



# ParentConnect

Impact Evaluation for the Connect Programme

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A S S O C I A T E S

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***This six week accelerated learning programme, offers parents a workable and effective approach to creating harmonious and happy family relationships.***

## **PARENTCONNECT**

ParentConnect is an innovative approach to parenting and community living that is accessible to parents and carers of children of all ages. The programme is ideally suited to be delivered to a maximum of 12 people.

The programme focuses on improving the relationship between a parent or carer and their child/children primarily through frameworks which promote effective communication viz. respectful dialogue which enables understanding. This includes relationship with self, partners, children and others.

## **THE AUTHORS OF THE PROGRAMME**

Tracy and Janet have both worked with parents and children for many years. They are both mothers and Tracy has grandchildren. Individually and collectively, Tracy and Janet have worked professionally with individuals, groups and organisations to bring lasting change.

Tracy Seed is a consultant in early years care and education she has worked in Europe and USA. In addition to her work with parents she has specialist expertise in leadership, management and curriculum training. She is an endorsed High/Scope trainer, qualified teacher, coach, NLP Master and NVC Practitioner. Tracy has presented at conferences, and been involved in many panels as an expert in early years care and education.

Janet Wilson has worked with families in different contexts since 1985. She is a consultant and coach with international experience in strategic and line management and facilitation. For 4 years she worked as a teacher, counsellor and coach in the United Arab Emirates with students and teachers from over 35 different countries. Janet is a trained facilitator, NLP Master, NVC Practitioner and an accredited coach in good standing at the International Coach Federation.

## **EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND LEARNING THEORY**

ParentConnect is a programme which is designed to raise emotional intelligence and awareness of the motivation around habitual behaviour in our relationships with our children. Our traditional view of human intelligence (IQ) is far too narrow. Our emotions play a far greater role in our thoughts, decision making, and individual success than is commonly acknowledged. This is never more true than in the family and particularly in our behaviour in our homes. (Emotional Intelligence, why it can matter more than IQ, Daniel Goleman)

We do this through a combination of methods which encourage people to engage with one another in the process which draws on the behaviour, experience, knowledge and skills of the people in the small group to learn more about themselves and others. As facilitators we serve as guides in a journey which is aimed at bringing greater understanding to some of the more complex moments in our lives and in our families. The journey's end is to understand what it means – and how – to bring our emotions, intentions, intelligence and behaviour into alignment.

When designing the programme we considered the most practical way of bringing about real change in habits and behaviour. With this in mind we decided to run the material over 6 weeks, allowing participants to put theory into practice, as well as to access support from the group during the change.

Some of the theories and philosophies that have informed our design include:

## **NON VIOLENT COMMUNICATION**

Marshall Rosenberg's work in Non-violent communication offers a framework which helps us to identify the feelings and needs behind our behaviour.

A large amount of time is spent exploring the needs that drive behaviour, choices and decisions, both in the parent and in the child. We work with the parents to recognise their feelings and needs in a non-judgmental way and to accept their role in managing these for themselves. The

idea is that once they are able to apply this for themselves they will be able to recognise it in the other members of the family. Participants are introduced to vocabulary and concepts early on in the programme and we include many opportunities for practice over the six weeks.

## **NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING**

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is the study of what works in thinking, language, and behaviour. It is a way of coding and reproducing excellence that enables you to consistently achieve the results that you want both for yourself and your family life. It is a process of modeling the conscious and unconscious patterns that are unique to each of us in such a way that we are continuously moving toward a higher potential.

**Neuro** – by increasing our awareness of the patterns in our thinking, we can learn how these through patterns influence the results we are getting.

**Linguistic** – by listening to what we say, we can understand more about what and how we think. Learning to understand our language and the impact of our words on others is often key to changing dynamics in the family.

**Programming** – by exploring the habits we have, the beliefs we hold and our strategies, we are able to explore alternatives and thereby give ourselves choices.

The facilitators use their expertise in NLP to support the participants in recognizing their own patterns and those of their children. Some of the exercises use interventions which help to shift blocks in thinking through art, movement and meditation.

## **LEARNING IN GROUPS**

Learning in groups rather than in formal lectures or training sessions, allows people to have greater scope to negotiate meaning and express themselves within the language of the subject. It also helps them to establish a far more effective relationship, not only with their teachers but with each other. It can also play a central part in developing key professional skills, such as listening, presenting ideas, persuasion, self-direction, self-monitoring and team working.

David Jacques defines four qualities crucial to meeting the emotional needs of the group: support, commitment, enjoyment and imagination. (*Learning in Groups, David Jacques*)

This is one of the theories behind the small group design; another is social impact for the parents, many of whom have very little contact with others.

## **ENROLMENT**

Enrolment in a learning programme is governed by a mix of demands and expectations—from friends, from family, from those who can influence us—and by our own needs and desires, which stem from our experience and what we believe to be possible in the situation in which we find ourselves.

To this end participants should ideally be self selecting and we do this by sharing the agenda, process and underpinning values with them in the first session.

In this programme we focus on activities that create circumstances in which others can learn. It is vital to have the participants who subscribe to the process and prepared to commit to confidentiality, participation, respect and trust. We work with experience and this requires crossing boundaries and sharing differences.

## **PARENTCONNECT MODULES**

### **What is important about being a parent?**

We look at the values and beliefs we have about parenting

### **Being Human**

We spend time focusing on what we want and need as parents.

### **Understanding others**

The developmental stages/phases and the role of feelings and needs on actions and behaviour.

### **A Key to Parenting**

Empathy and a new way of communicating

### **Communicating Effectively**

Let's all win. Looking at the key areas of concern and ways of negotiating peacefully.

### **Designing the Future**

We will spend time integrating what we have learned and developing a vision for the future.

## **HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME FIT WITH EVERY CHILD MATTERS?**

### **Be Healthy**

Supports families and children in making healthy choices - mental and emotional health.

### **Make a Positive Contribution**

Supports families and children to promote positive behaviour

### **Stay Safe**

Supports families in discussing issues openly and honestly to keep children safe.

This programme develops self confidence and respect in parents and children which supports the achievement of all outcomes - be health, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

As well as making children's lives happier and strengthening the home/school/community partnership,

research shows that good parenting also has a significant impact in raising achievement in school. A 2003 study by Professor Charles Desforges of Exeter University shows that good 'at home' parenting can make over a 10% difference to children's outcomes in school.

ParentConnect addresses relationship primarily through frameworks which promote effective communication viz. Respectful dialogue which enables understanding. This includes relationship with self, partners, children and others. We have mapped the programme against the outcomes.

## EVALUATION AND OUTCOMES OF THIS PROGRAMME

The programme was piloted with a group of parents of teenagers, during 2006. These are a few comments from these parents.

*'I really enjoyed attending the sessions. It was great to have some time out to think about me, my family and how we get along now, and how we might get along in the future. The trainers were very professional and took time for discussions. I'm definitely better at listening'* **Joan: Lewisham - mother of two sons, one adult and one teenager.**

*'A very thought provoking course. Organized in a way that made me feel comfortable to share my thoughts and feelings openly. I could really deal with issues that were very individual to me. Helped me to work on my behaviour.'*

**Beverly: Mottingham, Kent - mother of teenagers**

The pilot programme was attended by a Children's programme manager in Lewisham who successfully recommended us for the bid to Downham SureStart. Our bid was successful!

The programme ran for 6 weeks and was deemed a success. A group of 10 parents attended. The programme was evaluated via two routes:

1. Through feedback from our own questionnaires, data and reflections.
2. Through the TOPSE tool, which is a tool developed by Hertfordshire University to measure parent efficiency before and after a programme.

## WHAT THE PARENTS SAID

Evaluation forms were completed by 6 parents at the last session. They were asked to rate the following using the following scale: 1= Excellent, 2= Good 3= Satisfactory 4= Poor. The results are as follows :

Area	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Environment	6			
Location	6			
Child in Crèche		5		
Programme Duration	4	2		
Handouts/Documentation	6			
Debate and Discussion	6			

Parents were asked to comment on the learning they gained from attending the programme this is what they said:

- Self confident and to feel well so as to take care of my family successful
- I learnt about how important my needs and others are. Confidence to make the changes in my life that I want to
- Learning how to relax more
- To think how I feel to think how others feel
- Got my relationship back with my daughter and am less anxious
- I've definitely leaned to be more patient and to listen more

They were asked to think back to their relationship with their family before they came on the programme and were asked to recognise anything that has changed. This is what they said:

- Yes, I feel I can give them more
- More relaxed and laid back
- I feel more positive
- I feel I communicate better with my family and I understand them more.
- My whole family is better, calm and happy
- Yes, I am more organised and now think about their feelings and needs more

They were asked if they would encourage friends or family to attend this programme and were asked what they might tell them about it. They said:

- The impact this programme had on my family life
- Yes, I would encourage friends and family. I would tell them how it shows you that most things relate to feelings and it gives you confidence to really change your life.
- It helps to talk about things.
- Its different
- Yes, I would recommend it I would tell them everything I got out of it
- There is so much I would tell them

## EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME THROUGH TOPSE DATA ANALYSIS

This evaluative data has been compiled, after meeting with nine participants, individually. We used the TOPSE booklet (a tool developed by the University of Herfordshire to evaluate the effectiveness of parenting programmes) to measure a change in parenting efficiency.

The TOPSE evaluation booklet should ideally be completed prior to or during the first session of the parenting programme with a second booklet completed during or following the final session. We were not aware of this tool when we started our programme and consequently,

the data was collected during a one to one session with each participant identifying the scores before and after the sessions.

Three of the participants were unable to offer data which could be used.

### CONCLUSIONS FROM TOPSE DATA

The table provides an illustration of the effectiveness of the ParentConnect Programme.

An illustration of sections scored as a percentage of the optimum TOPSE Parent Efficiency pre and post programme.

The table details % pre-programme and % post programme.

Sections	Prior to ParentConnect	After ParentConnect	Increase
Emotional Affection	68%	91%	23%
Play and Enjoyment	55%	89%	34%
Empathy and Understanding	57%	87%	30%
Control	51%	78%	27%
Discipline and Setting Boundaries	56%	87%	31%
Able to deal with Pressure	59%	85%	26%
Self Acceptance	59%	93%	34%
Learning and Knowledge	68%	91%	23%

This data concludes that the programme had a significant effect on all areas of efficiency. The four areas showing the most significant increase were:

1. Play and enjoyment
2. Self Acceptance
3. Discipline and Setting Boundaries
4. Empathy and Understanding

### OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM DELIVERING PARENTCONNECT

ParentConnect is suitable to be delivered to small groups of parents from diverse backgrounds and with mixed abilities.

This programme ran very effectively in partnership with local services and independently with the Pilot group.

Childcare arrangements and home care assistance for one parent, were key factors to the high level of attendance during the Lewlsham programme.

The participants appreciated the benefit of the small group and regular meetings.

Clearly anecdotal evidence and TOPSE parent efficiency data suggests learning.

### PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

To continue to deliver the programme through funded organisations and to private individuals.

Pilot PHASE TWO – ParentConnect Support Group - is to establish a support group for parents and carers, who meet on a regular basis (monthly) to practice their skills, sustain and encourage the continuation of the changes they have chosen to make in their relationships.