



Matt Buttery Triple P : Opening statement (check against delivery)

Joint Committee on Disability Matters Committee meeting to consider the topic ‘Consideration of Family Centred Practice and Parent Training Interventions’. 26th January 2023

Good morning. I would like to thank the Chairperson and members for inviting Triple P here today to speak to the topic of ‘*Consideration of Family Centred Practice and Parent Training Interventions*’. My name is Matt Buttery, I am the CEO of Triple P UK and Ireland. With me are Pamela Gannon a parent that has completed Triple P, Audrey Cruise, Social Care Manager, Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS), St. Helena’s Resource Centre, and Debbie Keogh, Social Care Worker, St. Helena’s Resource Centre who deliver a number of different Triple P programmes in the Finglas area. We are delighted to be here and to meet you.

[The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program](#)[®] is a multilevel suite of evidence-based interventions of increasing intensity for families with children aged up to 16 years. Each level of our system can be delivered in a range of formats including one-to-one, small groups, large groups, or self-directed online. This Triple P system of parenting and family support interventions is designed to prevent behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children. It aims to help parents develop a safe, nurturing environment, promote positive, caring family relationships, and develop effective strategies for promoting children’s development.

The programme has been developed, researched, and licensed by The University of Queensland (UQ), Australia.

Ranked by the United Nations as [the world’s most extensively researched family skills training programme](#), Triple P is backed by more than 40 years of ongoing research. Our positive parenting programmes are delivered in over 41 countries around the world, including Ireland.

Fourteen of the seventeen (82%) Triple P programmes submitted to undergo the rigorous assessment process of the [Early Intervention Foundation \(EIF\) Guidebook](#) which lists early intervention programmes that have demonstrated improved outcomes for children and young people in their research, have received a rating of 3 or more. Only programmes with level 3 evidence or higher can be categorised as “evidence-based” - that is, the programme has undergone at least one rigorous evaluation and therefore, a judgment of causality can be made. This Guidebook, and the standards of evidence, are also being used to deliver the [What Works Ireland Evidence Hub](#) - which is expected to go live this year.

Triple P has a proven track record of working in Ireland with state agencies, Tusla and the HSE, voluntary and community sectors, and schools. We have been present in Ireland since 2009. Our programmes have been rolled out all over the country including the Midlands, Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Limerick, Donegal, and other regional hubs.

More recently, we were delighted to have been the chosen as one of two positive parenting programme chosen to be delivered under the Sláintecare Healthy Community initiative.

In everything that we do as a community to improve the life-course outcomes of children, nothing is more important than the kind of parenting that they receive.

Childhood is a crucial stage of development for all young people, particularly so for children with developmental disabilities. Research shows that among parents of children with developmental disabilities, addressing critical factors (e.g. parental stress and behavioural problems) early in life can improve the parent-child relationship in the long-term.¹

¹ Mitchell, D. B., & Hauser-Cram, P. (2010). Early childhood predictors of mothers' and fathers' relationships with adolescents with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 54(6), 487–500. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2010.01268.x>

Good parent-child relationships may mediate the relationship between parental social/behavioural development, and negative parent-child relationships may be damaging to children with developmental disabilities.²



stress and particularly

Targeting these factors may drastically improve an adult with developmental disability's quality of life.

Parents of children with disabilities are often faced with the challenges of difficult parenting situations.

It is important to consider innovative means of addressing these challenges, specifically where there are cost effective, and evidenced-based approaches which can support parents of children with disabilities.

Parenting programmes have to take into account that there are children with special needs whose parents need parenting support.

[Stepping Stones Triple P](#) is designed specifically for parents of children with special needs with the aim of teaching parents how to encourage healthy behaviour and emotions in children with developmental disabilities.

The intervention provides parents with comprehensive support in managing their child's behaviour across various settings (e.g. disobedience, fighting and aggression, temper tantrums). The focus is on understanding the function of problem behaviour and teaching the child skills that can be used to replace misbehaviour.

The programme can be delivered in a range of formats with different levels of intensity.

Stepping Stones is delivered in groups, one-to-one sessions, or short low-intervention formats such as seminars. All variations of the Stepping Stones programme have been assessed by the EIF. In addition to efficacy, EIF cost ratings for these programmes also indicate that they have a medium-low cost to set up and deliver compared to similar programmes.

Evidence-based parenting programmes work; research shows that positive parenting programmes like Stepping Stones Triple P benefit families with children with developmental disability in the following ways:

- Reduces child behavioural and emotional problems^{3,4}.
- Improves parental mental health.⁵
- Reduces conflict over parenting^{6,7} and improves family functioning⁸.
- Reduces the stress and burden on parents in the longer term.⁹
- Reduced use of dysfunctional parenting practices. Error! Bookmark not defined.

So what about real lived experiences of the Stepping Stones positive parenting programme? I know you will want to hear from Pamela about her experience of the programme, but first, I would like to let you know about a case study where Australia took a public health approach to positive parenting, in particular, for parents of children with a disability.

² Lewallen, A. C., & Neece, C. L. (2015). Improved social skills in children with developmental delays after parent participation in MBSR: The role of parent-child relational factors. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(10), 3117–3129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0116-8>

³ Brian, J., Tint, A., Branson, J. C., & Pilkington, M. (2021). Effectiveness of Group Stepping Stones Positive Parenting Program for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and disruptive behaviour: Program evaluation from a large community implementation. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 26(2), 1–19.

⁴ Whittingham, K., Sanders, M., McKinlay, L., & Boyd, R. N. (2014). Interventions to reduce behavioral problems in children with cerebral palsy: An RCT. *Pediatrics (Evanston)*, 133(5), e1249–e1257. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-3620>

⁵ Ruane, A., Carr, A., Moffat, V., Finn, T., Murphy, A., O'Brien, O., Goarke, H., & O'Dwyer, R. (2019). A randomised controlled trial of the group Stepping Stones Triple P training programme for parents of children with developmental disabilities. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24(4), 728-753. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104519827622>

⁶ Roux, G., Sofronoff, K., & Sanders, M. (2013). A randomized controlled trial of group Stepping Stones Triple P: A mixed-disability trial. *Family Process*, 52(3), 411-424. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12016>

⁷ Lee, Keown, & Sanders. (2022). The effectiveness of the Stepping Stones Triple P seminars for Korean families of a child with a developmental disability. *Heliyon*, e09686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09686>

⁸ Zand, D. H., Bultas, M. W., McMillin, S. E., Halloran, D., White, T., McNamara, D., & Pierce, K. J. (2018). A pilot of a brief positive parenting program on children newly diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. *Family Process*, 57(4), 901-914. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12334>

⁹ Brian, J., Tint, A., Branson, J. C., & Pilkington, M. (2021). Effectiveness of Group Stepping Stones Positive Parenting Program for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and disruptive behaviour: Program evaluation from a large community implementation. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 26(2), 1–19.



Case study

A "population-health" approach to supporting parents of children with a disability

Between 2012 and 2017 Stepping Stones Triple P was offered free of charge to families of children with developmental disabilities aged from 2 to 12 years in three Australian states.

The programme was chosen by the government-funded research project 'Mental Health of Young People with Developmental Disabilities' because it was:

- Cost-effective to deliver
- Flexible to suit different needs of families coping with a broad range of problems
- It has been shown to work

The programme was delivered in a range of formats and at differing level of intensity.

Approximately 38% of the targeted population participated in the programme.

An evaluation of the Stepping Stones Triple P programme found that;

- Children's behaviour and parents' skills improved when they participated in a Stepping Stones programme. On all measures of negative child behaviour, a significant decrease was shown 3 months after the intervention and these gains were maintained 12 months later.
- Parenting skills improved by becoming more positive and less coercive
- Parents' stress reduced following the programme. However, reduction in parental stress was not as great in families with financial hardship.
- Participating helped families financially as they were able to take less time off work.
- Organisations and professionals adopted the programme enthusiastically.

Thank you.