



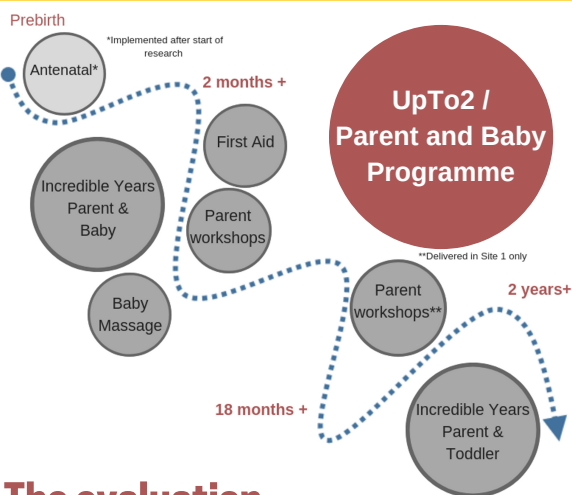
Overview of Key Findings from the Evaluation of the UpTo2/Parent and Baby Programme

BACKGROUND

ENRICH (Evaluation of wRaparound in Ireland for CHildren and families) is a five-year multi-component research programme funded by the Health Research Board and established to: (1) build a greater understanding of how we can best address the health, mental health and social care needs of young families; and (2) to contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of 'wraparound-inspired' services for children and families living in Ireland.

One of the central aims of the research was to understand the effectiveness, implementation and cost-effectiveness of a new 'wraparound-inspired' early parenting support service called the **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme**.

As part of ENRICH, a detailed impact evaluation of this programme was conducted, accompanied by an in-depth process evaluation. These studies investigated the impact of the programme on parent and child outcomes and explored the factors which influenced implementation. Some of the key findings are summarised here. Further information is provided in two Summary Reports available upon request or from our website (www.cmhcr.eu/enrichprogramme).



- The **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme** is a new universal early parenting intervention comprising a range of developmentally tailored services and supports for parents and their young children from birth up to two years of age
- Group discussions, role plays and modelling are used to promote positive and proactive parenting and to enhance parent and child wellbeing
- The **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme** was developed, and is delivered, by Archways in collaboration with Public Health Nursing and several community-based services, including the Deansrath Family Resource Centre and the Genesis Programme.

Programme impact - key findings

- Statistically significant differences were found in relation to **parenting self-efficacy** - parents who received the **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme** were more confident and satisfied in their role of parent when compared to those who received 'services as usual' (Fig 2).
- The qualitative findings highlight numerous perceived benefits of the the **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme** in terms of **improving parenting knowledge and skills**. For example, participating mothers reported using more sensitive and proactive parenting strategies and being more responsive and attuned to their infants' emotional needs.

The evaluation

- Almost 400 parents and babies** participated in the **impact evaluation**. This involved detailed assessments across a 24-month period. Data were collected on parenting competencies, parent wellbeing, parent-infant relationships and child development.
- Parents and children who participated in the **UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme** were compared with those who accessed services as usual.
- A detailed **process evaluation** - involving **over 60 key stakeholders** - was undertaken to explore the experiences of, and responses to, the intervention, as well as the facilitative and inhibitive factors and processes which influenced programme implementation.

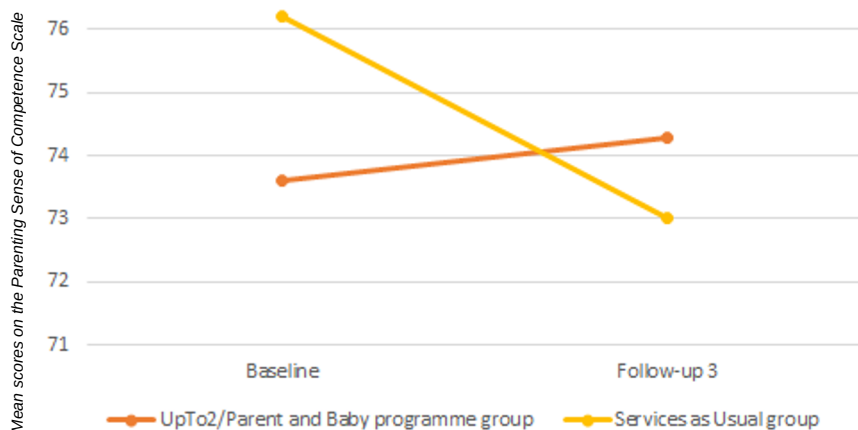
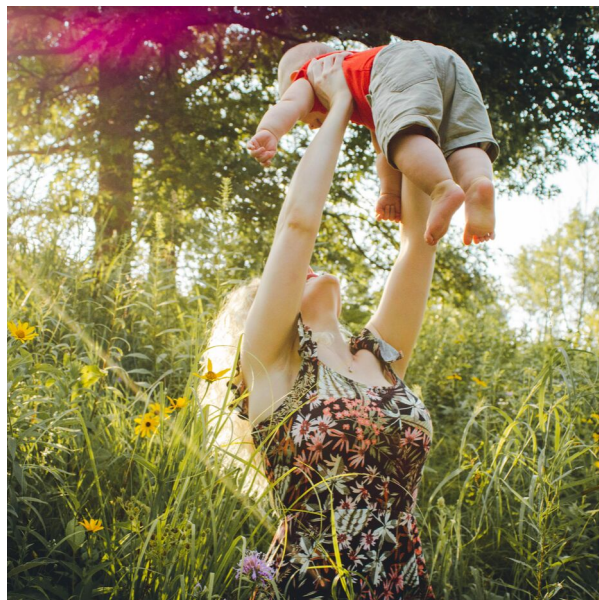


Fig 2. Differences between the UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme group and the services as usual group in respect of parenting self-efficacy

Parents' responses to the programme

- **Parent satisfaction** with the programme was **very high**. Pre-programme, qualitative findings highlighted mothers' feelings of exhaustion and anxiety around caring for their baby. Programme attendance helped to alleviate concerns and stresses, helping parents to feel more supported during this vulnerable period.
- The group-based nature of programme delivery was highly valued. The social and moral support received during the group process was seen as essential for **reducing social isolation and increasing confidence**.
- However, **parental attendance was a challenge** and participation tended to decline over the cycle of programme delivery.
- Additional analyses indicated that 'low risk' families benefited more from the intervention in respect of parenting self-efficacy, child temperament and child problem solving skills; there were no differences on parent and child outcomes between families who experienced more adversity. These results may have been influenced by **differential patterns of attendance**; more vulnerable families attended significantly fewer sessions.



Programme implementation - key findings

Establishing and embedding these kinds of innovative and complex programmes in community-based settings, is a significant undertaking which takes considerable time, effort and resources. The process evaluation explored the successes and challenges of implementing the *UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme*.

Implementation successes

- The programme was delivered with **high levels of fidelity**; programme facilitators were highly praised by parents for their support and encouragement throughout the programme. Their strong interpersonal skills were seen as crucial to facilitating engagement and promoting positive parenting outcomes.
- Despite the early stage of programme implementation, there was **substantial programme adoption amongst practitioners**, who also held very positive views of the programme.
- The programme was seen to offer **considerable benefits** with regard to: **(1)** supporting parents and improving parent outcomes; **(2)** developing organisational capacity; and **(3)** strengthening collaborative working and inter-agency practices and communication within child and family services. The last of these would appear to be particularly important in promoting service uptake/utilisation and reducing gaps in service delivery.

Implementation challenges

- Programme facilitators identified a significant need for adequate **time and resources** to support their involvement and attendant skill development in implementing the *UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme*. There were difficulties in achieving a balance between involvement in programme delivery and other work commitments, particularly in the context of organisational staffing and financial constraints.
- An **unsupportive work environment** (e.g. managers'/colleagues' lack of understanding of implementation requirements) was a barrier to sustainable delivery.
- **Receptivity to innovation** was crucial to quality delivery and sustainability. Two key factors were identified as important in this respect: leveraging strategic leadership from service managers and fostering buy-in for implementation through relationship building and organisational development.

Key lessons

Our collective findings suggest that, overall, the *UpTo2/Parent and Baby programme* can provide **important and effective support** for parents in the earliest years:

- There was a **strong perceived need for universal early parenting supports** within primary care and community service settings.
- Numerous programme benefits for parents were highlighted, including **sustained improvements in parental confidence, increased feelings of support and the promotion of stimulating, sensitive and supportive parenting**.

Additionally, **important lessons have been identified for the scaling up** of these kinds of programmes:

- Engaging families in preventative supports is a significant challenge. Our research shows that 'harder to reach' parents were less likely to attend the programme and attitudinal and practical barriers to participation were common. These merit attention in the context of future programme development and implementation. We need to understand better the kinds of strategies and supports required to engage all parents in preventative support programmes.
- Finally, the implementation of complex early parenting supports requires **sustained effort and planning**. Cultivating leadership and support for innovation and practice change, whilst also building strong relationships to support practitioners, is vital to ensuring high quality implementation and to ensuring optimal outcomes for parents and children.



Evaluation of WRaparound in Ireland
for Children and families