

Small Scale Research & Impact (SSRI) form

Trainee(s)	Supervisor(s)	Placement	Cohort	Date Completed
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Research background and context

Attachment difficulties are common within the Looked After Children (LAC) population (Hughes, 2011). In common with similar services across the UK, the LAC service in Derbyshire receives a high volume of referrals for attachment difficulties. In response to the local need, the service offers regular group-based intervention on attachment difficulties for foster carers. The Attachment Group was developed by this service based on Kim Golding's 18 week nurturing attachment group (Golding, 2013). It is a course for parents of adopted children and foster carers.

The LAC service's group consisted of between four and eight people, and was delivered once a week from 10am to 1pm (three hours) for seven weeks. The content was presented via slides, group and individual discussions/exercises and video. Handouts accompanied each session. Evaluation measures for overall stress (SDQ); carer's self-efficacy in managing their children's difficulties (BPSES); the understanding, confidence, stability and level of reported reward the parent experiences with their child (Carer's Questionnaire); and progression towards personalised goals were completed pre- and post-group, and followed by face-to-face reviews with all attendees approximately three weeks later. It was considered important by the service to demonstrate the effectiveness of the group programme at a local level.

Research aims

Clinicians in the service were keen to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the attachment group, and to subsequently adapt/develop the programme on the basis of feedback. In response to this, the trainee examined data to evaluate both effectiveness and service-user acceptability.

What the research discovered

Fifty-two participants completed the attachment group between June 2016 and October 2017. Twenty-nine participants attended but did not complete the group (i.e. did not complete 5 out of 7 sessions or the outcome measures). However, no data on individuals who did not accept a place on the course was available. The reasons for drop-out and non-attendance would be useful to explore in further detail.

Changes in the outcome measures (SDQ and BPSES scores) indicated an overall reduction in overall stress, an improvement in participants' belief (self-efficacy) to manage their children's difficulties, and a progression towards their individual goals pre- to post-intervention. No statistical change was observed on the Carer's Questionnaire probably as a result of the high levels of variation in individual scores; however, there was an improvement in the mean scores pre- to post- intervention.

Group participants expressed general satisfaction with their experience of the group, and the facilitators. All aspects of the course received excellent aggregate rating relevant to the area assessed which were supported by qualitative responses within the feedback.

However, qualitative feedback also identified ways in which the programme could be improved. A number of participants wanted increased information in relation to engaging teenagers, increased flexibility about the timing of the sessions and its availability earlier in their parenting careers, and how missed sessions were addressed and information recapped. It also highlighted that levels of understanding and application were not explicitly measured and some participants demonstrated confusion or misunderstanding around some presented information.

How the findings will be disseminated

The findings of the current evaluation are to be disseminated within the clinical team and during the next clinical commissioning meeting.

Service impact achieved by the research and future plans

The evaluation indicated that the group should continue to run as a central aspect of the service (based on the qualitative feedback and the positive [but variable magnitude] of observed changes). Furthermore, feedback suggested a need to consider inclusion of a wider range of participants e.g. social workers, supervising social workers and those individuals entering foster caring roles. Feedback suggested that some consideration should be taken in relation to evaluation of the actual level of understanding. It may also be beneficial to compare understanding between the group and individualised psychotherapy to ensure efficiency of the group. These considerations will be discussed and actioned appropriately. Consequently, any changes will be implemented and monitored to evaluate impacts on service-user satisfaction and associated therapeutic gains.

Furthermore, future evaluation will be improved by:

- Collation of longer-term follow-up data from outcome measures, to gauge post-group maintenance of gains.
- Consideration of the most effective way to collect and store data for evaluation purposes, to prevent the data loss and make analyses more efficient.
- Collection of data in relation to drop-out and non-attendance rates to evaluate any factors which may be contributing to the observed high rates.
- Consideration of methods of evaluation to ensure effective measurement of the change demonstrated within qualitative feedback.

Finally, the service aims to calculate the local-level cost-effectiveness of the attachment group to better gauge whether the group provides a resource-efficient way of providing psycho-education to the LAC population.

Trainee's Signature:



Date:

19/10/18

Research Commissioner's Signature:
(e.g., supervisor, course member)



Date:

19/10/18