

PINE Suggested Evaluation Plan - Southwark Fathers Group

Evaluation Aspirations

The desired aim of the self-evaluation is to provide indications of evidence for the effectiveness of the Southwark Fathers Group against a range of outcomes, and also to understand whether there are areas for improvement with regards to the delivery and process around the intervention.

Our evaluation questions are focused on the outcomes associated with the families in contact with SFG. The evaluation of the process around the intervention activities (pre-, during and post-intervention) are included later in the document as part of an Implementation and Process Evaluation.

Evaluation Questions

Based on our assessment of what data will be possible to collect, we suggest the following evaluation questions.

- 1) To what extent do the family relationships of recipients of the programme change over time after receiving the Southwark Fathers Group intervention compared to before receiving it?
- 2) To what extent do recipients of the programme report improved parental skills after receiving the Southwark Fathers Group intervention compared to before receiving it?
- 3) To what extent do recipients of the programme report that their knowledge and understanding of child development has improved as a result of attending?
- 4) What proportion of recipients of the programme had increased parenting involvement 6 and 12 months after the end of the programme? What proportion had a decrease?
- 5) What proportion of recipients of the programme have joint or full caring responsibilities 6 and 12 months after the end of the programme compared to before?
- 6) What proportion of recipients had parental responsibility 6 and 12 months after the end of the programme compared to before?
- 7) What proportion of the children of recipients of the programme had a reduction in the level of social care involvement 6 and 12 months after the end of the programme compared to before? What proportion had an increase?



Note that none of these questions use the term 'impact'. This is because it has not been possible to find a suitable comparison group for us to be able to robustly determine causal impact.

Outcome measures

This section outlines, for each research question, how we recommend measuring the outcome.

EQ1: Family relationships

You noted that inter-family conflict was a key issue for the fathers in the group, and therefore something it was important for the evaluation to focus on.

While we recommend that the Family Relationships and Parental Skills outcomes be treated as separate research topics, they might both be measured via surveys conducted at one of the early meetings (preferably the first - though we acknowledge this might risk lessening engagement) and the final meeting. You mentioned that literacy skills might present an issue in collecting survey data, but that administrative support might be available to help facilitate this.

We propose measuring family relationships using the [SCORE-15](#) survey for family functioning and change (Annex A), which is a validated measure for family therapeutic change. Each respondent will be given a score of family functioning between 1-5 where higher values indicate higher levels of family functioning. The survey, as well as resources for recording and scoring responses, are available for free online.

The first survey will provide a 'baseline' for these two outcomes, and the second the 'endline' measure. In effect, you will be comparing the recipients' scores at baseline and endline and reporting any change between the two. Changes in the same people over time such as these are useful indicative evidence that the intervention is having the desired effect, but this type of comparison has some limitations. It doesn't allow you to say that the programme *caused* the change - only that the change took place - as other things might have changed in the lives of the recipients over the course of the period the intervention was running that had an influence on the change.

We would also recommend a further follow-up 6 months after the end of the programme to get an indication of whether any change seen lasts or attenuates over time, though as this would have to be done remotely either by email or phone using administrative support.

Other indicators that could be helpful to routinely capture as part of monitoring the outcomes of recipients of the programme:

- *A short number of carefully-worded questions for children who attend the celebration event - as we wouldn't have a baseline for this measure these should be seen as*



indicative and providing a richer idea of how the intervention is perceived within the family, and to understand the parent-child relationship specifically.

- *DA incidents recorded by Children's Services - we recommend capturing and monitoring these, but as not all recipients of the programme will be known to CS we do not recommend this as a primary outcome measure.*

EQ2: Parental Skills

Equally, the development of parental skills / knowledge is also central to the aims of the programme. It was noted that knowledge of children's transitional stages, as well as practical skills such as managing emotions, related directly to the content of the programme, and would therefore be important to capture.

We therefore recommend including items from the [Brief Parental Self-Efficacy Scale](#) in the same 'pre/post' survey to measure changes in recipients' knowledge and skills in this area (Annex B). This is a five-item survey which, added to questions on inter-family conflict detailed above, results in a survey which we feel is a manageable length for recipients to complete. Scoring can be done easily by hand to provide an overall score of Parental Self-Efficacy between 1 and 5, where 5 indicates a higher score.

While the reliability of this measure has not been comprehensively assessed, we consider it suitable for use based on its brevity and on the suitability of the focus of the survey items.

Other data to collect:

- *As part of the qualitative data collection (see 'other data' section below), you might want to include semi-structured interviews with a small number of recipients at the end of the programme, to get a fuller idea of the 'distance travelled' over the 10 weeks. Preferably the recipients would be selected randomly to understand the range of responses.*

EQ3: Knowledge of Child Development

While recipients' own view of changes in their knowledge is a subjective measure, we agreed that it was important to include a survey question to get an indication of changes in this given how central it is to the aims of the programme. We recommend including a question in the second survey to capture recipients' perception of changes in this area:

- To what extent do you agree that your knowledge and understanding of child development has improved as a result of attending the Fathers Group?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree



EQ4-6: Parenting Involvement and Caring Responsibilities

In addition to the survey items, you indicated that it was important to get an indication of whether attendance of the programme influences the recipients' involvement with their children and their level of caring responsibility.

For these measures, we recommend recording information about each of the recipients at three time-points: at the end of the programme; and six and twelve months after the end of the programme. These measures might be:

- Which of the following best describes the recipients' level of involvement with their child/children?
 - a) No contact
 - b) Contact 1-2 times a year
 - c) Contact every few months
 - d) Contact 1-2 times a month
 - e) Contact weekly
 - f) Child lives with recipient some of the time
 - g) Child lives with recipient most / all of the time

- Does the recipient have either full or joint caring responsibilities?

This would be recorded as a binary measure - 'yes' if the father has either full or joint caring responsibility, and 'no' otherwise. You indicated that this information should not be too difficult to collate, and that administrative support could be used for this.

- Does the recipient have parental responsibility for their child/children?

Again, this would be recorded as a binary measure - 'yes' if the father has parental responsibility, and 'no' otherwise.

As noted above, in the absence of a suitable comparison group and with relatively small numbers of recipients passing through the programme, these measures would provide evidence of promise rather than evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention.

EQ7: Level of Social Care Involvement

You also noted that you have had strong indications that engagement with the programme has led in some cases to a reduction in the level of a child's social care involvement, and therefore the importance organisationally of recording this information as part of the evaluation of the intervention.

As the level of social care involvement amongst the families of recipients of the programme is quite varied, we suggest recording a simple binary 'reduction of involvement' indicator for each family six and twelve months after the end of the programme. The 'level' of social care involvement might be defined as:

- Child is Looked After - either by LA, or separate arrangement such as SGO.



- Family has had / will have a Public Law Outline Meeting
- Child has a Child Protection Plan
- Child has a Child In Need Plan
- Family working with/open to Early Help team (if applicable)
- Child does not have an active case in either Children's Social Care or Early Help.

A case would be recorded as a 'reduction' if the child was moved from a CP to a CIN plan, or from having a CIN plan to Early Help for example.

To provide a fuller picture of the outcomes of the families for this measure, we also recommend recording increases in Social Care involvement.

Implementation and Process Evaluation

As well as the quantitative outcomes listed above, it is also important to gather qualitative information to help you get a richer picture of how different elements of the intervention, including the onboarding and end-of-programme processes are working. We would recommend this is done via a small number (4-6) of semi-structured interviews with recipients focusing on the following topics:

- **Effectiveness of different parts of the programme;** was there any content that was particularly helpful or less helpful? Did the recipients find the supplementary material (e.g. videos) helpful? Are there any ways they could think of that the programme or individual elements could be improved?
- **Delivery of content;** how did recipients find the delivery in the weekly sessions, and how did they find the structure of the meetings?
- **Support;** do the recipients feel they have been well-supported by services in the borough to get more access to their child? Do they feel less isolated and more engaged in the processes around Children's Services, if their family is involved in these?
- **Onboarding;** was there anything that could have been done differently to make signing up to the programme more appealing? Do the calls / drop-in / home visits appear to be particularly effective for producing this initial engagement?
- **Post-programme;** do the recipients feel like they have enough support or guidance after the end of the programme? Would they value the facilitation of some peer group support from others in their cohort?

Interviews (4-6) with contacts at referring organisations. This is primarily Social Care, but interviews with referrers (in Early Help, Schools, Mental Health Services, Family Nurse Partnerships, Children's centres, mentoring services) might also help to understand whether that process is working as intended, or whether it could be made more efficient or reach suitable recipients more efficiently:

- **Identification of potential recipients;** How well known is the programme within the referring organisation? Do they feel there are more cases which might have



benefitted from referral? Did the intervention take place at the right time? Do you feel confident discussing the service with fathers? Did you discuss the referral with others in the family/partner? Was it easy to refer?

- **Case discussions;** What do they think of the meetings with the programme leader to discuss referrals? Do they feel all the relevant information is passed on? Are there any ways the meetings could be improved? Did you feel involved with the work the service was doing? How did the service communicate with you? Were the children engaged in the work? Did you feel that the service managed risk appropriately?
- **Recipient engagement;** how do they view the current engagement process conducted by the Family Early Help team at Southwark? Are there ways in which they feel this might be improved? Are there any fathers you referred who didn't engage with the programme? Why?

Sample

Your sample - who you want to collect data about - should consist of as many of the recipients of the programme as possible, and ideally all of them. For survey data, we recommend collecting responses in person at the first meeting, and then again at the last meeting for the follow-up. It should be noted that survey completion rates will depend somewhat on attendance of the meetings and responsiveness and availability to follow-up enquiries, so it may not be possible to successfully collect data from all participants given the resources available.

For administrative data, for social care involvement every child in a family that receives will be included in our sample. For caring responsibilities, every parent who receives the intervention will be included in our sample.

Other Data you May Want to Consider Collecting

Additional data monitoring

In addition to the additional data collection we recommend in the sections above, it could also be good to capture other data systematically, to help you monitor your intervention over time and be able to communicate key information to internal stakeholders. For example:

- Number of fathers worked with
- Number of referrals from different organisations / agencies
- Average attendance of programme and completion rate

We would be happy to advise on methods that could be employed to help you do this.

Omissions

Transitional Stages

You also mentioned that fathers' knowledge of childrens' transitional stages is something you hoped would be improved by the programme. Although the measures in the pre/post survey on Parental skills don't include any questions that explicitly address this, we expect that



increased knowledge of these stages and of child development in general would be reflected in their responses to these questions.

However, if you were particularly interested in understanding whether there have been any improvements in recipients' knowledge about the content of the programme in particular, you might consider adding a small number of questions into the survey - we would be happy to provide support for this.

Data Collection Schedule

You noted that you anticipate running the programme with three cohorts of 10-15 fathers over the course of 12 months. While this is a relatively small sample size, there is a balance to be struck with concluding the evaluation within a reasonable time period. We therefore recommend that you include in the evaluation recipients from as many cohorts as start the programme between January and December 2021, allowing for reporting of findings in Spring 2022.

The table below outlines the data collection points for each measure for each cohort.

Evaluation Question (data collection method)	Pre (ranges from start date of programme to 2 weeks into the programme)	Post (end of programme)	6 month follow up (6 months after end of programme)	12 month follow up
Family therapeutic change (SCORE-15) (survey)				
Parental self-efficacy (survey)				
Knowledge of child development (survey)				
Parenting Involvement and Caring				



responsibilities measures (calls by admin support)				
Level of social care involvement (admin data)				
Implementation and Process Evaluation				

Contingency Plan for Evaluation of Virtual Groups

We discussed the challenges of conducting the evaluation given the uncertainty around whether groups could be held in person in the coming months. You said that you anticipated being able to hold meetings in person from January next year, but that there should be a contingency plan should the situation change.

Our suggestion is to collect administrative data (EQs 4-7) for any virtual groups taking place between now and January. If you had capacity to do so, you might also capture this data from the group who have recently finished their programme. Doing this will help you to build experience in collating this kind of information and recording it in spreadsheets, and to iron out any problems with this process before January. This data might then be included in the final evaluation should 2021 cohorts also be run virtually, giving us a larger sample size, or could be compared to the outcomes of the 'in-person' groups if the intervention returns to its previous format.

We suggest that you don't collect the survey data prior to the start of the evaluation period in January, mainly due to the challenges we would anticipate in trying to do this remotely. However, should the groups remain virtual in January we should consider ways to collect this information.

Were groups to run virtually throughout next year, we would also suggest focussing on this element of the programme delivery in the Implementation and Process Evaluation, to understand how recipients found attending the group virtually, whether anything was lost in their experience because of this (such as camaraderie with other attendees for example).



Annex A: SCORE-15 Survey

Describing your family Date.....

We would like you to tell us about how you see your family at the moment. So we are asking for YOUR view of your family.

When people say 'your family' they often mean the people who live in your house. **But we want you to choose who you want to count as the family you are going to describe.**

For each item, make your choice by putting in just one of the boxes numbered 1 to 5. If a statement was "We are always fighting each other" and you felt this was not especially true of your family, you would put a tick in box 4 for "Describes us: not well".

Do not think for too long about any question, but do try to tick one of the boxes for each question.

For each line, would you say <u>this describes our family</u> :	1. Describes us: Very well	2. Describes us: Well	3. Describes us: Partly	4. Describes us: Not well	5. Describes us: Not at all
1) In my family we talk to each other about things which matter to us					
2) People often don't tell each other the truth in my family					
3) Each of us gets listened to in our family					
4) It feels risky to disagree in our family					
5) We find it hard to deal with everyday problems					
6) We trust each other					
7) It feels miserable in our family					
8) When people in my family get angry they ignore each other on purpose					
9) We seem to go from one crisis to another in my family					
10) When one of us is upset they get looked after within the family					
11) Things always seem to go wrong for my family					
12) People in the family are nasty to each other					
13) People in my family interfere too much in each other's lives					
14) In my family we blame each other when things go wrong					
15) We are good at finding new ways to deal with things that are difficult					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.



Annex B

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1 Even though I may not always manage it, I know what I need to do with my child	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2 I am able to do the things that will improve my child's behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3 I can make an important difference to my child	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
4 In most situations I know what I should do to ensure my child behaves	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5 The things I do make a difference to my child's behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5