Family Foundations


Family Foundations (FF) is a group-based programme for couples expecting their first child, delivered any time during the mother’s pregnancy.

The programme is delivered by male and female co-facilitators with a QCF-level 6 in a helping profession. Parents attend five weekly sessions where they learn strategies for enhancing their communication, conflict resolution and the sharing of childcare duties. Couples return for four more weekly sessions, two to six months after the baby is born, to learn strategies about how to communicate effectively as parents and support their child’s development.

Family Foundations seeks to improve children’s outcomes by improving the quality of interparental relationships (IPR).
EIF Programme Assessment

Family Foundations has evidence of a long-term positive impact on child outcomes through multiple rigorous evaluations.

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 4 indicates evidence of effectiveness. This means the programme can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least two rigorously conducted evaluations (RCT/QED) demonstrating positive impacts across populations and environments lasting a year or longer.

Cost rating

A rating of 1 indicates that a programme has a low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of less than £100.
Child outcomes

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

**Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing**
- Improved infant soothability (father report) - based on study 1
- Improved duration of orienting (mother report) - based on study 1
- Improved self-soothing (observational measures) - based on study 1
- Reduced internalising problems (teacher report) - based on study 1
- Improved soothability (coded observation) - based on study 2
- Improved orienting (coded observation) - based on study 2
- Improved sleep (parent report) - based on study 2

**Enhancing school achievement & employment**
- Improved prosocial behaviour (parent report) - based on study 1

**Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour**
- Reduced externalising problems (teacher report of boys only) - 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:

- Perinatal

**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:

- Sixth-form or FE college
- Community centre
- Out-patient health setting

**How is it targeted?**

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

- Universal

**Where has it been implemented?**

United Kingdom, United States
UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

This programme’s best evidence includes evaluation conducted in the UK.
About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- Family Foundations is delivered in eight sessions of two hours’ duration each by two facilitators.

What happens during the intervention?

- Parents learn skills to better cope with the transition to parenthood, improved communication skills and better conflict resolution.
- Parents also learn strategies for responding to their child in a sensitive way. Parents learn through a variety of group exercises, role play and group discussion.
- Parents also receive programme packs that contain a homework element. Once the baby is three months old parents attend for more sessions to discuss parenting experiences and explore areas for improvement.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The practitioners that deliver this programme are two facilitators with QCF-6 qualifications.

What are the training requirements?

- The practitioners have 24 hours of programme training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.
How are the practitioners supervised?

- Practitioners are supervised by one highly qualified host-agency supervisor (QCF-7/8).

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

- Fidelity self-report forms are completed by practitioners at the end of each session
- Independent observation
- Supervision and accreditation (by videotape)
- Booster training session from programme developer

Is there a licensing requirement?

There is no licence required to run this programme.

How does it work? (Theory of Change)

How does it work?

- Family Foundations assumes that improved parental self regulation will help parents better manage environmental stresses and improve the co-parenting relationship.
- Family Foundations therefore helps couples improve their co-parenting relationship through improved communication and conflict resolution strategies.
- Parents also learn strategies for responding sensitively to their child and developing appropriate sleep routines.
- In the short term, couples will experience an improved co-parenting relationship and reduced family stress.
- In the longer term, children will experience greater attachment security, improved self-regulation, decreased emotional and behavioural problems, and increased academic adjustment.
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Commissioning Toolkit Programme Overview
NREPP Programme Overview
Blueprints Programme Overview
RAND Programme Overview
About the evidence

The most rigorous evidence of Family Foundations comes from two RCTs conducted in the USA.

**Study 1**

*Citation:* Feinberg, M. E. (2008); Feinberg et al (2009); Feinberg et al (2010); Feinberg et al (2014) | *Design:* RCT

*Country:* United States

*Sample:* 169 couples expecting their first child; 160 from the original study; 142 families from the original study; 98 families from the original study

*Child outcomes:*
- Improved infant soothability (father report)
- Improved duration of orienting (mother report)
- Improved self-soothing (observational measures)
- Reduced internalising problems (teacher report)
- Improved prosocial behaviour (parent report)
- Reduced externalising problems (teacher report of boys only)

*Other outcomes:*
- Improved co-parental support (parent report)
- Improved depressive symptoms (mother report)
- Improved anxiety (mother report)
- Improved parenting-based closeness (father report)
- Improved parent-child dysfunctional interaction (father report)


### Study 2

**Citation:** Feinberg et al (2015)  |  **Design:** RCT

**Country:** United States

**Sample:** 399 couples expecting their first child

**Child outcomes:**
- Improved sootheability (coded observation)
- Improved orienting (coded observation)
- Improved sleep (parent report)
Other outcomes:

- Improved positivity in co-parenting (coded observation)
- Reduced competition with partner in co-parenting (coded observation)
- Improved overall triadic relationship quality (coded observation)
- Improved positive endorsement of parenting (coded observation)
- Improved positive communication in couple interaction (coded observation)
- Improved quality of marriage (parent report)
- Reduced depressive symptoms (parent report)
- Reduced anxiety (parent report)
- Reduced inter-parent physical violence (parent report)
- Reduced parent-child psychological violence (parent report)
- Reduced parent-child physical violence (parent report)


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
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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