

LAY SUMMARY

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AIM:

We aim to assess whether parents who are offered a 13-week group-based parenting programme will feel better in themselves, feel less stressed and generally more able to cope with looking after their families. We will also assess if the programme has any effect on children's behaviour.

BACKGROUND:

Childhood is an important stage of life which has long lasting effects into adulthood. Unfortunately many children in modern society experience emotional and behavioural problems which can lead to problems within their family, school and local communities. If these are not dealt with early on, they can get much worse and cause major difficulties for all those involved. Several parenting programmes have been developed and been shown to be helpful to parents and children. However most of these have focused on families with pre-school children, and children with very severe behaviour problems, and have not included many families from Black and ethnic minority groups, and those living in poverty. For over 10 years the Race Equality Foundation, a charity working to promote race equality in the UK, has been organising group-based parenting programmes for families with older children, particularly from minority ethnic communities and those living in poverty. This programme called *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities* has had major success in engaging with these communities across many parts of the country. Although very popular with the families involved, the programme has not yet been fully assessed to show if it is effective in achieving its goals. The Race Equality Foundation are very keen to address this gap in knowledge and have therefore initiated this study.

#### DESIGN:

Across 7 urban areas of England where ethnically and socially mixed communities live, the parenting programme will be offered to families who either decide themselves that they need help or families referred by professionals for help. 676 parents agreeing to take part in the study will be randomly allocated (like flipping a coin) to either immediately starting the programme or having to wait for a 10- month period before starting it. All the parents agreeing to take part in the study will be interviewed by phone at the start, after the programme has been completed and then 6 months later. A smaller number of parents and staff involved in delivering the programme will be interviewed about their views and experiences of it.

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

Parenting is a potentially sensitive and stressful issue. It is therefore vitally important that the public are fully involved in a study which aims to assess the potential value of a parenting programme. KM, a parent and former participant in the programme has agreed to be a co-applicant to assist the team in planning and conducting the study, to ensure parents' concerns and needs are considered. In addition, 3 parent forums comprising 8-12 parents will be established to provide additional input into all aspects of the study.

#### DISSEMINATION:

Given the current high level of research, policy and media interest into the best ways of providing parenting support to families in need, the findings of this study are likely to get a high level of attention. The team will therefore take great care in ensuring that all interested parties including the families involved in the study and their local communities are given information about the results. The PPI co-applicant and parent forums will assist with the dissemination.