

Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE Parent Training Curriculum

Review: January 2021

Incredible Years ADVANCE is an add-on programme to the Incredible Years Preschool BASIC and School Age BASIC programmes. It is designed to be delivered to families after they have received the BASIC programmes, particularly where child risk factors (oppositional or aggressive behaviours, ADHD, poor social skills or autism spectrum disorders) or parent risk factors (mental health problems, poor communication skills, social isolation, marital conflict or emotion regulation difficulties) are present.

Evidence
rating: 2

Cost rating: 2

This Guidebook page describes **Incredible Years ADVANCE, when delivered as an add-on to the School Age BASIC programme** (which has its own standalone Guidebook entry [here](#)).

The School Age BASIC programme is a targeted-indicated parenting programme for parents of children between the ages of 6 and 12 diagnosed with oppositional-defiant or conduct disorder. It is delivered in communal settings (children's centres, primary schools, community centres, outpatient settings) and aims to improve parents' communication skills as well as children's emotion regulation, cooperation, problem-solving skills, relational skills and academic learning.

The ADVANCE programme involves adding 9–12 sessions of 2–2.5 hours' duration each to the BASIC programme. Incredible Years recommend adding the ADVANCE programme for high-risk groups as these tend to progress slower through the curriculum content. Adding the ADVANCE programme enables parents and practitioners to consolidate covered content and progress on content for which there was no time in the BASIC programme sessions.

Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE targets parents' skills in the areas of communication, emotion regulation, problem-solving, relationship building and parenting in order to achieve positive outcomes for children in these areas and regarding academic progress. Incredible Years School Age BASIC and ADVANCE work with the same methods and curriculum. The ADVANCE components offer practitioners the opportunity to strengthen and reinforce topics already covered in the BASIC programme component as well as introduce new topics. It is recommended for higher-risk groups to consolidate learning effects.

Parents learn through discussion, home assignments, video vignettes, roleplay practices and individual goal-setting. Therapists use a collaborative process to encourage discussion in which parents self-reflect and develop parent principles that help them generalise the material presented to their own parenting situations. Roleplay practice provides opportunities for therapists to help individualise scenarios to the parents' own situations and then to practise skills. This behavioural practice is then continued at home through structured home activities that parents complete and discuss the following week. While the programme is structured and has a manual and required material to cover, the model is built on the principle of tailoring the topics, activities, and skills to the individual families in the group.

This programme seeks, in part, to improve children's outcomes by improving the quality of interparental relationships (IPR).

EIF Programme Assessment

Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE Parent Training Curriculum 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.

Please note that the evidence included in this assessment compares the outcomes of families receiving Incredible Years School Age BASIC, followed by the ADVANCE programme, to families receiving neither. Consequently, while this evidence suggests improvements for families receiving the School Age BASIC + ADVANCE programme compared to those receiving no treatment, this evidence cannot tell us that the ADVANCE component is adding value over and above the BASIC programme (i.e., that those receiving ADVANCE in addition to BASIC have better outcomes than families who only receive the BASIC programme). In terms of the target population of the programme, please note that the evidence included in this assessment investigates a targeted selective (rather than targeted-indicated) implementation of Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE. It assessed the ability of Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE to prevent conduct problems. Thirdly, please note that this study investigated an adaptation of this programme to the needs of Chinese American parents. In this adaptation, the curriculum covered core Incredible Years concepts such as promoting positive behaviour and reducing inappropriate behaviour, and additionally focused on cognitive restructuring, communication training, and positive, proactive parental involvement in children's schooling.

Cost rating

A rating of 2 indicates that a programme has a medium-low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of £100–£499.

Cost rating: **2**

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

Reduced child conduct problems - 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:

- Primary school
- Preadolescents

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
- Primary school
- Community centre
- Out-patient health setting

How is it targeted?

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

- Targeted selective

Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE is designed as a targeted-indicated intervention for children diagnosed with oppositional-defiant or conduct disorder. However, the assessed study evaluates Incredible Years School Age BASIC + ADVANCE as a targeted selective intervention for parents identified as in need of parenting support by a community partner or self-referring as having such a need.

Where has it been implemented?

England, Estonia, Netherlands, Russia, 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.

About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- Incredible Years School Age BASIC is delivered in 12–16 sessions of 2 hours' duration each by two practitioners to 5–8 families.
- For Incredible Years ADVANCE, an additional 9–12 sessions of 2–2.5 hours' duration each are delivered by two practitioners to groups of 5–8 families (8–12 parents).

What happens during the intervention?

- Parents learn through discussion, home assignments, video vignettes, roleplay practices, and individual goal-setting.
- Video vignettes provide models of effective communication, emotion regulation, and problem-solving strategies for parents to discuss and apply to their own lives. There are also less effective video models that are catalysts for parents to discuss what they would do differently. Therapists use a collaborative process to encourage discussion in which parents self-reflect and develop parent principles that help them generalise the material presented to their own parenting situations.
- Roleplay practice provides opportunities for therapists to help individualise scenarios to the parents own situations and then to practise skills.
- This behavioural practice is then continued at home through structured home activities that parents complete and discuss the following week. While the programme is structured and has a manual and required material to cover, the model is also built on the principle of tailoring the topics, activities, and skills to the individual families in the group.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The practitioners who deliver this programme are two psychologists, mental health counsellors, marriage and family therapists, social workers or similar practitioners with QCF-7/8 level qualifications.

What are the training requirements?

- Both practitioners have 18 hours of programme training for the Incredible Years BASIC programme plus 16 hours of programme training for the Incredible Years ADVANCE programme. Booster training of practitioners is recommended.

How are the practitioners supervised?

Practitioner supervision is provided through the following processes:

- It is recommended that practitioners are supervised by one clinical host agency supervisor (qualified to QCF-7/8 level), with 2–3 years of programme training.

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

Programme fidelity is maintained through the following processes:

- Training manual
- Other printed material
- Other online material
- Video or DVD training
- Face-to-face training
- Fidelity monitoring

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?

- Parents model social behaviour for their children. Their affect, communication, and conflict resolution skills influence children's conduct problems.
- Incredible Years School Age BASIC plus ADVANCE aims to improve protective factors (parental communication skills, parental emotion and mood regulation, parental problem-solving skills and support networks including partner relationship and parent–teacher partnerships) in order to enhance parents' ability to parent effectively, to model and regulate their own emotions, and to teach emotion regulation and problem-solving skills to their children.
- Parents learn to effectively problem-solve and communicate with parenting partners, teachers and their children; and to give and get support from others. This in turn leads to positive outcomes for children in the areas of child emotion regulation, compliance/cooperation, problem-solving skills, positive relationships with peers and academic learning.
- In the long term this leads to reductions in behaviour problems, academic failure, school drop-out, depression, violence and substance abuse.

Intended outcomes

Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing
Enhancing school achievement & employment
Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour
Preventing substance abuse

Contact details

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<http://www.incredibleyears.com/certificationgl/advanced-parent-certification/>

<http://www.incredibleyears.com/about/incredible-yearsseries/series-goals/>

About the evidence

Incredible Years School Age BASIC plus ADVANCE's most rigorous evidence comes from an RCT which was conducted in the US.

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

This programme is underpinned by one study rated level 2, hence the programme receives a level 2 rating overall.

Study 1

Citation: Lau et al. (2011) | **Design:** RCT

Country: United States | **Study rating:** 2

Sample: 54 Chinese American families, with children between 5 and 12 years old (mean age 8.4 years), where parents were referred or self-referred for a need in parenting support.

Timing: Interim measurement; Post-test; 6-month follow-up

Child outcomes:

Reduced child conduct problems

Other outcomes:

Increased positive involvement of parents with children

Decrease in parents' use of negative discipline

Lau, A., S., Fung, J. J., Ho, L. Y., Liu, L. L., & Gudino, O. G. (2011). Parent Training With High-Risk Immigrant Chinese Families: A Pilot Group Randomized Trial Yielding Practice-Based Evidence. *Behaviour Therapy* 42, 413-426.

Available at <https://www.incredibleyears.com/article/parent-training-with-high-risk-immigrant-chinese-families-a-pilot-group-randomized-trial>

Study design and sample

The first study is an RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to an immediate treatment group and a waitlist control group.

This study was conducted in the U.S., with a sample of children aged 5-12 years. Parents were first generation Chinese American immigrants. Most parents were high-school educated or less and had an annual income below \$50,000. About half of the sample had elevated internalizing or externalizing behaviour problems.

Measures

Child conduct problems were measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist.

Findings

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

This includes improved child conduct problems at post-test. For the 6-month follow-up measurements, results from immediate and delayed treatment group were combined. In this combined sample, child conduct problems were further reduced compared to post-test.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to the sample size being below 20 in one study group and a lack of clarity in terms of attrition, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

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.

Hutchings, J., Bywater, T., Williams, M. E., Shakespeare, M. K., & Whitaker, C. (2009). *Incredible Years: An Effective Parent Programme for High-Risk 8 to 16 year olds*. School of Psychology, Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd.

Hutchings, J., Bywater, T., Williams, M. E., Whitaker, C., Lane, E., & Shakespeare, K. (2011). The extended school aged Incredible Years parent programme. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 16(3), 136-143.

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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