In the Fun Theory Workshop we introduced the concept of the “fun theory: the thought that something as simple as fun is the easiest way to change people’s behaviour for the better. Be it for yourself, for the environment, or for something entirely different, the only thing that matters is that it’s change for the better.” Volkswagen.

We asked practitioners to identify barriers to implementation of parenting programmes and how they had overcome these. Through research findings we highlighted how we can engage parents in parenting programmes, and introduced some psychological theories such as the stages of change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to think about engaging parents “hearts, hands and minds”. We then asked practitioners to come up with their “fun ideas” to help recruit and retain parents.

**Barriers to implementation, recruitment and retention:**

- Time and capacity (of practitioner) due to other workload
- Relationships within community (between parents and professionals, and between families), trust and short timeframes to build relationships
- Referral issues: few families referred, poor recruitment due to limited promotion, no recruitment champion, paper work from referrers poorly filled in (limited information, wrong telephone numbers, wrong contact details), referral pathway unclear, parents don’t know what they have been referred for, referrers not having time to refer.
- Poor communication and collaboration between staff (e.g. some people not passing on information, practitioners poor understanding of what programme involved, joint first visit not always possible)
- Parents feelings (fear, frustration, denial, feeling judged, anxiety, confidentiality concerns) – can impact on them coming along on first day
- Reluctant or ambivalent parents
- Over-familiarity
- Stigma of being “targeted”
- Language used can be off putting, feel judgemental or confusing
- Anxiety about low literacy
- Difficulty finding appropriate venue (e.g. sometimes school negative connotations, environment unsuitable group delivery)
How have you overcome barriers?

Ideas to overcome these

- Support from management (e.g. protected time to plan, prepare, reflect, importance of prioritising group)
- Awareness of staff importance of protecting time – make clear to all staff why parent and group leader there (i.e. to take part in group, not deal with other issues in nursery)
- Recruiting and engaging parents helped by – existing relationships, coffee morning to raise awareness, encouraging parents to network with other parents.
- Building relationships (with both parents and professionals, network, establish good boundaries)
- Word of mouth from parents who have taken part in a previous group (show DVD of other parents or get previous parent participants along to help with recruitment, retention)
- Make parents aware of what group will involve (encourage to talk to other parents, introduce parent to environment in advance)
- Multi-agency approach and gain support from other agencies (use other professional contacts – spread the word, facilitation in local nursery, school)
- Work collaboratively (e.g. offer to do paperwork, or meet the family at least initially, highlight to professionals how much time they are spending with parents already, if they feel they don’t have the time for joint visits, keep referrer engaged and informed where appropriate)
- Reduce stigma – all children complete SDQ/screening tool, “normalise” parenting support, show DVD of other parents, use word of mouth, increase visibility of programme in community.
- Normalise it for all – promote programme holistically – to parents, staff, other agencies
- Change language used
- Organisational champion of referral system
- Identify what parents would like to change, would feel is of benefit to them
- Contact in variety of ways - letter through the door, knocking on the door, home visits, meet parents in a safe place, pre-group information get-togethers
- Individualise programme and tailor to families’ needs (e.g. listen to the needs of parent, do all that can be done to accommodate them, set goals - adjust expectations and time scales about how and when change possible, a writing buddy who then did home visits, judge how much information to give them – don’t overwhelm them)
- Providing crèche, transport, suitable venue, refreshments
Fun ideas for recruitment and retention:

- Rewards/ Lottery/ Raffle/ Prizes: Reward half-way, use stickers, give prizes such as loom bracelets with IY charm, relaxation, mini prizes (e.g. little gift, survival pack, tissues, massage), surprise rewards; Weekly raffle - big one last session; Raffle tickets for every group – the more groups parents attend, the more chance of winning; Parents vote who gets an end of group prize – use local places for prize; Get parents to pick snack for next week
- Give parents a star chart – set goals e.g. 10 stars = gift voucher (baby sitter, pampering, etc)
- Checking out parent’s birthday, child’s birthday – acknowledge on the day
- Send flowers to hospital, with weekly handouts
- Washing and ironing service
- Tea and toast on arrival
- Parents/social coffee morning for new parents due to attend
- “The FUN bus” (Families United in Nurture Bringing Us Success) – parents upstairs, crèche downstairs with soft play – funded by VW!

The winners:

- Friend nominating a friend – if friend engages, then get a prize
- Send a “fun card” to parents who were unable to attend
Promotion of Programmes – Ideas from the PoPP Team

Sick of washing hanging around the house? Bring your washing here! Save yourself time, electricity and having damp washing hanging round for days! Chuck your wash on and get it tumble dried whilst you attend the programme.

Every few weeks we host a family BBQ or lunch with other families doing the programme. Come along and have a bite to eat, chat to like minded people in the same boat as you!

We’ve teamed up with the local leisure centre to provide you with free leisure passes to the gym, pool and classes for you and the kids! All you have to do is come to at least 50% of the programme.

Fancy a free trip to the cinema for you and the kids? Every week we have brilliant raffle prizes for the best ideas parents share about how to manage their kids challenging behaviour.

Your children will be looked after by highly qualified staff on the premises whilst you attend the group. We also provide free transport and refreshments.