



The AdOpt Parenting Programme Evaluation Summary

Background

This summary highlights primary findings from an evaluation of the AdOpt parenting programme, implemented by the National Implementation Service (NIS). AdOpt is a group-based parenting programme specifically designed for adoptive parents to help promote parenting techniques and supports aimed at helping parents understand and respond to the often-complex needs of their adopted children. The programme is theoretically underpinned by research in the areas of neuroscience and developmental psychology, and is suitable for adoptive parents of children aged between 3 – 8 years, both pre- and post-adoption.

Aim

The core objective of the evaluation was to examine the efficacy of the AdOpt programme relative to targeted outcomes (see Evaluation details below), working in partnership with the NIS. The full evaluation engaged a new cohort of AdOpt programme participants (across 7 Local Authorities (LAs) in England) and also utilised existing pilot data previously collected by the NIS.

Evaluation

The evaluation team employed 3 main strategies to examine the efficacy of the AdOpt programme:

- Examination of programme impacts on primary outcomes using pre-post programme assessments (employing quantitative and qualitative methodologies);
- Comparison of the AdOpt evaluation and AdOpt pilot samples on primary outcome measures;
- Examination of the viability of engaging comparative data from LAs linked to other relevant programmes where evaluations have been completed in order to facilitate possible cost benefit (costs avoided) analysis.

Primary outcome-based assessments focused on examining the efficacy of the AdOpt programme relative to improved parenting competencies, parenting satisfaction and confidence, as well as child emotional and behavioural outcomes pre- and post-programme implementation (up to one month post completion). The evaluation team also examined programme facilitators' experiences of programme delivery, parents' overall satisfaction with the programme, evidence of any long-term/sustained effects on outcomes, as well as possible examination of the cost-effectiveness of the AdOpt parenting programme compared to services as usual.

Findings

Data for the AdOpt evaluation project were collected from parents of 101 children. There was a ~10% drop out rate across the evaluation project period primarily due to placement disruption, inability to arrange child care at the time of the group sessions, or the timing of the course not being suitable. Full analysis was conducted on a sample of parents of 91 index children, with the following primary summary results:

- The AdOpt parenting programme was effective in reducing total problems and conduct problems as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), but not emotional problems, hyperactivity problems, peer problems, or prosocial behaviour;

- Pre-post-test comparisons demonstrated improvements in parenting, specifically parents' sense of competency, parental monitoring capacity and satisfaction;
- Interviews and focus groups with 36 parents evidenced that the AdOpt programme had positive effects on child outcomes and parenting practices as well as parenting satisfaction. Adoptive parents also reported that they felt increasingly supported, more connected to others, less isolated, and reported their experiences as adoptive parents as being more 'normalised' and understood by themselves, as well as promoting continued programme participation and reducing adoption-based challenges;
- Focus groups with facilitators suggested that training in, and implementation of the AdOpt programme promoted a high sense of job satisfaction and highlighted that the skills gained from training were especially useful for working with adoptive families, and could be used in other areas of their work.

Cost benefits

- Cost-benefit analysis of the AdOpt programme could not be adequately conducted due to limited information made available from LAs. Of those LAs who returned questionnaires, specifically designed by the evaluation team to facilitate cost-benefit evaluation/analysis, the majority reported difficulties reliably reporting relevant costs associated with delivering the programme (relative to other programmes).
- Manchester and Leeds each estimated the cost of the programme's first delivery as £1995.00 plus VAT. Leeds provided estimated costs of subsequent delivery to be £1000 as part of a matched funded agency contract. However, there were alternative services being used within each LA, limiting attribution.
- This is an area that requires further evaluation.

Recommendations

- The AdOpt parenting programme is novel among adoption-focused parent support programmes in that the focus of support is post legal-Order. Post legal-Order support represents a period of significant importance for parents, children and families and merits continued programme development and investment. Findings from this evaluation highlight the efficacy of the AdOpt programme relative to specific targeted outcomes, adding evidence to support the case for continued investment and programme development.
- The AdOpt parenting programme is one of a very small number of programmes in the UK specifically aimed at adoptive parents and children that employs a rigorous theoretical evidence base aimed at promoting positive synergies between parents and adoptive children. It is recommended that programmes targeting family process influences on children employ a clear theoretical framework that permit associated logic models and theories of change to be articulated and robustly evaluated. The AdOpt programme represents a 'model of good practice', with a specific focus on the needs of adoptive parents, children and families.
- Based on primary findings from this evaluation, it is recommended that consideration be given to additional follow-up assessment of programme participants to examine and evaluate the long-term effects of the AdOpt programme relative to targeted outcomes.
- It is recommended that continued engagement with, and analysis of LA data regarding programme implementation costs relative to targeted outcomes is pursued to allow cost benefit/costs avoided analysis.

Changes made in services in response to evaluation findings

- The NIS is presently reviewing core evaluation findings with a view to maximising future AdOpt programme impacts for parents, children and facilitators.
- The NIS is implementing systematised data collection and recording strategies with a view to future programme implementation and long-term (longitudinal) follow-up of outcomes.
- Steps are being pursued to facilitate cost-benefit (avoided) evaluation of the outcomes.

The DFE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme funded this project and its independent evaluation. Co-ordination of the evaluation was undertaken by the Rees Centre from the University of Oxford

(www.reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk.) A full copy of this report can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications