. The second objective was to devise an effective approach to measuring the impact of PNS training. The approach adopted in this aspect of the study was Audit Methodology which capitalises on the empirical evidence base on impact and effectiveness already available in a given area and allows for trial design and statistical analysis which is economical and manageable directly by the organisation supported by external consultation. Results based on impact analysis of ninety six parents using the T.O.P.S.E. show statistically significant outcomes for the PNS parenting programmes. This was sustained at follow up after a six month period. Parallel measurement using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Parent Version) indicated improvement in child well being and behaviour at the six month follow up stage but not at the initial post intervention stage. Results from the SDQ suggest that while parent self efficacy increases immediately after training, child well being and behaviour increase over time in response to changes in parenting.

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Background: Preparatory Discussions and Exploration of Design and Measures

Parent Network Scotland (PNS) commissioned an independent evaluation which was carried out in 2006-2008 to provide information on the success of Parent Network Scotland's parenting programmes. The evaluation comprised a qualitative review of stakeholder perspectives and an analysis of the organisations existing data base. The evaluation outcomes included suggestions that PNS seek to develop more robust internal evaluation processes and to measure the impact of their programmes using quantitative and qualitative analysis. In 2011, PNS decided to follow up these recommendations via a specialist, independent consultancy to support the implementation of these suggestions.

The Consultation Process

Increasingly charitable organisations are required to provide information on the impact of services they provide and this information in turn supports applications for future funding. In relation to providing high quality information on outcomes and impact they are faced with often insurmountable barriers in the form of the enormous costs associated with independent academic analysis of the effects of their services, the less obvious problems associated with difficulties in the theoretical understanding of what they are setting out to achieve and the endemic problems in measurement of interventions per se (Kendal and Bloomfield 2010).

In addition, recent developments in Implementation Science suggest that processes of implementation are central to effectiveness in any programme of intervention (Kelly and Perkins 2012). In the context of parenting and family support implementation processes are increasingly highlighted in development, delivery and evaluation of programmes (Mildon 2014). Evidence points to the fact that practitioner skills constitute one of the most significant variables in programme success. Understanding, developing and improving impact relates to how an organisation designs and delivers programmes, how well practitioners are trained and how effectively the organisation is led and resourced (Meyer, Durlack and Wanderman, 2012).

As a backdrop, recent key developments in understanding the theory underpinning parent training and associated measurement of impact allow organisations to make sound decisions about their approach to impact measurement. The development of a generic measure for evaluating parent training programmes allows the essential development of a sound evidential basis of effectiveness (Kendall and Bloomfield 2007). In addition, the application of Audit Methodology offers an economical approach increasingly used in health contexts to establish the impact of evidence based approaches across multiple contexts, referencing these results to larger scale empirical studies of the intervention (NHS Executive, 1996; Dretzke J, et al, 2009). The approaches outlined above formed the basis of the consultation. The consultation processes aimed to provide collaboration and information for PNS on leading edge, evidence based methods to build continuous improvement protocols and demonstrate impact. In this context, improvement emerges through ongoing related review of implementation processes and impact measurement.

The initial stages of the consultation involved discussion with board members on the follow areas:

- Reviewing findings and recommendations from the previous evaluation report

- Discussion about the role of the previous evaluation exercise, in particular their perceptions of the context for impact evaluations today and the general advantages of enhanced impact evaluation and of more robust self-evaluation techniques
- Consultant's perusal of relevant literature on the theory, aims, evaluation and effectiveness of parenting programmes
- Joint consideration of the current programme implementation and delivery models in relation to enhancing programme delivery and effectiveness.

The format for planning and decision making about the evaluation and improvement involved regular discussion around each area researched by the Consultant and the Board's considerations and responses to any ideas or proposals. Facilitators were consulted by the Board about their feelings and reactions to suggestions and plans. Negotiation took place where necessary but always with the aim of ensuring strong design and methodology which the Board and facilitators found acceptable.

PNS philosophy aims and training provided for parents and professionals

Parent Network was established in London in 1986 and began in Scotland in 1991. Since then PNS has become a distinct Scottish charity and company limited by guarantee responding to Scotland's specific structures, systems, policies and practices. PNS offer a wide range of programmes designed to develop professional skills in supporting parents as well as programmes supporting parents directly. The report focusses on the parent training programmes specifically, Parenting Matters, a basic programme for parenting skills.

The organisation's ethos and aims for parent training are clearly articulated as a distinctive value system highlighting the following: ¹

Parent support services are most effective when they are inclusive and encourage participation by:

- Removing barriers that prevent people accessing support
- Designing courses that are for anyone in a parenting role, irrespective of family structure - many different people are involved in parenting
- Recognising and valuing different experiences and cultures
- Recognising and valuing different learning styles
- Enabling the sharing and pooling of different ideas and experiences, using difference as a resource
- Recognising that parents and children are individuals and avoiding stereotyping and labelling

Parent support services are most effective when they empower individual parents by:

- Acknowledging the impact of external circumstances and validating parents' experiences
- Recognising that parents want to do their best for their children and building on their strengths
- Supporting parents to make choices and find solutions that work for them
- Having services delivered by people who have experience of parenting

Everyone needs help from time to time in their lives and parents are no exception to this. Seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness

Positive communication is about inner attitude as well as skills. Respect for self and others underpins self-esteem and healthy relationships

¹ Described in document Parent Network Scotland 2013 Ethos and Aims

- Children and young people will benefit from enhanced communication and understanding in the family.

PNS aims are summarised as:

- To help parents develop self-esteem and confidence in themselves as parents - and thereby to help children develop self-esteem and confidence
- To help parents develop their understanding of themselves and their children
- To enhance parent-child communication and support the parent-child relationship
- To provide safe settings in which parents can share experiences together and benefit from mutual support
- To provide the quality of support and learning that will enable parents to develop their own skills and strategies to deal with the issues they are facing in their families
- To create a learning environment that is supportive, inclusive, practical, stimulating and fun in order to achieve these aims
- To deliver content flexibly and tailor session plans to meet a wide range of needs
- To model the key skills and values in the delivery of Parent Network Scotland

Recruitment, Training and Facilitation

The recruitment, training and facilitation processes have been identified as essential aspects of evidence based implementation processes and should allow for the selection of practitioners with key qualities of enthusiasm, commitment and belief in the aims and methods used by the organisation in question (Mildon 2014) and offer training which is interactive, continuous and allows for coaching in context and modeling (Joyce and Showers 2002; Trivette and Dunst, 2009). PNS has a distinctive approach to recruitment and seeks to encourage parents who have attended programmes to become trainers and facilitators. Transition to facilitator is via attendance at PNS 's professional training programme.

PNS has a network of trained facilitators who lead courses and advise parents on setting up their own parenting support groups. They are supported by a national staff team who coordinate, train and support facilitators, ensuring that all courses are quality assured. Parent courses are delivered in small friendly groups led by a parent facilitator. The core parenting course is Parenting Matters exploring communication between parent and child. Other courses are more specific tackling for example parenting children with ADHD, teenage problems and drug use. The courses are adapted to suit parent needs in for example, language and literacy. Courses are based on experiences, activities and reflections related to parenting and being parented. Learning is supported by take home tasks.

All parents completing a course have the option to continue to meet as a support group. These groups are supported by the organisation via a pack of information and resources for running the group. On-going support for specific purposes is available, for example running events, finding a speaker or developing workshops. An annual evaluation is carried out with these groups. Parents are encouraged to consider becoming facilitators. Facilitators are trained and quality assured via a twelve day accreditation programme. All facilitators complete a facilitator assessment and are required to sustain a high level of professional practice via maintaining records, monitoring and evaluation and on-going professional development training. All facilitators receive on-going observation, supervision and support from a Facilitator Supervisor to ensure all courses maintain high standards.

PNS and Working in Partnership

PNS also works in partnership with other organisations offering the following:

- Delivering parenting courses to individual parents, client groups or organizations, designed to ‘plug the gaps’ in existing provision
- Providing information and resources to assist parents and organizations
- Delivering training for parent facilitators and supporting them to deliver courses and other services to parents
- Collaborating on the development of national and local policies relating to education and family life
- Supporting local parent participation in relevant forums and groups
- Providing quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation and feedback

Focus of this study: Pre and post evaluation of impact

This study focuses on Parent Network’s universal parenting programme. Data relating to impact was drawn from the programme entitled ‘Parenting Matters’ which aims to support parents with pre teenage children.

PNS deliver a differentiated range of programmes designed to address different levels of parenting difficulty with programmes varying in intensity and focus and in numbers of parents attending. The basic ‘Parenting Matters’ programme has general relevance to all parents who express the desire to improve their parenting skills. Parents in this group are self-referring meaning they have not generally been referred by another agency but have responded to advertisement or solicited advice on how they might improve their parenting skills.

Key issues relating to impact evaluation in the parent training context

The concept of impact refers to the effects a programme can be shown to have on target populations. Consistent and predictable impact is recognised as being difficult to demonstrate, particularly in the context of universal, preventative programmes such as those offered by PNS. This is the case for all universal parenting programmes (Smith and Pugh, 1996). Universal programmes address undifferentiated need in a population targeting specific areas aiming to prevent problems arising. In the case of universal parenting programmes, the aims are to encourage parents to adopt approaches to parenting which some research suggests will contribute to their feelings of self-efficacy as parents and may impact on children’s behaviour and well-being.

There is a growing interest in parenting programmes generally but a lack of rigorous evaluation studies of their effectiveness or their longer term outcomes. In addition, there is little research reported on the views and perceptions of parenting programme recipients themselves or their children (Kendall and Bloomfield, 2005). In addition, there has been little focus on how programmes are implemented. Information emerging from Implementation Science, particularly about the impact of practitioners and factors associated with recruitment, training and supervision of those who deliver programmes suggests that a focus on these areas will help promote programme effectiveness and more so than any other areas of programme delivery (Kelly and Perkins, op cit)

Governments, including those in Scotland and the UK have invested substantially in supporting parents and children through a wide range of legislation, policies, projects, strategies and approaches. In the UK, the government consultation paper ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’, (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) refers to the need to provide effective, collaborative support in health, education and social services aiming to provide high quality, professionally delivered interventions for parents and carers. ‘Sure Start’ was a government funded programme aimed at improving outcomes for children, their parents and

communities by supporting parents and improving the health and development of young children. In the evaluation of 'Sure Start' support and advice to parents was found to be highly valued, particularly in enabling parents to access information about good parenting (Belsky et al, 2006). In Scotland, 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government, 2006) and most recently the 'National Parenting Strategy' (Scottish Government, 2012) reflect the very significant, on-going investment in improving parenting skills with a view to improving outcomes for children.

Despite increasing interest and investment in parenting programmes as a means to enhance outcomes for children, parents and communities, there are few existing examples of reliable and robust research on the impact of parent training. One reason for this is the lack of generic outcome measures which allow programmes to be evaluated and compared. Although findings across a number of meta- analyses and systematic reviews indicate that parenting programmes may have an impact across range of outcomes for parents and children, key information has been missing until recently on the theoretical constructs underpinning programmes or the type of training delivered (Rothbaum and Weisz (1994). This has made it difficult to understand which theories and approaches have particular effects and therefore which are most likely to yield positive and desirable outcomes. Bunting (2004) examined findings across a number of systematic reviews summarising the most reliable research evidence on the impact of parenting programmes. The evidence suggests that parenting programmes can improve child behaviour, increase maternal self-esteem, improve relationship adjustment, improve mother-child interaction and decrease maternal depression and stress. Less information is available on the theoretical constructs underpinning parenting programmes or the type of training given. Systematic reviews identify a number of theoretical frameworks. These include behavioural, cognitive/behavioural, relationship based, Rational Emotive Therapy derived and programmes using a combination of theoretical frameworks and components (Bunting, op cit). One systematic review of parenting groups indicates that one half of the studies were based on social/cognitive/behavioural theories with many using a combination of two or three approaches (Thomas et al, 1999).

Lack of well-developed, clearly defined theoretical constructs makes evaluation difficult in a number of ways. The links between the rationale of the programme, its design, objectives and impact are difficult to articulate and therefore to measure. It is also difficult to compare programmes in terms of outcomes if the intended objectives cannot be clearly identified. A key systematic review of qualitative research into parenting programmes attempted to establish what it is that parents tend to find helpful about programmes. This review derived constructs from data provided by in depth interviewing and videotaping of parents. Constructs emerging were interpreted dynamically to give an overview of parents' feelings before, during and after parent training (Kane et al, 2007). Parent experience in this study gave the following overview of the parent training experience.

- Parental acknowledgement of a problem
- Parent understanding of the serious consequences of conduct disorder
- Opportunity for peer support;
- Need for support from spouses and partners
- Opportunity to gain control and confidence
- Opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills
- Recognition of parent's needs
- Effective non-judgmental support. (Kane et al 2007)

Improving the quality of impact evaluation of PNS programmes had to be linked to current understanding, albeit partial and developing, of the role of theoretical frameworks underlying parent training and research on perceptions of the beneficial effects of parent training by parents themselves. Kendall and Bloomfield (2005)

suggest that the general approach underpinning all parenting programmes is to help parents become 'problem solvers' who understand the effects of their behaviour on their children and who feel empowered and confident in the parenting role. Their analysis of parent responses to parent programmes reflects the dynamic constructs identified by Kane et al (2007). Kendall and Bloomfield identified *self-efficacy* as an overarching theoretical framework to help develop a tool to measure and compare the effects of various parenting programmes. The T.O.P.S.E. (Tool to Measure Parenting Self- Efficacy) was specifically developed to aid the measurement of parent self- efficacy as an aid to measuring parenting programmes. Evidence on the reliability and validity of the measure has emerged through randomised control trials (Kendall and Bloomfield, 2007)

Consultation focus and design Part 1: Exploring tools and approaches for measuring impact

Both the theoretical framework offered by self-efficacy as a primary psychological construct and the content and structure of the T.O.P.S.E itself were reviewed by members of the PNS Board of Directors and facilitators as part of the consultation and development of the self-evaluation process. Both the self-efficacy construct and T.O.P.S.E. framework were seen to reflect the philosophy, objectives and overall approach applied by PNS. One of the items in the TOPSE dealing with the idea of discipline was challenged by trainers and programme directors as likely to be misleading for participants about the objectives of PNS which has no focus on discipline per se but after discussion about the validity and evidence supporting the use of the TOPSE, it was decided to use the measure with some explanation to participants about its role in standardising information about a range of parent training approaches.

The development of the T.O.P.S.E. is based on focus group data from parents and programme facilitators. A thematic analysis of transcripts identified key items subsequently included in eighty two Likert-format statements. Nine domain specific subscales were identified and used to construct a valid and reliable tool to measure parenting self-efficacy. The T.O.P.S.E. is a multi-dimensional instrument involving nine scales each representing a distinct dimension of parenting: Emotion and Affection, Play and Enjoyment, Empathy and Understanding, Routines, Control, Discipline and Boundary Setting, Pressure, Self-Acceptance and Learning and Knowledge. The items are rated on an 11-point scale where 0 represents 'completely disagree' and ten represents 'completely agree'.

It was agreed that the T.O.P.S.E. would address the major requirement for evidence base development on the effectiveness of the PNS basic programme, Parenting Matters. Evidence suggests that the T.O.P.S.E. is most effective for programmes for parents of children *up to eleven years*. Programmes aimed at parenting teenagers address different parenting challenges to those commonly highlighted for younger children.

In addition, the authors of the T.O.P.S.E encourage users to share research findings. This was perceived positively by the Board. Collaborative research and development helps strengthen the involvement of stakeholders such as PNS in developing rigorous evidence and coherent and effective programmes. It also endorses PNS 's commitment to parenting overall, conveying an authoritative and ethical stance (Harada and Yukawa, 2012).

Additional impact measures

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman et al, 2000) was recommended to the Board as an additional measure which would help verify the impact of PNS programmes on children's mental health and wellbeing. The SDQ is an evidence based instrument with proven validity and reliability and good psychometric properties. It is used widely to support the implementation and evidence based developments in a range of prevention and intervention wellbeing programmes (Hobbs and Ford, 2012). It provides information via parent

report on children's emotional and behavioural presentation. It was hypothesised that changes recorded in the T.O.P.S.E. before and after parenting training would be reflected in changes in the SDQ indicating the impact of parent training on children's behavioural and emotional presentation.

It was argued that use of the SDQ questionnaire alongside the T.O.P.S.E. would strengthen the impact evaluation considerably by adding separate and independent measures of parenting perspectives on changes on children's behaviour.

In the course of discussion separate measures of self-esteem were also given further consideration by the PNS Board but were seen to be unnecessary given the encompassing theoretical framework and linked objectives provided and embedded in the T.O.P.S.E.

Additional considerations: Interviews with children of participants

As part of the consultation on developing impact measures, interviewing children of parent participants was suggested as an area for development in researching the impact of the PNS programmes. Potentially it was seen to offer significant and crucial data on child perspectives on parent training. This type of innovation in data gathering, directly reflecting the policy imperatives of funders and stakeholders, is essential in helping to evidence the need and potential impact of government and other sources of support and funding. This would allow PNS to create an area of innovation and expertise, building confidence in research and in the quality of the input being developed and offered. The rationale for looking into this area in particular is the idea that the development of parental self efficacy is not an isolated process but part of a developmental and dynamic journey which creates relationship skills and increases well being in the parent /child pair. The impact on later life choices and relationships for children could be considerable. PNS's decision to become involved in research into the development of effective parent/ child relationships longer term is positive. It reflects a growing body of evidence from Implementation Science about the role of theoretical understanding in practitioners in creating successful programme design, implementation and impact (Kelly and Perkins 2012).

Evaluation design and methodology: Audit methodology

In discussion and planning meetings with PNS it was highlighted that control group design and independent measurement methodologies continue to represent the gold standard in measuring impact. However there are obvious reasons why these conditions and methods might be difficult to arrange. These include: problems in matching the participants adequately across groups and the small sample sizes given that PNS programmes generally involve few participants, PNS's limited financial resources and the availability of experienced research personnel to organise, manage and carry out this type of external research. In addition, PNS's Board and facilitators were particularly aware of the possibly unethical nature of data gathering which might also seem intrusive or overwhelming to parents who have come along for training.

PNS Board considered a waiting list approach and agreed that this would probably be the best additional impact measure but would require the support of a long term research assistant. This approach was deferred until the Board developed more skill and experience in this aspect of the self-evaluation process.

Audit Methodology is arguably the most effective design for the measure of impact directly by organisations and practitioners. This approach has been applied successfully using the T.O.P.S.E. (Kendall and Bloomfield, 2010). Audit Methodology capitalises on the empirical evidence base already established on impact and effectiveness available in a given area, in this instance based on large scale trials of the T.O.P.S.E. This

knowledge allows smaller scale interventions without control groups to be measured in terms of impact and results compared to established means for larger controlled pre and post research designs. This allows statistical outcomes to be interpreted confidently in relation to means established by previous large scale trials. (Statistical information required for audit of the T.O.P.S.E. is outlined in Bloomfield and Kendal, 2010).

Impact and sustainability

PNS has a model of implementation and delivery which highlights an awareness of sustainability issues and reflects the emerging evidence on effectiveness in delivery. The sustainability aspect of evaluation is often ignored in parenting programme evaluation but can be very useful in developing the programme's evidence base. It was suggested that the T.O.P.S.E. could be completed by participants six months after the initial programme was completed. It was highlighted that if possible, the T.O.P.S.E. questionnaire should be completed via the same methods used at the beginning and end of the programme. However it was decided that in the event of the organisation of follow up on groups proving too difficult, the T.O.P.S.E. would be completed by telephone interview. This strategy would be used mainly to avoid the familiar problems of non-return which PNS would encounter if it was decided to opt for a postal questionnaire for follow up. The telephone choice involves loss of privacy for the respondent to some extent and represents a compromise at that level. The interview was completed anonymously as each respondent had a number allocated and the telephone interviewer did not know the respondents' identity.

Demographic and biographical information on participants

PNS already audits all participants in programmes. Ideally, to improve the information about response to parenting programmes, audit information should include data which is related or likely to be related to parenting skills and to response to instruction. A range of factors has been identified by parenting programme research as likely to impact on parenting and on response to parent programmes. Major factors include marital problems, economic difficulties, single parenthood and depression. For parents who have multiple problems, the positive impact of group based, universal training is less clear. Research suggests that this group requires broader based enhanced input to effect change (Webster Stratton, C. 1991). Enhanced training may include actively impacting on parental self-esteem as opposed to parenting self-efficacy and on marital/relationship adjustment (Smith and Pugh 1996, Barlow, 1999).

It seems that significant positive change is sustainable even for the most disadvantaged parents. Enhanced audit information would support the diversification of PNS's range of programmes, tailoring programme content, design and size for those parents presenting complex needs. Research is already available on what should be taught to particular participants and how (Greist et al 1982). The PNS Board and facilitators were unsure of the effects of asking for this type of information on participant comfort and confidence and decided not to seek additional personal details at this stage of the evaluation and improvement cycle.

Implementation and delivery

Implementation Science literature and research provides a strong evidence base outlining the impact of the key areas and processes on programme effectiveness and sustainability. In general, consultation with the PNS Board and facilitators highlighted that implementation of PNS programmes is of a high quality reflecting innovative elements currently highlighted in Implementation Science research as contributing to effective programme

delivery and outcomes (Blasé, Van Dyke, Fixsen and Bailey, 2012; Meyers Durlack and Wanderman 2012; Joyce & Showers 2002). These include the aspects of selection, training, coaching and standardisation of training input through on-going observation and feedback to facilitators and offering facilitators opportunities for practice, modelling and self-reflection on new skills.

Ideally high quality implementation should include attention to the following key processes and the Board may want to explore and develop any current practices which do not meet high standards for effective implementation. This would be part of an on-going, internal development programme drawing on focus groups, staff and client questionnaires and brainstorming sessions supported by consultation to direct attention to areas where implementation needs to be enhanced. The following areas should form the basis for this type of development.

Selecting staff effectively

In relation to current evidence, PNS selects staff to an exacting standard, drawing from a pool of former participants in PNS programmes and focusing on skills in communication and capacity for understanding the material. The following checklist could be used to develop staff evaluation and training

- Staff should have a clear idea of the vision and goals of PNS and be able to commit to these
- They should be aware of and understand the theory supporting PNS programmes
- Training should be provided which is intensive and allows the staff to be fully aware of the intended impact of the training they will offer
- They should demonstrate the necessary skills in communication and empathy to ensure the confidence and comfort of the client group during the programme and the evaluation of the programme
- They should be aware of and sensitive to the vulnerability of parents in learning new skills

Training and evaluating staff effectively

PNS is supported by a team of facilitators who coach and train new recruits after initial training. Training is intensive and allows for new staff to learn by modelling and coaching by experienced staff. Areas which may need development are the inclusion in training of the importance of *programme integrity* and improved methods of monitoring the *quality and regularity* of the sessions taught. Staff should be aware of fidelity issues, preserving the integrity of the teaching material to avoid change in content which may impact on acquisition of parenting skills and on evaluation processes.

Key objectives highlighted in implementation research on the impact of programmes in relation to training in particular are:

- Provide a training manual
- Script teaching sessions
- Pre service and in service training sufficiently in depth to allow building practice skills.
- Provision of on-going coaching and consultation. Most skills are learned on the job and regular craft coaching input boosts development of skills better than any other approach.
- Evaluation of the use and the outcome of the skills reflected in the selection criteria, taught in training and reinforced and expanded via coaching. This is designed to help the facilitator continue to improve his /her effectiveness.

Assessing key aspects of the overall performance of the organisation

- Consumer responses sought regularly and used to create more effective training and data for quality improvement
- Data provided to support decision making about changes and innovation, particularly via consultation of literature and research evidence
- Frequent reports provided to inform policy development

Providing facilitative administration

- Provide strong leadership
- Use data to make changes appropriately
- Keep staff focused and motivated
- Attend to culture and climate in staff and facilitators

Assessing the views of staff and facilitators via focus groups is useful in providing an overview of how staff feel about their role and their effectiveness and allows consideration of any changes which they suggest to improve the system of delivery. Focus groups should be carried out annually to allow reflections on both the training and coaching systems and on the delivery of the programme. This information feeds back into organisational decision making.

Developing effective systems intervention

- Provide the necessary financial, organisational and human resources required to support the work of facilitators and others.

Design and outcomes of the *impact evaluations*

The initial stages of the consultation process offered two research strands and a wide range of evidence based actions and strategies for the improvement of the design, implementation and evaluation of PNS and its programmes. All recommendations were based on appropriate, current research and reviews of the literature. In particular, suggestions included a focus on high quality implementation which directly impacts on effectiveness of programmes (Kelly and Perkins 2012)

The PNS Board elected to carry out an evaluation of their universal programmes using the T.O.P.S.E. and the SDQ. Processes around informing clients and data gathering were carefully discussed and negotiated with the Board and facilitators. As the process was to be a self-evaluation audit, as much guidance as possible was provided to create a sound basis for this. Self-evaluation audit methodology is vulnerable to the same flaws as any implementation process and self-evaluators need to be clear about the processes surrounding research design, data gathering, analysis and evaluation and interpretation. These issues were covered in some depth

during consultation. A research assistant supported the development of data collection and organisation by PNS staff.

Methods, Data Analysis and Results

Parents attending universal programmes were invited to take part in the PNS audit of effectiveness. The purpose of the research was explained via scripted notes to participants at the first session. Parents agreeing to follow up were contacted by the facilitator six months after the end of the last programme session. All parents completed the T.O.P.S.E. and the SDQ at the initial session and at the final session.

Detailed demographic and biographic material was not sought but parents were asked to provide basic information on age and number of children.

96 parents provided responses. Uneven data was taken into account in the statistical analysis

Analysis of the responses to the T.O.P.S.E

The T.O.P.S.E. is a multi-dimensional instrument of eighty two statements over nine scales, each representing a distinct dimension of parenting: Emotion and Affection (EA), Play and Enjoyment (PE), Empathy and Understanding (EU), Routines (R), Control (C), Discipline and Boundary Setting, (DBS), Pressure (P), Self-Acceptance (SA) and Learning and Knowledge (LK). The items are rated on an eleven-point Likert Scale, where 0 represents 'completely disagree' and eleven represents 'completely agree'. The scale contains both positively and negatively worded items and the responses are summed to create a total score by scale which in turn is summed to create a total 'self-efficacy in parenting score'. The total score indicates the level of parenting self-efficacy where the lower the score the lower the level of parenting self-efficacy.

The data provided by the parents attending PNS programme 'Parenting Matters' was collected and analyzed in two stages using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The final number of participants varied across instruments and stages.

Participants provided some demographic information on place of residence, parenting role and marital status. Participants were all from areas in Scotland including Glasgow, East Ayrshire, Greenock and Inverness. Some were parents, some were grandparents, some were separated, some had experienced domestic violence and some were being treated for health issues.

Participants also provided information about the support needs of children. Although the majority of children were typically developing, some were reported to have developmental disorders such as dyslexia, autism and ADHD.

Analysis of responses to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is a twenty five item behavioural screening questionnaire which measures five different areas of child behaviour: Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity/Inattention, Emotional Symptoms, Peer Problems and Prosocial Behaviour. The first four of these subscales are summed to produce the total difficulties score. The prosocial scale alone produces a prosocial score for the child.

Both the TOPSE and SDQ were completed at the start of the program, at the end and then at a 6 month follow up.

Cronbach's alpha calculations were carried out to test the internal consistency of both questionnaires used in the evaluation (See Table 1). This process confirms that the items are measuring the same constructs. Coefficients of above 0.7 show good internal consistency. Previous research has found good reliability and validity of both these measures (Bloomfield and Kendall, 2012). This was reflected in the present study and only 'Conduct Problems' in the SDQ and 'Pressure' in the TOPSE are slightly lower than predicted.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients at baseline for all measures

Scale	n	α
TOPSE 1: Emotion and Affection	92	0.74
TOPSE 2: Play and Enjoyment	91	0.93
TOPSE 3: Empathy and Understanding	91	0.81
TOPSE 4: Control	91	0.75
TOPSE 5: Discipline and Boundaries	92	0.86
TOPSE 6: Pressure	92	0.63
TOPSE 7: Self-acceptance	91	0.79
TOPSE 8: Learning and Knowledge	92	0.81
Total TOPSE (sum of all subscales)	89	0.95
SDQ: Emotional Symptoms	65	0.74
SDQ: Conduct Problems	68	0.58
SDQ: Hyperactivity	67	0.80
SDQ: Peer Problems	66	0.60
SDQ: Prosocial	66	0.78
Total Difficulties Score (excludes prosocial)	64	0.86

It was intended that one-way repeated measure (ANOVAs) would be conducted to determine if the differences in scores for both the TOPSE and the SDQ at baseline, after the programme and at the six month follow up were significant. However, as a result of skewed data, some analyses used the non-parametric equivalent which is the Friedman test.

It should be noted that as a total of 9 tests was conducted on the TOPSE data and 6 on SDQ data, the p value was reduced to .01 to control for type I errors (i.e. saying something is significant when it isn't).

Table 2 shows the mean changes in scores across the time points for each subscale of the TOPSE and the total TOPSE score. The results indicate a positive increase in not only the total self-efficacy scores but also in all of the subscales following the programme and no significant decrease in scores at the follow up.

Table 2: Mean change in scores for TOPSE across time points

Subscale of TOPSE	n	T1 toT2	T2 toT3	T1 toT3	Analysis
Emotion and Affection	63	3.70**	.05	3.60**	$X^2(2) = 21.42$ $p < 0.001$

Play and Enjoyment	61	3.43**	.60	4.03**	$X^2(2) = 19.92 p<0.001$
Empathy and Understanding	62	4.98**	1.16	6.14**	$X^2(2) = 34.24 p<0.001$
Control	62	7.66**	.42	8.08**	$X^2(2) = 44.22 p<0.001$
Discipline and Boundaries	62	8.68**	.79	9.47**	$X^2(2) = 47.86 p<0.001$
Pressure ^a	63	5.59**	2.92	8.51**	$F(2, 124)=19.62 p<0.001$
Self-acceptance	61	5.33**	2.39*	7.72**	$X^2(2) = 45.57 p<0.001$
Learning and Knowledge	62	3.46**	1.29	4.77**	$X^2(2) = 31.56 p<0.001$
Total TOPSE score	60	43.02**	9.38	52.4**	$X^2(2) = 52.50 p<0.001$

** $p<0.001$, * $p=0.001$. ^aDifferences for Pressure were analyzed using ANOVA; all other

This suggests that the increase in self-efficacy was maintained over a period of time. Self-acceptance was the only subscale to significantly increase between time two and three. This suggests that the program is particularly effective in raising parents' self-acceptance.

Table 3 shows the mean changes in scores across the time points for each subscale of the SDQ and the total difficulties score.

Table 3: Mean change in scores for SDQ across time points

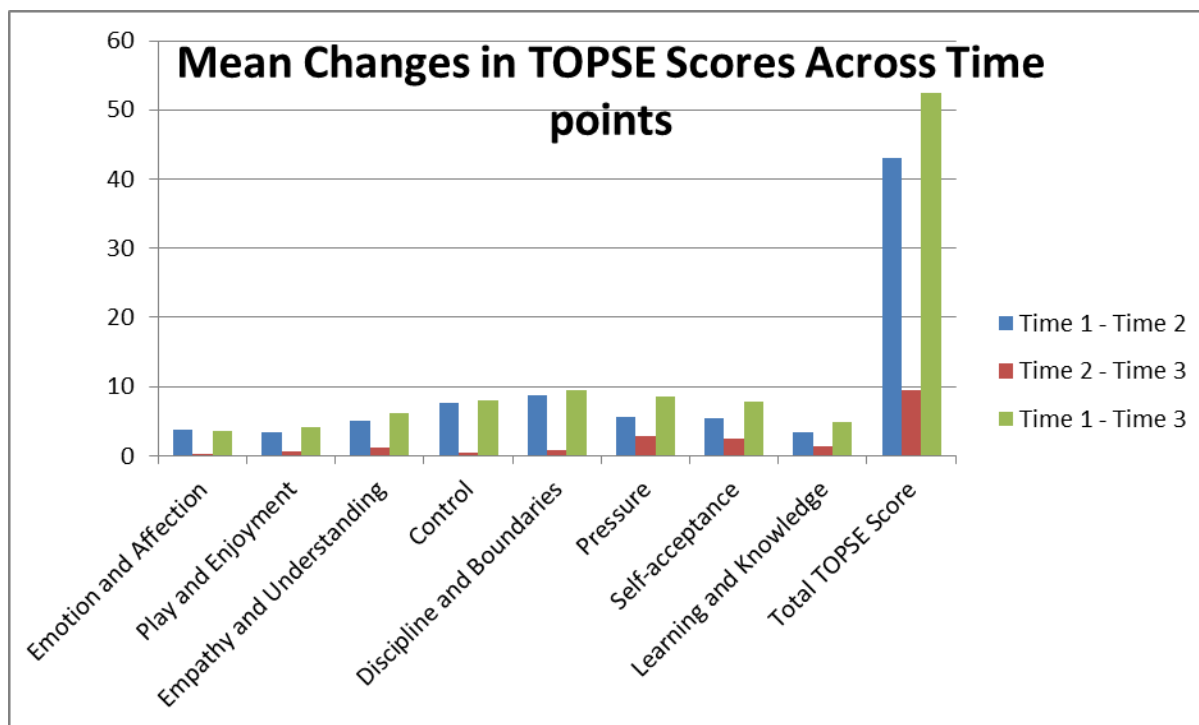
Subscale of SDQ	n	T1 to T2	T2 to T3	T1 to T3	Analysis
Emotional Symptoms	54	-0.36	-0.45**	-0.82***	$X^2(2)=14.22 p<0.001$
Conduct Problems	56	-0.33	-0.39***	-0.73***	$X^2(2)=13.50 p=0.001$
Hyperactivity ^a	55	-0.41	-0.67	-1.09**	$F(1.50, 80.96)=7.16 p<0.01$
Peer Problems	55	-0.32	-0.15	-0.47	$X^2(2)=2.69 p=0.26$
Total Difficulties ^a	53	-1.51	-1.68	-3.19***	$F(1.40, 72.70)=10.62, p<0.001$
Prosocial	55	0.54*	0	0.54*	$X^2(2)=19.99, p<0.001$

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.017$, * $p=0.01$. ^aDifferences for Hyperactivity and Total Difficulties were analysed using ANOVA; all other differences were analysed using a Friedman test.

Results showed that only the scores on the prosocial scale showed significant improvement between time 1 and time 2. Although this suggests that the programme did not address any of the difficulties measured by the SDQ, it should be noted that emotional problems, conduct problems, total difficulties and also the prosocial scores showed significant improvement between time 1 and 3. This suggests the programme may not have an immediate effect on addressing children's difficult behaviour but over time and that beneficial effects are apparent over time and in response to parent changes.

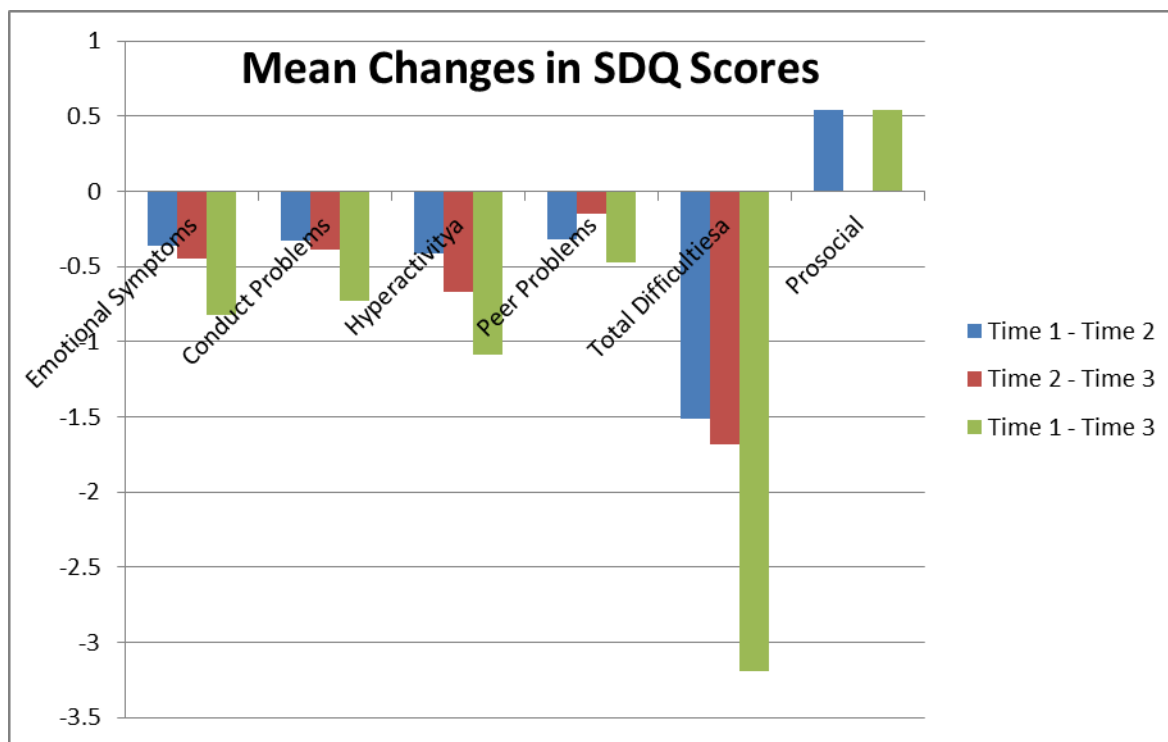
Tables 4 and 5 show a further illustration of impact measures in graph format.

Table 4
TOPSE Data



The graph illustrates the average change in scores across the time points. The results indicate a positive increase in not only the total self-efficacy scores but also in all of the subscales following the programme and no significant decrease in scores at the follow up (all significant and $p < 0.001$ level). Self-acceptance was the only subscale to significantly increase between time two and three.

Table 5
SDQ Data



The graph shows the mean changes in scores across the time points for each subscale of the SDQ and the total difficulties score. Scores showed the biggest decrease when comparing time 1 and time 3 scores.

Discussion of impact analysis

The PNS programme can be seen to have an immediate effect on parents' levels of self-efficacy and that this is maintained over a significant amount of time. Although children's behaviour and presentation is not immediately affected, the programme can be seen to impact over time on the areas explored in the SDQ. This suggests that programme effectiveness for children may be related to parent self-efficacy. Once this is acquired, the parent is better able to cope with difficult behaviour. The level of impact demonstrated suggests that PNS implementation and delivery of their programmes is of high standard in key areas. The implementation and delivery are explored in a part two of this report and do demonstrate areas of excellence as well as suggesting where changes may be made to support continuing improvement.

The results demonstrate the effectiveness and potential of the 'Parenting Matters' programme. The issue of parent training impact measured indirectly via child factors is an important one and offers considerable justification for further research to be carried out by PNS. In addition data suggest there may be a link between parent training and children's development of pro social behavior.

Demographic material needs to be more carefully considered in the light of effects and implications for programme evaluation and development.

Evaluation Part Two: Implementation issues, self-evaluation and improvement

Methods, Data Analysis and Results

Frameworks and evidence from Implementation Science highlight the fact that impact in parent training programmes and indeed any intervention is profoundly affected by how they are delivered. Existing evidence based frameworks allow baseline measures to be established in relation to organizational ethos, facilitator training and delivery of programmes and to consider how each of these aspects is contributing to the impact of programmes (Meyers, Durlack and Wanderman 2012; Kelly, 2013).

Implementation processes were measured using the Fixsen et al Integrated Framework for Implementation (2009). This framework flags up key areas for exploring PNS in terms of improvement and self-evaluation. Table 6 below highlights these key areas in relation to PNS practice and organization. Data for this exercise was gathered via discussion with the Board, perusal of the literature on aims, ethos and practice in PNS and from questionnaires completed by PNS facilitators. (Facilitator questionnaire is included in the appendix).

Table 6 Analysis of key areas impacting on implementation effectiveness in relation to PNS' improvement and self-evaluation agenda

Areas related to impact	Assessment of these for improvement and self-evaluation agenda
Understanding theory underpinning parent training and aims	Needed clarification and may be worth covering this in training for facilitators
Supportive and Effective Leadership	Rated as very good overall by facilitators but areas for consideration flagged up
Training, Coaching and Learning	Excellent in design and methodology. The system reflects the highest standards outlined in the implementation science evidence base of effective training. However some need to offer additional consideration to facilitators in remote areas and feelings of belonging to the whole network
Monitoring of Delivery and Fidelity	Very good though some adjustments suggested by facilitators which should be explored
Practitioner perceptions of effectiveness	High rating of effectiveness of programmes and linked by respondents to facilitator training and experience as parents
Openness to research and innovations	Very open and keen to develop an evidence base to demonstrate effectiveness
Resources	Needs investigating and flags up funding issues
Other areas flagged up	Image, marketing and innovation require development

Full summary of responses from facilitator questionnaires

Understanding PNS' theory and aims

All facilitators believed that they understood the theory and general aims of PNS programmes and felt this was a result of having completed the original facilitator training and further top up training and events.

One facilitator stated that they served on the Board and hoped to run courses in the near future. This suggests that by encouraging facilitators to play an active role in PNS and to allow facilitators to deliver training to others, this may encourage deeper learning.

An issue to consider is that one facilitator felt that although the training helped them understand PNS' theory and aims, their understanding of this was also based on their own research. This suggests the training may be lacking something if facilitators feel they must go and seek information after the training. It is unclear what exactly this facilitator had researched or whether they had not understood or simply researched out of interest however, this is an issue which should be taken into account.

Perceived effectiveness of programmes

Facilitators felt confident that PNS programmes support parents and children positively and effectively and suggested several reasons for this. Firstly, facilitators noted the importance of feedback from parents who had attended courses and how this feedback demonstrated the positive impact programmes had on the parents' lives. For example, facilitators claim they see the difference in parents who complete the courses; their confidence and communication skills increase and they appear to be more content in their family life. Moreover feedback from local youth groups regarding the behaviour of children whose parents have attended PNS programmes suggests that the children are more settled. Social work intervention is decreased and the parents are contributing more resourcefully to their local community.

Training, coaching and learning

Although one facilitator stated that they had had the opportunity to observe programmes being taught and believed this was useful whilst another had this opportunity as a result of being a facilitator-trainee mentor, the majority of facilitators did not have this opportunity. During training, facilitators completed exercises to practice leading elements of the courses and found this useful however they did not have the chance to observe programmes being delivered to parents. One facilitator believed that this would be good idea. Such an opportunity would allow facilitators to see how the programmes work and could then subsequently discuss what went well and what they would have done differently.

Facilitators agreed that there is a need for programme delivery to be observed regularly by someone who is experienced in order to support them and address any issues. However, this has been done very rarely or never in most of cases. Facilitators felt that this would be a good learning experience.

Support and leadership

The majority of facilitators felt supported by PNS management in delivering PNS programmes in that during times when they needed support, they did receive this either via email or via someone coming to visit them to discuss available resources. Some facilitators were less sure. For example, it was believed that there are difficulties in servicing remote locations and that there is a need for extra funding in such areas. There is also the feeling that more regular support from someone in "head office" is needed to avoid facilitators in these areas feeling isolated and to help them achieve a greater sense of being part of the whole Parent Network. Facilitators who themselves live far away from centres of population have a disproportionate burden of travel costs.

All facilitators agreed that if they needed coaching at any time, they can request this and acknowledge that training is ongoing anyway. One problem is that facilitators may not ask for input as they feel PNS staffs are extremely busy. Another issue is that although facilitators may feel face to face coaching is important, travelling to receive this can involve long distances and expenses. One other issue raised was that there is a need for additional resources and support for facilitators working with parents of children with disabilities.

Although facilitators generally feel that their comments are valued and listened to, they are less certain that contributions are acted upon. One facilitator highlighted that as financial resources are limited, this may hinder ideas being implemented in more remote areas.

Delivering the programmes

Whilst some facilitators agreed that they knew how important it is that some programmes are taught exactly as intended and that if they make changes it could influence the effects and limit the benefits to parents and children involved, other facilitators felt they could not answer such a question without knowing which courses were involved. Furthermore, facilitators also raised the issue of a facilitation process in that the main priority is to keep the group engaged and interacting. To stop this in order to make particular points in a prescribed order could hinder the effectiveness of the course.

Although some facilitators felt it was not their job to add or omit material from the course and if they felt this was needed, they would discuss this with PNS, some facilitators did give examples of how they had made changes to programmes. For example, if some issues took longer than expected to get through, this then gets in the way of other material. Facilitators also noted the importance of the individuals in the particular groups in that they believed it was essential to allow the programme to be flexible in order to suit the group. One facilitator gave an example of this suggesting that there may be a need to run sessions for additional weeks to ensure that the learners feel confident in their learning. Another facilitator suggested that if they believed something had been omitted, they would add this in the end-of-session summary notes for the group. Finally, another facilitator had condensed two weeks of listening skills into one.

Research at PNS

Facilitators believe that research will help show that parenting interventions are effective thus adding credibility to the courses. Such research should aim to show the increase in positive wellbeing and benefits to both the parents and children involved not only in their family life but in other aspects and relationships in their lives. They believed PNS would also benefit from research into the cost savings to the state in terms of future reduced interventions and necessary support for families. Finally, PNS could benefit from research into the most efficient and effective way of consolidating and sustaining the improvements made. Facilitators also suggested using case studies or evidence from the literature to inform practices.

PNS Marketing and image

Some facilitators felt that PNS is a leader in its field and several reasons were put forward to support this. For example, it was suggested that PNS is a leader due to its structures and policies. It is seen to be 'by parents for parents', and employs a mentoring/coaching approach thus using different strategies to those employed by other organisations. Feedback from the parents has also played an important role as some parents who have attended other courses have reported to facilitators that PNS programmes are more effective. However, other facilitators suggested that PNS may not have as high a profile in comparison to other organisations. Facilitators felt that there may be room for improvement. For example, publishing more articles in Children in Scotland magazine or in any newsletters that are available. They also suggested the need for more academic articles such as those in journals. It was also suggested that PNS must ensure social networking sites are used and kept up to date. This

could involve blogs to allow parents to participate in discussion and debates. Another suggestion made is that teachers may benefit from participating in a course to gain more understanding of children and their parents. Whilst it may be difficult to get well established teachers to participate, student teachers could be targeted. One issue raised was that little is done in terms of marketing in more remote areas.

New ideas and practices

Although some facilitators felt they did not know if other facilitators were willing to try new ideas and practices, they themselves were open to this. It was also mentioned that this has been evidenced at training days and initial training. For example, in the facilitator training programme, there are a range of resources used such as different elements of group work, facilitation and self-development.

Suggestions for change

One important suggestion given by facilitators was the need for more financial resources. This could be used to remove the stigma that parenting classes may hold for parents and perhaps highlight that it takes strength to seek extra skills. It was also suggested that there should be more emphasis on the evidence base of the effectiveness of the courses. Finally, it was suggested that there is a need to address needs of parents with children with autism.

Main themes highlighted by facilitators

- Importance of PNS training and support from staff
- Parent feedback is essential
- Locations and problems with remote areas; problems of limited resources and support in remote areas
- Need for facilitators to be given the opportunity to observe programmes being delivered to parents.
- Lack of clarity regarding the flexibility of the programmes and if facilitators can change make their own changes
- A need for facilitators to be observed by someone experienced.
- Better marketing
- Need for additional support when working with parents with atypically developing children (i.e. learning difficulties or developmental disorders).

Conclusion and next steps

This report outlines an ongoing consultation process involving a complex and innovative self-audit and self-evaluation design adopted by Parent Network Scotland. The consultation aimed to strengthen evidence of effectiveness and impact via enhanced measures of impact of their universal parent training programme, 'Parenting Matters' and through the application of evidence and frameworks for Implementation Science. The approach used is an emerging one which is likely to become more common in the light of current economic constraints and, more positively, in the wake of developments providing standardized measures of parent training.

The PNS study has provided evidence on the strong positive impact of their basic programme Parenting Matters and on sustainability and development of this impact over time. Results provide valuable information on how to extend our understanding of the impact of parent training on children's wellbeing and pro social behavior. They also provide a source of information on effective approaches to improving organizational processes to support effective parent training.

Further consultation should be around: extension of data gathering across programmes, the possibility of developing ways to consult with children on parent training and how to improve implementation sensitive areas covered in the questionnaires to protect impact.

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Appendix - Questionnaire for Facilitators

Parent Network Scotland
Questionnaire for Facilitators and Trainers
To be returned to
Dr Barbara Kelly
Consultant to PNS by
20th June 2013

As you know, PNS has been carrying out research on how effective their programmes are in supporting parents, enhancing their self-efficacy and promoting positive change for children.

The first part of the research gave very positive results, indicating that PNS is very effective for both parents and children. An important aspect of the research is how facilitators and trainers feel about the organization and the implementation of its programmes. This questionnaire asks you to consider some important areas and give your opinion, where you see fit, on PNS' strengths and on how it might develop and improve.

You need not sign the questionnaire if you do not wish to do so but do state your role.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please expand on a yes or no and give full comments where possible!

1. I know about the theory and general aims underlying Parent Network Scotland programmes. (If yes, how did you gain this knowledge?)
2. I feel confident that PNS programmes support parents and children positively and effectively. (If yes, how do you know this?)
3. I have had opportunities to observe programmes being taught and to discuss my thoughts and any learning requirements with PNS facilitators and trainers. (If this was so, was this helpful? If not, would it be helpful?)

4. I feel supported by PNS management in delivering PNS programmes and know the time and resources will be available to me to do this well. (If so, how do you know? Or give examples or experiences? If not, how can these areas be improved?)
5. I know how important it is that some programmes are taught exactly as intended and that if I make changes I could influence the effects and limit the benefits to parents and children involved. (See next question!)
6. I know when and how I can make changes to programmes.(If yes, please outline when and how you might make changes)
7. I agree that programme delivery should be observed regularly by someone who is experienced and that this is done to support trainers, help iron out any problems and check that training conveys the material effectively. (Does this happen? If so, is it helpful?)
8. If I need coaching at any time in delivering programmes, I know I can request this.
9. I feel that research will help to support PNS? (If yes, how will it do that?)
10. I feel that my comments are highly valued and I can suggest changes which will be listened to and considered by the PNS Board? (How do you know this? If it's not the case, what do you feel prevents this?)
11. I feel PNS promotes itself well. (For example web site, regular public events, effective recruitment strategies, meetings, seminars or conferences for practitioners or parents, links with government and funders, excellent development plans. If yes give some examples, if not, give some suggestions)
12. I feel that facilitators and trainers are willing to try new ideas and practices. (How do you know this? If they are not willing, why is this?)
13. Do you feel that PNS is a leader in its field? (If yes or not, why is that?)
14. In your view, what changes would benefit PNS?