

**P A R E N T S U N D E R
P R E S S U R E S T U D Y**

Spring 2013

Welcome to the second edition of the Parents Under Pressure study newsletter. Read about our parliamentary launch event and how Parents Under Pressure helped mum Emma and her young son.

Houses of Parliament launch of Parents Under Pressure UK evaluation

Professionals working with substance misuse and early intervention joined MP Graham Allen at the Houses of Parliament launch of the NSPCC's Parents Under Pressure evaluation in February. The seminar focused on the importance of the 'think family' approach to substance misuse, which combines adult treatment services with interventions designed to support the family and promote effective parenting.

Parents Under Pressure founder Professor Sharon Dawe (Griffith University) spoke about the development of the programme in Australia. Professor Jane Barlow (University of Warwick), who is leading on the evaluation of the programme in the UK with the NSPCC, talked about the quest for effective interventions to support drug and alcohol misusing families with babies.



Parents under Pressure Launch

Meet the team behind the UK evaluation of Parents Under Pressure: Chris Cuthbert (NSPCC), Jane Barlow (University of Warwick), Gwynne Rayns (NSPCC), Sukhdev Sembi (University of Warwick), Dr Paul Harnett (University of Queensland), Professor Sharon Dawe (Griffith University), Ingrid Anson (NSPCC), Richard Cotmore (NSPCC).

Parents under pressure study

Emma's* story:

Emma was referred to the NSPCC's Parents Under Pressure programme following the birth of her first child, Hamish, who was the subject of Social Services Child Protection Procedures due to having Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

Emma's dad abused alcohol when she was growing up and she started drinking when she was around 12. As an adult she drank two ciders every evening after work and would binge drink heavily at weekends. Emma (40) was in shock when the unplanned pregnancy was confirmed at 25 weeks and she had been drinking heavily. She stopped drinking on learning she was pregnant but relapsed two weeks before the birth.

Alcohol was at the centre of her life but she continued to deny the extent and seriousness of her alcohol use. After Hamish was born, Emma worked hard to change her lifestyle and stay sober. She hid a couple of one day relapses but shortly after confessed because she was full of guilt. Her PUP practitioner worked to help her understand that if she carried on drinking she could put Hamish's safety at risk and wouldn't be emotionally available to him and that their relationship and his early development could suffer.

A turning point was when Emma realised she needed Antabuse and Campral to help her manage her addiction to alcohol. She was also prescribed medication following a diagnosis of depression.

Emma's PUP practitioner encouraged her to identify clear goals to work on during the 20 weeks of home visiting. These focused on lifestyle changes and meeting Hamish's needs and included abstaining from alcohol, attending all health, social work and addiction appointments, and developing support networks by attending mother and baby groups. As well as weekly home visits the NSPCC supported Emma with regular texts and telephone calls.

Emma was filled with guilt about Hamish's diagnosis of FASD and wanted to minimise any further ill effects. Her PUP worker helped her to manage these emotions and used them to encourage Emma to make positive changes in the future rather than focusing on things she couldn't change. Emma was also encouraged to use mindfulness - combining meditation, breathing techniques and paying attention 'in the moment' to change the way she thinks, feels and acts - to bond with Hamish, and she used mindful play to maximise this bond and understand Hamish's early communication

A new health visitor assigned to Hamish said he wouldn't know that Hamish was affected by FASD because he was now meeting his developmental milestones. Emma has successfully completed the PUP programme and met the goals she set for herself, her confidence as a mum and her belief in her ability to remain sober has grown, and social work are preparing to remove Hamish's Child Protection plan.

Emma said: "Without the support of the NSPCC and other agencies I wouldn't have my baby. Parents under Pressure really helped manage my depression and anxiety and helped me build an attachment to Hamish. Without that his development would have been affected." Her partner James said Emma is a different girl, and a natural mum and the birth of Hamish and not drinking has completely changed their lives for the better.

**Names and other identifying features have been changed to protect the identity of the family.*

NB: the case study is from the NSPCC programme and is an example of the sort of change that can happen- but that the evaluation will examine the nature of impacts more broadly and if PUP is more effective than standard services.

Frequently asked Questions

Q. As a potential referrer to the study, what support can I expect from the NSPCC?

A. Parents Under Pressure practitioners can meet families with you to help explain the study and answer families' questions. The NSPCC team in Glasgow has helped support local professionals to seek fully informed consent from families in this way.

Q. How can I find out more about the study?

A. Information about the Parents Under Pressure study is available from the NSPCC (0808 500 8000, help@nspcc.org.uk) or the University of Warwick: http://warwick.ac.uk/pup_study.

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