



Building parent capacity to support early language and learning: A cluster randomized controlled trial

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Victorian Govt. Department of Education and Training
the Parenting Research Centre and 20 Local Government Authorities

Partners:



Program design

Fit with existing services/ funding models
Fit with workforce skills

- Group program
- Focus on fairly narrow range of skills
- Keep core elements simple
- Guided by a narrated DVD

Trialled 2 levels of intensity:
group program only vs. group PLUS home coaching



Early Home Learning Study 2009 – 2011


Funded by DET
Designed and conducted by PRC

Find out how to support parents to provide positive home learning environments to their children in the Victorian early childhood context

- Maternal and Child Health service (infants)
- Supported playgroup programs (toddlers)

CRE-CL funded Elizabeth Westrupp's role on the study.

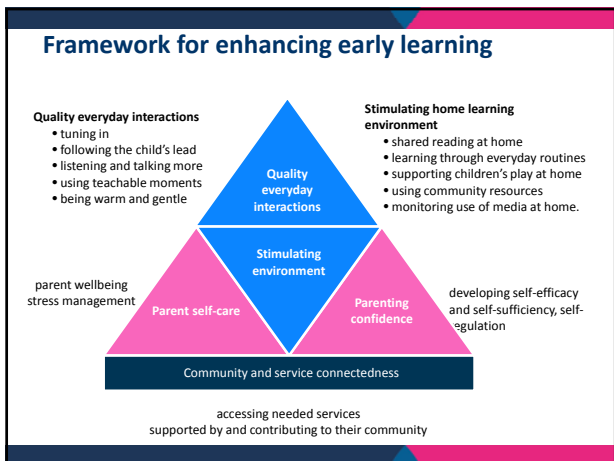
Partners:



smalltalk
Quality for children's great start



- Practitioner manuals
- Promotional materials
- Resources to use with parents
- Parent workbooks
- DVD examples



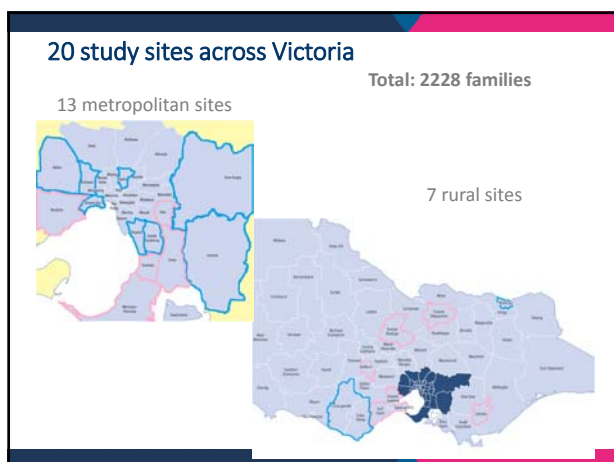
Co-production process



Warm and Gentle



Healthy
Safe
Get along
Resilient
Strong and Think



Analyses

Within platform (i.e. separately for infant and toddler)

Adjusted regression analyses

- Pre to post; pre to follow-up
- Presented estimates are Effect Sizes (ES) for continuous data & Odds Ratios (OR) for categorical data

Adjusted for: child age, single parent family, language other than English, young parent (<25yrs), low parent education, parent unemployment, low income, government benefits

smalltalk

Two services:	MCH	SPG
Parents of:	Infants 6 – 12 months	Toddlers 12 – 36 months
No. weekly sessions:	6 sessions	10 sessions

Two levels of intensity

- *smalltalk* – group only
- *smalltalk plus* – group plus home coaching (6 home visits)

Practitioner role

- Introduce & coach

Compared to 'usual care'

- Standard parenting or playgroups

Interpretation

Effect Sizes (ES) – summary of the magnitude of difference between the groups. For a community samples and a preventive intervention, we interpret these as:

- Large: >0.50
- Medium: 0.25 - 0.50
- Small: <0.25

Odds Ratio (OR) – likelihood of the outcome cf. reference group

- = 1.0 equal probability of the outcome
- < 1.0 reduced probability of the outcome
- > 1.0 increased probability of the outcome

Recruitment, reach and retention

Recruitment	84% of recommended families agreed to attend
Reach	84% had at least 1 indicator of social disadvantage
Engagement	Attended 60% of group sessions and 87% of home visits 2 in 3 received all 6 home visits
Retention	83% retained to post-intervention 78% retained to 5-month follow-up

Analyses

Reliable change*

- Summary statistic, applied to the self-report data only
- For each individual, calculates whether change on a given measures over time is greater than could be expected by chance alone
- We have categorised each participant as showing reliable change on at least 1 measure (Y/N)
- Comparisons by condition expressed as OR

* Jacobson & Truax (1991)
Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology

Outcomes by intervention condition

- Overall pattern:
 - *smalltalk plus* was better than (or the same as) *smalltalk*
 - *smalltalk* was better than (or the same as) standard
- For simplicity, we present:
 - *smalltalk plus* vs. standard comparisons

Toddler Platform – self report data

smalltalk plus vs. standard

	pre to post N=1014		pre to follow-up N=940	
	ES	p	ES	p
Parenting warmth	-0.04	0.679	0.05	0.532
Parenting irritability	-0.10	0.080	-0.09	0.145
Parent verbal responsivity	0.08	0.233	0.04	0.630
Home activities	0.16	0.011	0.11	0.152
Literacy environment	-0.05	0.444	0.05	0.379
	OR (CI)	p	OR (CI)	p
High household confusion	1.04 (0.68, 1.60)	0.858	1.38 (0.88, 2.18)	0.163
Reliable change (1 or more areas)	1.26 (0.80, 1.98)	0.323	1.94 (1.36, 2.78)	0.000

Infant Platform – self report data

smalltalk plus vs. standard

	pre to post N=798		pre to follow-up N=757	
	ES	p	ES	p
Parenting warmth	0.11	0.223	0.01	0.862
Parenting irritability	-0.03	0.703	0.13	0.075
Parent verbal responsivity	0.18	0.012	0.08	0.285
Home activities	0.20	0.005	0.00	0.971
Literacy environment	0.19	0.007	0.03	0.671
	OR (CI)	p	OR (CI)	p
High household confusion	0.80 (0.43, 1.48)	0.478	1.09 (0.56, 2.12)	0.807
Reliable change (1 or more areas)	1.77 (1.26, 2.48)	0.001	1.14 (0.83, 1.58)	0.419

Toddler Platform – observational data

smalltalk plus vs. standard

	pre to post N=119		pre to follow-up N=129	
	ES	p	ES	p
Acceptance & warmth	0.20	0.298	0.19	0.291
Descriptive language	0.77	0.000	0.46	0.038
Follow child's lead	0.18	0.440	0.35	0.071
Maintains child's interest	0.52	0.029	0.55	0.008

Infant Platform – observational data

smalltalk plus vs. standard

	pre to post N=100		pre to follow-up N=88	
	ES	p	ES	p
Acceptance & warmth	-0.05	0.856	0.20	0.379
Descriptive language	0.63	0.014	0.16	0.635
Follow child's lead	0.56	0.022	0.25	0.482
Maintains child's interest	0.03	0.907	0.32	0.362

Parenting and the home learning environment

Best outcomes for *smalltalk plus*

MCH groups

- Early gains compared to standard groups.
- Differences not sustained to 5 month follow up

Supported playgroups

- Fewer early gains
- Differences were sustained and strengthened to 5 month follow up



What did we learn?

1. **Co-production and partnerships is the 'way to go'**
 - High level of 'buy in' from families , practitioners & services
 - Referral, reach & attendance/ retention indicate high acceptability/relevance for families
 - Good fit to existing service model and staff training
2. **It is possible to improve the home learning environment through a relatively light touch program**
 - although more intensive intervention is required for the most vulnerable families

What Next?



La Trobe & CRE-CL are leading research grant to look at long term effects

- Impact on children's adjustment and performance at school – has *smalltalk* helped to narrow the gap?

PRC is supporting DET to rollout *smalltalk*

- make *smalltalk* supported playgroups more broadly available
- effectively triage home coaching to the families who would benefit the most

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