# PEEP in the pandemic: supporting parent learning on-line

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# Background

- A research project entitled '*Evaluating parent and practitioner views of participation in the PEEP Learning Together Programme and developing an enhanced delivery model'* is ongoing.

- Practitioners trained by the charity PEEPLE run PEEP Learning Together Programmes (PEEP-LTP) for child-with-parent groups, supporting families to develop effective evidence-based home-learning practices.

- There is evidence of parent self-reported developments in these areas.

- However, recent COVID-19 restrictions have necessitated moving from face-to-face delivery to on-line approaches. Support to develop online delivery is being offered by PEEPLE.

# Background

- Early adopters' informal evaluations reported on-line platforms accommodating larger participant groups, such as Zoom, could be effective:
  - On-line delivery allowed some parents to join groups more confidently than personal attendance
  - Travel problems are avoided.
- However:
  - There is a loss of social interaction amongst parents.
  - There is a loss of play opportunities for grouped children.
  - Following up group audio-visual sessions with phone calls to embed learning is needed at times.
  - Appropriate technology and security are problems for some families.
  - Practitioners' confidence or otherwise in using technology to communicate is varied.
- This presentation explores these issues.

# Aims & Adaptations

- The project surveyed and analysed local PEEP practitioners' views of embarking upon on-line programme delivery, and its impact on practitioners and families, to determine, share and adopt best-practice approaches.

- Due to Covid-19 restrictions the following methodological adaptations were made:
  - Online questionnaires and consent forms were used, not paper copies
  - Online interviews/telephone interviews were used, not face-to-face
  - Altered time-scales

# Methods

▶ Approx. 50 Stirling Council PEEPs practitioners were invited to complete on-line questionnaires, with some also interviewed, as part of the evaluation project.

▶ One question about online delivery was included within the questionnaire:

*PEEP groups are to be offered on-line as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please list the opportunities and challenges you anticipate in undertaking on-line delivery, and what would help you to remain confident in offering on-line delivery.*

▶ At the point of writing, 20 PEEP practitioners had responded to the questionnaire. 3 practitioners were interviewed.

▶ Parents' views will be sought after they have competed a PEEP-LTP.

# Analysis

- At the point of writing, a thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006) of one interview transcript and the responses to the open-ended survey questions was undertaken using the following procedures:

  - The interview was digitally transcribed and checked by the researcher, taking care to remove all identifying information.

  - This transcript and responses to the survey open-ended questions were uploaded into Nvivo (qualitative software).

  - In Nvivo, the data was coded independently by two researchers. The researchers compared their initial coding of each interview transcript, exploring variations in coding. Researchers then agreed a set of codes.

  - The data was then analysed further by both researchers for further coding. Coding was then compared within and between the transcripts, looking for patterns and structures, then classifying and ordering them to produce themes.

  - Themes were built to consider and represent both similarities and consensus across the data.

  - Practice is evolving, and additional themes are also likely to emerge as more data is gathered and analysis is conducted.

# Our Findings So far….

# Advantages for parents of PEEP groups being delivered online

- Benefits for parents who work from home.

- Preferable for parents who otherwise feel anxious about being in a group:

"One of the advantages is that some folk who have struggled with groups and struggled with social situations, have found it a little bit easier and hopefully we can build on that, because they felt confident within that group. So that's good, so that means that we've reached some people who might have dropped out because of their issue…" (Practitioner 1, Interview)

# Advantages for parents of PEEP groups being delivered online

- Wider reach

  - Avoiding travel.

  - Avoiding range of logistical challenges (I.e. co-ordinating group with other family commitments)..

  - Reaching parents during pandemic circumstances and potentially supporting them as their resultant needs have changed

  - Advantage for parents with disability:

"The other thing is for some people who have disabilities or have pain management and things like that that struggle to go very far or things like that, that will…do you know, they'll be able to do it in their own house, transport, it means that we could have a group where they're from five different nurseries." (Practitioner 1, interview)

# Disadvantages for parents

▶ Technical limitations:

"Some parents may not have equipment to help them access PEEP online." (Practitioner, Survey)

"Challenges would be having parents engage with the online programme or having appropriate devices and WiFi available." (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ Confidence with technology.

▶ Affordability of technology.

▶ Security concerns.

# Challenges for Practitioners

▶ Privacy, security, portal that suits everyone:

"[…] Finding a suitable space with an internet signal can be challenging, especially when you need to consider other staff members who also need to have on-line meetings etc. Privacy needs to be secure, so this needs to be a portal that is secure, but may not be what the parents use or feel comfortable with." (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ Concurrent and pandemic related practical challenges:

"May not be able to take time off floor due to staff shortages" (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ Attaining and maintaining engagement:

"Setting up the environment to keep everyone engaged could also be challenging." (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ Managing to monitor the group online.

# Challenges for Practitioners

- Sense of confidence with technology:

  "Finding a system that works for parents and getting positive feedback from parents that they were able to access the sessions easily and that these sessions were useful alongside feeling comfortable myself with using the technology will help me to become confident with online delivery." (Practitioner, Survey)

- Distractions at home making it difficult to focus.

- Implications of technology not working:

  "Practitioners' technology not working - parents then wouldn't feel confident with practitioners.  Parents' technology not working - not likely to attend again." (Practitioner, Survey)

# Security and ethical risks online

- Disinhibition effect:

"Having rules are really, really important, opening people up to…without scaring them off, the risks online, that you don't know who's on the other side of the screen. You don't know if there's somebody hiding behind a couch sort of thing. But because of that, we do have a little form that we had written up with expectations. So like, for example, on one of my groups, the woman was so comfortable that she lit up and started smoking during the session, so we had to add that in. It's just like a normal group, no energy drinks, no sort of…because we want a calm sort of space, no cigarettes, no… So there's things like that, I don't suppose that's going to come up in PEEP because they're sitting with their child, but because you have that already, we can share that with the parents beforehand. So there's, yeah, there's all sorts of things that come up with online." (Practitioner 1, Interview)

# Practitioner's suggestions for what might help to adapt PEEP to online delivery

▶ "Being shown examples of good remote practice would be helpful." (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ "[We] have put a bid in for devices for families, which may help with these issues, but we are awaiting confirmation as to whether the bid has been successful." (Practitioner, Survey)

▶ Let the children wander!

"So with the parents who took part who did have their kids, I suppose what we'll need to do is let their parents know that it's okay if the children wander off. [...] They don't need to sit constantly because they're just wee folk and that's okay. They can come back and they can wander about. Just like they would in a PEEP, we're not strict that the kids have to just sit and listen, we really encourage the parents to let them explore everything and it's fine and all of that." (Practitioner 1, Interview)

# Practitioners suggestions for what might help adapt PEEP to online delivery

▶ Building trust with support phone calls and icebreakers

"For building that trust so that they trust us to go along with it as well.  So what we're building into the trust with us is support phone calls, support phone calls to set up the digital support phone calls to talk it through and sort of… So we're hoping that we can do that.  And I suppose the first session, building in some little icebreakers, some little fun things to introduce each other." (Practitioner 1, Interview)

# Limitations online

- Topics determined more by practitioners
  - Pre-covid, topic selection for PEEP groups was driven by parents. On piloting, online groups, practitioners maintained that this would be less possible to achieve.

"[…] but the parents will be aware that if they're taking part in a pilot to try how it works out online. They'll be very much aware [that] actually what we're trying to see is how it all feels online, so any feedback from them will really help us work out…so we'll possibly just pick the topics for that. And [we'll choose] the ones that are maybe easiest to do online. Because that's a bit trickier because the children and their parents are obviously going to be sitting in front of a screen, so it's not the same as doing…making books with them or making musical instruments, it's not…" (Practitioner 1, Interview)

- Practical activities far less feasible to engage in and share

# Summarising

- As the research project had to adapt quickly and dramatically in response to the pandemic, so too have the PEEP practitioners.

- Delivering PEEP groups online:
  - Opens the provision up to a wider range of families and needs.
  - Presents another source of learning for the programme and opens up other potentials for programme development.
  - Presents logistical and technical challenges to both parents and practitioners.

- Moving forward, the research project will build on insights by:
  - Collecting data with families.
  - Identifying key strategies to enhance the impact of the PEEP programme.
  - Evaluating pilot trials of these strategies.
  - Reporting on these in Phase 2 of the project.

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