

Last reviewed: August 2026

Programme website: <https://www.peeple.org.uk/families-connect-programme>

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Families Connect

Please note that in the ‘Intervention Summary’ table below ‘child age’, ‘level of need’, and ‘Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity (EDIE)’ information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention **as offered/supported** by the intervention provider.

Intervention summary	
Description	Families Connect is a universal intervention designed for families living in disadvantaged communities with children aged 3 to 7 years old who attend early years settings, children’s centres, or primary schools. It is delivered by early years practitioners over eight sessions with the aim of supporting parents to promote their child learning at home.
Evidence rating	2
Cost rating	1
Child outcomes	• Supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing - Improved social behaviour - Improved social and emotional development.
Child age (population characteristic)	4–6 years old
Level of need (population characteristic)	Universal

Foundations Guidebook – Intervention information sheet

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Intervention summary	
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity (EDIE) (population characteristic)	Insufficient demographic information reported across the studies to assess representation or diversity within the evidence base.
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	• Children’s centres • Early-years setting or any community space attended by families • Primary school.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Any professional working with children 3–7 years old including Family Workers, Early Years practitioners and teachers.
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	Yes

Model description

Families Connect is a universal intervention designed for families living in disadvantaged communities with children aged 3–7 years old who attend early years settings, children’s centres, or primary schools. Delivered by early years practitioners, it comprises eight two-hour sessions held weekly, with the aim of supporting parents to promote their child’s learning at home. It is a group-based intervention, typically involving six to 12 parents per session. Each session is split into two halves: the first is for parents only, and the second brings parents and children together. Over the eight weeks, parents learn how to support their children’s learning at home across three key areas: social and emotional development; literacy and language development; and numeracy. The intervention aims to improve children’s socio-emotional learning and school readiness, and to strengthen home- school or nursery partnerships.

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Target population

Age of child	3–7 years old
Target population	Parents/caregivers and children between the ages of 3 and 7, often living in areas of deprivation and disadvantage.

Please note that the information in this section on target population is **as offered/supported** by the intervention provider



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Children living in areas of disadvantage are less likely to do as well academically compared to classmates from a more advantaged background.	Creating a good learning environment at home and improving parents' skills and confidence to support their child's learning can reduce the impact of poverty on their child's future.	Parents/caregivers and children aged 3 to 7 years old often living in areas of deprivation and disadvantage.	The intervention aims to increase parents' confidence, knowledge, and skills through discussion, modelling, and shared parent–child activities that promote positive interactions and learning in the home.	• Parents have greater confidence and knowledge to support their children's learning and development. • Children experience more positive interactions and communication at home, alongside greater engagement in reading, play, and early maths activities.	• Improved school–parent partnerships • Improvements in children's educational outcomes • Improvements in children's socio-emotional skills.	Children living in areas of disadvantage have a better chance of achieving their potential, including higher academic outcomes, and more professional opportunities.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Children aged 3 to 7 years old and their parents or caregivers.
How is it delivered?	Families Connect is delivered in eight two-hour sessions by a practitioner to a group of six to 12 families.
What happens during the intervention?	Each two-hour session is divided into two components. The first is for parents only, where a practitioner welcomes families, recaps the previous session, and discusses any activities they have tried at home. Through reflection and discussion, parents share experiences with the practitioner and with other parents, reinforce their learning, and consider how activities can be used within the home learning environment. The second component brings parent and child together, with both taking part in shared activities. Over the eight weeks, parents learn how to support their children's learning at home across three key areas: social and emotional development; literacy and language development; and numeracy. At the end of each session, families reflect on what they have covered, share feedback, and are introduced to the next topic, and parents are encouraged to continue the activities at home between sessions.
Who can deliver it?	The practitioner who delivers this programme is any early years' practitioner who works with children aged 3 to 7 years old.
What are the training requirements?	The practitioner receives seven hours of programme training. Booster training is not required.
How are practitioners supervised?	Supervision of practitioners is not required.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	• Training manual • Other printed material • Other online material • Face-to-face training • Fidelity monitoring.



Implementation requirements (cont.)

Is there a licensing requirement?	No
Contact details	Contact person: Sally Smith Organisation: Peeple Email address: training@peeple.org.uk Website/s: https://www.peeple.org.uk/families-connect-programme

Evidence summary

Families Connect’s most rigorous evidence comes from one pre–post study conducted in the UK consistent with Foundations’ [Level 2 evidence strength threshold](#).

The study identified statistically significant improvements in language and improved social behaviour.

Families Connect shows evidence of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the intervention caused the improvement.

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	6
Studies reviewed	4
Quantitative studies meeting the L2 threshold	1
Quantitative studies meeting the L3 threshold	0
Quantitative studies meeting the L4 threshold	0
Qualitative studies	0
Ineligible	3



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity (EDIE) summary

Representation across the evidence base

The available evidence for Families Connect includes a study conducted with a majority White British sample, with 59% of families reported as White British (Study 1). Representation of minoritised groups was therefore moderate, but reporting of characteristics was absent.

EDIE insights from quantitative studies

No subgroup analyses or equity-relevant quantitative data were reported in Study 1. In another study (Lords et al., 2021), which was an RCT which did not find evidence of positive outcomes for children, the study found no evidence of an effect of pupils having English as an Additional Language on the impact of Families Connect on vocabulary.

EDIE insights from qualitative studies

Qualitative evidence provided insight into how different groups experienced Families Connect, particularly of positive experiences for newly arrived families or those with English as an Additional Language, where Families Connect contributed to building a support network. One teacher described how Families Connect gave a mother with English as an Additional Language a group of friends (Bizas et al., 2016), and another how the intervention connected a family who were new to the UK to other support systems (Save the Children, 2018). Sometimes language was identified as a potential barrier, where parents spoke a language other than English, and in these cases either a Community Practitioner or another parent were able to translate materials or interpret (Lord et al., 2021).

Individual study summaries

Study 1	
Study design	Pre–post study.
Country	UK
Sample characteristics	139 families with a child aged 3 to 7 years old
Ethnicities	59% of parents participating in the intervention were White British. The study does not report any further ethnicity breakdown, grouping all other ethnicities together as “other”.



Study 1	
Population risk factors	52.5% of parents had household income below £20,000.
Timing	• Baseline • Post-intervention • Three-month follow-up.
Child outcomes	Post-intervention • Improved pro social behaviour • Reduced peer relationship problems • Reduced total difficulties (socio-emotional and behavioural)
Study rating	2
Citation/s	Bizas, N., Wilson, L., Anfield, G., Lacey, S., Newcombe, P., Patel, S. and Sovik, S. (2016) <i>Families Connect: Evaluation of Autumn Delivery 2016</i> . London: Save the Children UK.

Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 139 families from across the UK, each with a child aged four to six years old and living in an area of high deprivation. At the time of the study, the intervention was aimed at parents and their children aged four to six, although the youngest child in the sample was three and the oldest was seven. Since then, the intervention's age range has been expanded to three to seven. Of the participating children, 44% were boys. Among parents, 56% were White British; the study does not provide any further ethnicity breakdown, grouping all other ethnicities together as "other".

The intervention is universal, so all families of children aged four to six were eligible to take part if they were interested. The provider of the intervention prioritised offering the intervention to schools in more deprived areas and those already engaged in the provider's community-based initiatives. 52.5% of parents had household income below £20,000 and 43% of parents reported their employment status as looking after the home.

Study design

This was single-group a pre–post study. 139 families received the intervention, of which 136 children had baseline (pre-intervention) data collected. Post-intervention data was collected after the completion of the intervention and at three-month follow-up.

Measurement

Assessments took place at baseline (pre-intervention), post-intervention, and at three months post intervention.



- Parent-report child outcome measures included the parent reported Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Teacher-report child outcome measures included the teacher reported SDQ, BPVS3 (British Picture Vocabulary Scale 3) and Children's Softer Skills Scale (CSS).

Parental outcomes included:

- Parental self-efficacy (parent report)
- Home Learning Environment Index for KS1 (parent report)
- Parental self-esteem (parent report)
- Perception of parental engagement and efficacy (teacher report)
- Parent-child interaction (parent report).

Study retention

Post-intervention

71% (N=96) families participated in post-intervention assessment, indicating an overall attrition rate of 29%.

Results

Data-analytic strategy

Change from baseline to post-intervention was tested using paired t-tests. Analysis was restricted to participants with matched pre- and post- data, a complete case approach, with families who dropped out or did not complete both questionnaires excluded in the analysis.

Findings

At post-intervention, the intervention group showed statistically significant improvements on child outcomes. On the teacher-reported SDQ, there were significant improvements in total difficulties, peer relationship problems, and pro-social behaviour, while conduct, emotional, and hyperactivity subscales did not change significantly.

Limitations

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited due to the following methodological issues:

- **Concerns regarding comparison group:** The comparison group design element of this study was excluded from appraisal. The primary concern was a lack of rigour in the comparison group selection. Teachers selected the comparison children, rather than through random allocation or other quasi-experimental methods. This means that comparison group children were likely selected from those who had chosen not to take part in the intervention, which is a systematic confound between the two groups. There is also the possibility of spillover effects, as the comparison group was drawn from the same classrooms as the intervention group, and the comparison group itself showed positive outcomes. This means that the comparison group design could not meet Level 3 criteria



requirements.

This means that the pre-post single group study in this report was assessed against Level 2 criteria only.

- **Concern regarding the CSS measure:** To receive a Level 2 rating, a valid and reliable measure must be used. The CSS is a bespoke measure, which does not seem to have available information about reliability and validity. Therefore, the outcomes based on this measure are not included in the rating.
- **High attrition at three-month follow-up:** Attrition for the three-month follow-up measures exceeded Level 2 standards (no higher than 40%, with at least 60% of the sample retained). Therefore, the results of the three-month follow-up do not underpin the evidence rating.
- **High attrition for some measures:** At post-test, attrition levels varied across measures. The BPVS and parent SDQ had attrition that was too high (45% and 42% respectively) and so do not meet Level 2 standards.

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Vocabulary	*BPVS3	NA	Yes	77	Post-intervention
Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale total difficulties (teacher report)	NA	Yes	101	Post-intervention
Conduct problems	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale conduct problems (teacher report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Emotional problems	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale emotional symptoms (teacher report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Hyperactivity/inattention	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale hyperactivity/inattention (teacher report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Peer relationship problems	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale peer relationship problems (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	107	Post-intervention
Pro-social behaviour	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale pro-social behaviour (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	101	Post-intervention
Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale total difficulties (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Conduct problems	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale conduct problems (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Emotional problems	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale emotional symptoms (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Hyperactivity/inattention	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale hyperactivity/inattention (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Peer relationship problems	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale peer relationship problems (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Pro-social behaviour	*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Behaviour Scale pro-social behaviour (parent report)	N/A	Yes	80	Post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Attitudes towards learning	*The Children's Softer Skills Scale (CSS)	N/A	Yes	105	Post-intervention
Parent outcomes					
Parental self-efficacy	*Parental self-efficacy (parent report)	N/A	Yes	75	Post-intervention
Parental self-efficacy	*Perception of parental self-efficacy (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	96	Post-intervention
Parent-child interaction	*Parent-child interaction (parent report)	N/A	Yes	84	Post-intervention
Home Learning Environment	*Home Learning Environment Index for KS1 (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
Parental self-esteem	*Parental self-esteem (parent report)	N/A	No	N/A	Post-intervention
*Outcome measurements have not contributed towards the evidence rating.					

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this programme but did not count towards the programme's overall evidence rating. A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

- Lord, P., Rennie, C., Smith, R., Gildea, A., Tang, S., Miani, G., Styles, B., & Bradley, C. (2021). *Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluation of Families Connect Programme*.



National Foundation for Education Research.

Note: The child outcomes measured in this RCT all had null findings, but the study did observe some positive parental outcomes and so received an NL2 rating.

- Bradley, C., et al. (2016) *Families Connect: Evaluation of Summer Delivery 2016*. Save the Children.
- Rennie, C. and Styles, B. (2019). *Evaluation of data from the Families Connect programme: A Technical Paper*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).
- Save the Children UK. (2018). *Families Connect: Impact report 2018, UK wide*. Save the Children UK.

Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.