

## Supplementary Materials 5: Validation Event Powerpoint Slides

## Plan

1. Background information
2. Theme 1: Context and History
3. Discussion
4. Theme 2: Taking Part in a Randomised Controlled Trial
5. Discussion
6. Theme 3: Thoughts about Service Received
7. Discussion



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## Background

- The Helping Families Programme is a parenting intervention
- It has been developed to help multi-stressed families living in complex social circumstances with primary-school-aged children who experience long-standing conduct and emotional problems



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## The Study: A Pilot Randomised Control Trial (RCT)

- Randomised controlled trials aim to compare a new treatment and existing treatment(s) to see which works best
- Pilot- a trial run to establish whether it is useful or practical to run a full-scale RCT
- 48 people took part (50/50)



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## Interviews with participants

- All participants who agreed to follow-up at time-point-two (32 people) were invited to be interviewed
- 27 participant parents accepted the invitation (13 control, 14 intervention)
- What was it like for parents with complex psychosocial needs to take part in a pilot randomised controlled trial?
- What did participants make of the care they received?



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## Three Themes:

- **Context and History**

- Current life circumstances
- Past experiences
- Hopes and fears

- **Taking Part in an RCT**

- Randomisation
- Mechanics of research

- **Thoughts About Service Received**

- Impact
- Experience: mechanisms of change
- Recommendations for future delivery



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## 1. Context and History

- For many of the parents we spoke to, life is hard
- Past and present circumstances colour people's hopes, fears and their reasons for taking part in the study
- To understand people's experience of taking part in HFP we must understand the context of their lives



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## Difficult Life Circumstances:

### Circumstances impact mental health and parenting

Mental Health problems, physical health problems, stressful family relationships, caring for family members, single parenthood, debt, housing

*"... my parenting skills was proving quite difficult and I was finding it extremely difficult to maybe bond and communicate and understand what was going on with the kids because I also had a lot of personal issues going on as well. Then on top of that, there was erm issues that were out of all our hands that were also going on for me and the kids."*



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## Past Experiences:

Some (NOT all) people described having difficult childhoods and difficult experiences with services in the past

*"...a lot of things I didn't realise had kind of like happened in my childhood not like bad things but I was practically like as a teenager left to raise myself."*

*"... I remember at one point I was getting counselling from the family justice centre and the lady was really, really judgemental"*



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## Hoping for change

- Improved relationship with child
- Improved child behaviour (reduced anxiousness, violence, truancy and angry outbursts)
- Deeper understanding of child's needs
- Wanting to examine and change own parenting approach
- Get out of a rut
- Worried about impact of own MH on child
- Improve services for families



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- *“Like the way that I parent, the way that she gets angry, the way I react to her, the way I can't do boundaries and I'm not consistent, the way I don't have rules, the way there's no discipline, she talks to me like rubbish, she hits me and things like that so...”*

- *“...because I was going through a lot, like with mental health and depression and I wanted some support because also my son had some anxieties as well... I wanted to get some help around that.”*



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### Fears and concerns:

- Feeling stuck in a rut
- Willing to try anything to make the situation better
- Fear that nothing ever really changes, a sense of hopelessness (impacted by past experiences)

*“I’m always trying to support my other kids and that and I’m not putting myself first and things and to be fair...you get stuck in a rut where you sort of like, think, you know what, no, you start believing that things aren’t going to be any different and even if it is going to make that effect or difference, you just sit there and you, the way you view things and how you think that all these things are when they’re offered to you, it’s like, same old, same old...”*



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### Discussion

- Do you have any questions?
- Does this seem like a fair description of the experience?
- Are there different ways of thinking about this theme?
- Do you have any ideas for a name of the theme?



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## 2. Taking Part in an RCT

### Randomisation

Randomisation was understood to different degrees and in different ways:

- Completely clear
- Understood it was random but it felt personal
- Unclear (thought it was on the basis of need)

*“As a mum, I personally didn’t believe that I was good enough or my son was, to get the sessions. I thought, ‘for real, I opened up and I felt I was stressed out and my head was messed up and then no one helped’... I thought they thought my problems were too much.”*



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### Fairness

- Unfair- should be based on need
- Problematic at vulnerable time
- Regrettable but necessary- ends justify the means

*“I don’t know I think it’s like trial research of anything really you’ve got to have two sides of the story”*

*“...what happens if there’s a family out there who’s really struggling? And then there’s a family that’s not. And you’ve given the 16 hours to the family that’s not really struggling and you’ve given that one session to that poor family that is struggling.”*



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## Impact of randomisation

- Worried whilst waiting:

“When, when [X] said, ‘It could be a one session or a 16 session. It depends’, I was worrying then.”

- Relief: largely intervention

“...luckily I got the – the longer term so yeah that made me quite happy.”

- Disappointment: control

- 1 better than none
- Confirmed life’s negativity:



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*“To be honest with you I’ve very negative anyway about myself and when they were going through the questionnaires and told me that I was qualified and I would either get the one session or the 16, the first thing that came into my head was is that I know I’m going to get the one session so, like, because of where I’m so negative on how I think anyway, so I wasn’t really that disappointed because I just, yeah, I always expect the worst I guess.”*

*“IV: Um like um I’m trying to sort myself out and everything what’s the point? You try but you don’t get nowhere...”*

*I: Yeah so it sort of reinforced a sense of hopelessness?*

*IV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

*I: Yeah okay I’m sorry about that...*

*IV: That’s alright, no one’s fault is it it’s just life, I should have known yeah.”*



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## Logistics

- Paperwork: Mixed responses

*“Answering those questions can have a mental impact. Can make you feel guilty or like a bad parent. When ringing to make appointments warn people that they are quite in-depth”*

*“No because, er, because I think by us doing that questionnaire it would kind of give you guys an insight into what, er, kind of support”*

- Too long between meetings
- Researchers: Friendly and listened (difficult to criticise to a researcher)



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## Thoughts about service received

- Impact
- Experience- mechanisms of change
- Recommendations for future delivery



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## Impact:

- Behaviour: More time spent with kids, Boundaries and consistency, Less physical punishment, Looking after own needs, less fighting and fewer tantrums
- Cognitive: Thinking from different perspectives, putting self in shoes of other, improved relationship
- Emotional: Reassured, calmer, more hopeful about the future
- Not much changed- 3



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*"I learned from the therapist as well she needs a lot of positive attention and if you give her positive attention after she's done something then life's good"*

*"Ah I feel loads better, I feel more confident, I've, I feel everything like I dunno I just feel like I can handle more situations. Before I was not a mum I was a mate to my kids, I was never a mum I was their mate"*

*"it's opened a gate for me to be more optimistic towards my children, to understand how they feel and their feelings."*



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*"I didn't get a huge amount out of the programme ... I didn't feel I got any concrete um strategies or help from her to try and deal with the issues I was having and sometimes the sessions, the gap was too long in between um for various reasons not on my part, the therapist's part ... but I just didn't feel I got out of the programme what I was hoping to get."*



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## Impact of control

Two parents described shifts in thinking and new strategies which were useful:

*"it did...made me think about things in a sort of, detailed way that I hadn't necessarily done before, and when you do that, you sort of think, actually...yeah, you know, they've got a point, this is potentially a really useful way of looking at it...erm...you know, you get...stuck in what your beliefs are and then, if something comes along to kind of, prompt you to think through it...I definitely kind of realised something...in that session"*

Others described it as having little impact:

*"I: Do you think it's better to have, better or worse or doesn't make any difference to have an hour as opposed to nothing?"*

*IV: No, I don't think it's different."*



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In four instances parents were left feeling misunderstood and judged :

*"...if you've got someone that doesn't understand your situation, in my case, I've had a lot of people judge me for it, so I don't know if it's just natural reaction because so many people have judged me in the past, that I felt like she was doing it because of my anxiety, I don't know, but I felt like she didn't understand..."*



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## Experience: mechanisms of change

### Therapeutic alliance

Therapist qualities: Understanding,  
Determined, Responsive

*"... if you're a good listener with me that makes me feel very confident, if somebody just like talks and then that's it you go show that you're not that interested after a little while I won't ever talk to you again"*



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- *"The determination of not giving up, making sure I'm alright, re arranging the schedule to fit in so it was like, alright she really wants to do this, fuck it lets do it."*
- *"I would say something and she'd sort of explain to me what I said ... and then I would say yeah that's exactly what I mean so like she knows what I'm saying but how to say it because I don't really know how to say it properly. And then when she actually relays it back slightly different it's like oh actually yeah."*



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Insensitive and non-personalised responses by therapists damaged the therapeutic alliance and left participants feeling misunderstood and of secondary importance:

*“IV: Yeah laughing at the thing that I was saying like I was saying about that my daughter had done and she would chuckle about it and I thought well, that's not really something to chuckle about um ...Yeah I didn't feel very, I didn't feel good at all um it wasn't really a laughing matter the things I was talking about”*



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## Collaboration and planning

- Partnership work (together and between services) frequently described- feeding and resulting from therapeutic alliance:

*“... it made me feel more confident as well because I was involved in what is happening and the stuff that is, you meet professionals and they're like they're the ones there in the sessions they're like this is what we're doing. He didn't make it feel like that, he got us involved.”*



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- **Location:** Feeling comfortable and safe

*"I: How was it having it in the home, did you have it at home?"*

*IV: Yeah I found it quite comforting really I suppose [yes] yeah more relaxing."*

- **One-to-One:** Focused attention (depth) Vs peer support

*"Well I think it was also just having that very personal sort of, focussed on me and my problems and how I was going to manage my particular situation and manage me ..."*

- **Scarce mention of modules:** Checking-in and offloading popular
- **Materials:** Reminder of what had been learned Vs daunting/rigid paperwork



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## # of sessions

- 16 sessions acceptable to most participants, though one parent felt an hour per session wasn't long enough and was too rigidly adhered to
- Single control session largely unacceptable: not possible to understand the complex ecologies of people's lives or effect meaningful change in so limited a time-frame

*"... if you're trying to cram one session and you've got all these complex needs, I think if they would have been more time...to focus on it, to be able to explain all the situation and all that lot, then it would have been more helpful, but you've got like an hour, two hours, whatever the time is, and you're trying to cram it all in, by the time you've finished explaining the situation and all the complex situation and needs, you've hardly got any time to go through the actual situations or the programme itself to be able to sit there and see if it would help anyway."*



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- A less personal and more mechanical approach was described whereby the therapist tried to cover a lot of material in the allotted time:

*“IV2: And it was only literally for 60 minutes and she was dead to the time and it was run through like these sort of cards and, 'Right, turn the card. Turn the card.' And that's what it was like and it was so ...*

*IV: It was too regimental.*

*IV2: ... yeah, regimental and, 'Oh right, that's it. Time's up now. Right, just sign off. Right, I've got to go now.’”*



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## Recommendations for future delivery

- HFP: Helpful, should be rolled out, could include child in the sessions, neat folder to be given at the beginning of the intervention and followed through in orderly way
- Control: 2 people thought it was useful and should be rolled out, others felt it was ineffectual for complex needs. Might help for people with less complex needs as an early intervention, need to know more about the family on arrival, scrap cards



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## Discussion

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- Would you like to be thanked in the paper?



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