

Title

Early Years FAIAR for the Future: An Attachment Based Parenting Programme for Secondary Schools

What did we ask? (Research Questions)

- How effective is the Early Years Framework of Assessment and Intervention for Attachment and Resilience (EY FAIAR) for the Future Programme in improving pupils' understanding and knowledge about parenting and attachment?
- How effective is the EY FAIAR for the Future Programme in improving pupils' understanding and knowledge of how to interact and bond with babies and young children?
- Was there a positive change in pupils' attitudes and confidence towards parenthood following the programme?
- Does EY FAIAR for the Future help address issues relating to closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

What is the evidence base? (link to your definition of the poverty gap)

The Poverty Related Attainment Gap

In Scotland, children and young people living in poverty face attainment challenges (Scottish Parliament, 2018) and increased risk of health and wellbeing difficulties (NHS Scotland, 2017a). The poverty gap demonstrates the inequality of educational attainment between the richest and poorest households in Scotland (Scottish Parliament, 2018).

Despite being born into poverty, studies have shown that children with one committed parent/caregiver tended to overcome this adversity and thrive (NHS Scotland, 2017b) suggesting that initial secure attachment with a parent/caregiver has implications for mitigating the adverse impact of poverty.

Attachment, Resilience and Attainment

Developing an attachment with a primary caregiver is crucial for a child's development (Bowlby, 1969) and it has been shown that securely attached children display greater cognitive abilities compared to those with an insecure attachment (West, Matthews, and Kerns, 2012). Research also suggests that secure attachment is positively related to

attainment levels in secondary school (Feldman et al, 1998).

Further evidence suggests that there is a link between attachment and resilience and that positive parental attachment promotes childhood resilience (Conger and Conger, 2002). Werner and Smith (1982) described resilience as “The capacity of individuals to cope effectively with internal ... and external stresses”, and found that resilience in childhood has predicted successful outcomes later on in life (Werner and Smith, 1982).

Early intervention and EY FAIAR for the Future

Early intervention, such as educating parents on child development, has been shown to be an effective way to ensure healthy childhood development by promoting both social skills and emotional wellbeing (Newman, 2017).

Early Years FAIAR for the Future aims to provide intervention at the earliest level by educating young people on child development and the skills necessary to develop a secure attachment and instil resilience in their future children. The programme is grounded in Attachment Theory and Resilience Models with importance being placed on interacting and bonding with babies and young children.

Through targeting the programme at significantly deprived young people, it is anticipated that this will improve the outcomes for Scottish children born into poverty. As these young people become parents, we would hope that they become good attachment figures for their children and this in turn will support the future generation to overcome poverty related attainment. Furthermore it is hoped that the programme would also add to the understanding of the young people if they eventually work in a child care setting.

What did we do?

The Early Year FAIAR for the Future Programme was delivered to a class of 4th year pupils within a large mainstream secondary school which falls within SIMD 1. It was delivered on a weekly basis over 12 weeks by a senior educational psychologist and a depute head teacher with input from a pupil support teacher. The programme covered five themes of attachment taken from the Early Years FAIAR Programme with two sessions dedicated to each theme: Safety and Comfort; Love and Affection; Respect and Appreciation; Support and Encouragement; and Fun and Stimulation.

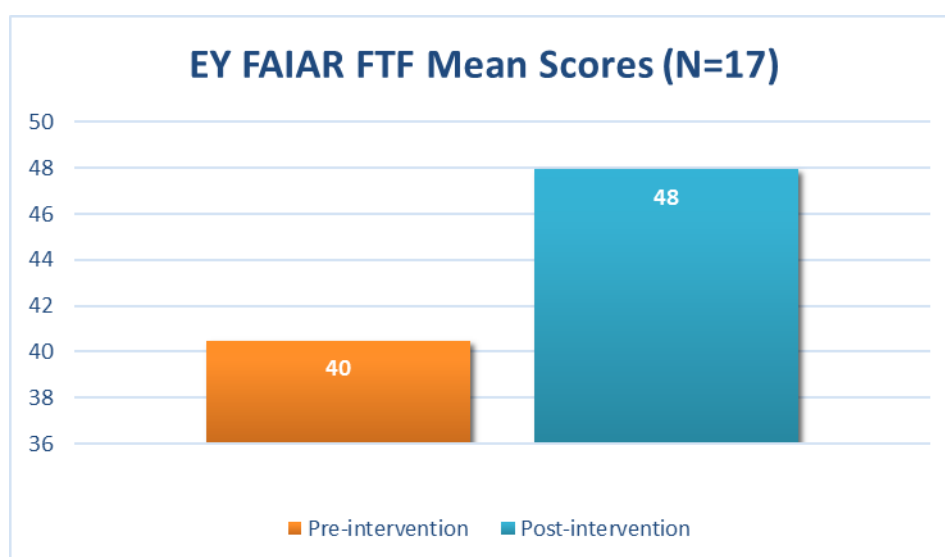
In the first session of each theme pupils were asked to reflect on their own attachment experiences and in the second they were asked to apply their knowledge and understanding to future parenthood. There was an introductory session providing an overview of attachment theory and a final session to reflect on the overall programme. There was a plan in place to provide support should any part of the programme prove distressing for pupils.

Baseline assessments were carried out via questionnaire to assess pupil's knowledge and understanding of parenting and attachment and pupils' attitudes and confidence towards parenthood. Pupils were then re-assessed at the end of the programme using the same questionnaire. Additional qualitative data was gathered through focus groups with pupils post

participation in the programme.

What have we found?

Twenty-six pupils completed the EY FAIAR for the Future Programme. Pupils were asked to respond to a series of scaling questions to determine their: confidence in their own knowledge of parenting skills/qualities; views regarding their interaction/bonding skills with babies/young children; and views regarding their understanding/knowledge about parenting and attachment. Seventeen pupils' self-reported responses were available pre and post-intervention. The pre and post-intervention mean scores are displayed below:



A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pupils' pre and post-intervention mean scores. The mean score post-intervention ($M = 48$, $SD = 5.1$) was significantly higher than the pre-intervention score ($M = 40$, $SD = 6.3$), $t(16) = -4.63$, $p < .001$. Cohen's $d = 1.12$, indicating a large effect size.

Upon completion of the programme, 24 pupils were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement: *The EY FAIAR Programme has increased my knowledge of attachment and resilience*. Sixty seven percent of pupils agreed with this statement. Eight indicated that they were "not sure". No one disagreed with this statement.

Overall, findings from the research showed that pupils reported an increase in confidence in their knowledge of parenting skills and understanding and knowledge of attachment theory and interaction and bonding with young children. The large effect size indicates that the "treatment" (EY FAIAR programme) had a strong effect on the current samples pre to post-intervention scores. This suggests that EY FAIAR for the Future contributes to understanding of attachment theory and parenting within the context of the targeted

demographic. Moving forward it is hoped that the delivery of EY FAIAR for the Future can contribute to closing the poverty related attainment gap for the most deprived 10% in Scotland by breaking intergenerational cycles of parenting and care giving practice.

What do we plan to do next?

Following the pilot, a working group was established to look at the evaluations and revise aspects of the programme to better fit within a secondary school curriculum. This resulted in the programme being reduced to 7 sessions.

A second pilot project has been proposed to upscale the revised Early Years FAIAR for the Future Programme within the same secondary school to include all 4th year pupils. This pilot will be delivered by pupil support teachers who will all receive training in the programme prior to delivery. This pilot will be overseen and evaluated by Psychological Services.

Follow-up research and more pilot programmes are needed to determine the impact on the poverty-related attainment gap.

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