

Families and Schools Together Preschool

Review: [Foundations for Life](#), July 2016

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

Families and Schools Together (FAST) Preschool is a group-based intervention for parents of a preschool child who wish to support their child and become more engaged in their community. It can operate at a universal level, but is more frequently provided on a targeted basis to families where there is an elevated risk of child behavioural problems.

Parents and children attend eight weekly sessions delivered by teams made up of representatives from the community, including previous group members alongside professionals. Weekly meetings include a shared meal, 15-minute play session, family communication activities and parent discussion from which parents learn how to manage their stress and their child's behaviour.

Evidence
rating: **2**

Cost rating:
NA

EIF Programme Assessment

Families and Schools Together Preschool has **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the programme caused the improvement.

Evidence
rating: **2**

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 2 indicates that the programme has evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample, using validated instruments.

This programme does not receive a rating of 3 as its best evidence is not from a rigorously conducted RCT or QED evaluation.

Cost rating

NA indicates that the information required to generate a cost rating is not available at this time.

Cost rating:
NA

Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour

Improved behaviour (parent-report)

Based on study 1

This programme also has evidence of supporting positive outcomes for couples, parents or families that may be relevant to a commissioning decision. Please see the 'About the evidence' section for more detail.

Key programme characteristics

Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Preschool

How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Group

Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting
- Primary school
- Community centre

How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Universal

Note: This programme is not currently available in the UK.

Where has it been implemented?

Australia, Canada, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, United States, Wales

UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence does not include evaluation conducted in the UK.

Spotlight sets

EIF includes this programme in the following Spotlight sets:

- parenting programmes with violence reduction outcomes
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About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- FAST is delivered in eight sessions of 2.5 hours' duration each by teams made up of representatives from the community, including previous group members, alongside professionals with QCF level 6/7. It is delivered to groups of families and children, typically in which an elevated risk of child behavioural problems has been identified.

What happens during the intervention?

- FAST Preschool is a group-based intervention for parents of a preschool child who wish to support their child and become more engaged in their community.
- Weekly meetings include a shared meal, 15-minute play session, family communication activities and parent discussion.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- This programme is delivered by teams made up of representatives from the community, including previous group members, alongside professionals with NFQ level 7/8/9.

What are the training requirements?

Not available

How are the practitioners supervised?

Not available

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

- Training manual
- Other printed material
- Other online material
- Video or DVD training
- Face-to-face training
- Supervision
- Accreditation or certification process
- Booster training
- Fidelity monitoring

Is there a licensing requirement?

Not available

How does it work? (Theory of Change)

How does it work?

- Parent–child attachment and family relationships reduce conflict in the family and improve child behaviour at home and at preschool.
- FAST Preschool aims to improve family communication and strengthen parent’s bonds with their child, each other, their preschool and their community.
- In the short term, FAST parents/carers have increased confidence and increased involvement in preschools and their communities. Children will be better able to self-regulate.
- In the long term, the benefits of FAST Preschool impact on the home through better relationships and parental engagement in their child’s early education. Later on in life, this will result in improved school attendance and educational attainment. In addition, children will be less likely to misuse substances, and engage in antisocial behaviour.

Intended outcomes

Contact details

Carol Goedken CEO FAST non-profit organisation
cgoedken@familiesandschools.org

<http://www.familiesandschoolstogether.com/>

About the evidence

Families and Schools Together (FAST) Preschool's most rigorous evidence comes from a pre/post study which was conducted in the US.

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child and parent outcomes.

A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study, which in this case is the McDonald et al. (1998) study, and so the programme receives a Level 2 rating overall.

Study 1

Citation: McDonald et al. (1998)

Design: Pre/Post

Country: United States

Sample: 80 families

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Improved behaviour (parent-report)
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Other outcomes:

- Reduced symptoms of depression
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Study rating: 2

McDonald, L., Payton, E., Sayger, T., & Whitfield, H. (1998). Increasing protective factors for mental health in Head Start children through outreach and multi-family FAST groups.

Study design and sample

The first study is a pre-post study.

The study was a pre-post only study. Outcomes were assessed before the intervention was delivered and six months after the intervention was delivered.

This study was conducted in the US, with a sample of 80 families with primary-school-aged children.

Measures

Family cohesion was measured using the Family Environment Scale (FES) (parent report) and the Family Adaptation and Cohesion Scales (FACES III) (parent report). Family conflict was measured using FES (parent report).

Child behaviour was measured using daily reports, and the Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) (parent and teacher report). Child internalising and externalising behaviour were measured using the CBCL (parent and teacher report).

Findings

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on one child and parent outcome, respectively.

In relation to child outcomes, there is evidence of improved behaviour.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to a lack of a comparison group.

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.

McDonald, L., Doostgharin, T., & Doostgharin, S. (2014). Families and Schools Together (FAST). Evaluation of community based FAST for 2-4 year old children and families living in poverty in 3 CRAS in 3 favelas in Brazil for the UNODC family skills project. United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime Brazil FAST Aggregate Report - **This reference refers to a study, conducted in Brazil.**

Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

[How to read the Guidebook](#)

[EIF evidence standards](#)

[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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10 Salamanca Place, London SE1 7HB | +44 (0)20 3542 2481

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