The Family Links Nurturing Programme (FLNP)
Element 1: Who is the programme for?

**PPET rating:** ★★★★★ A sufficiently specified target population and enrolment process

**Who is the programme for?**
Any parent interested in improving their relationship with their child. The content and practitioner qualifications are only suitable for parents with normal parenting concerns and not appropriate for families with more complex needs.

**How old must the children be?**
While the developers state that the programme is suitable for parents with children between the ages of nought to 18, the programme content is best suited for parents with children between the ages of four and 11.

**Classification**
- Universal
- Targeted Prevention

**Level of need**
- Low
- Moderate

**Referral and recruitment**
Families are typically recruited through school advertising, or from teachers or family support workers. Parents can also be referred through health agencies and other statutory services.

**Enrolment**
The programme developer provides resources for collecting information about family characteristics.

**Are there any eligibility requirements?**
There are no eligibility requirements.

**How are the needs of parents assessed and monitored?**
The developers recommend that when parents are referred into the programme, a needs assessment be conducted by the practitioner making the referral, in accordance with the guidelines of his or her agency. However, the developers do not provide any guidance as to how this information should be used to monitor families’ needs during the programme.

Parents can also monitor their own needs through *The Parenting Puzzle* that is given to them during the first session. *The Parenting Puzzle* helps parents set goals for themselves each week. Parents then report their progress towards these goals during the group sessions. Practitioners monitor families’ needs informally on the basis of the parents’ reports.
How are parents referred onto other services?
It is expected that the host agency will have their own guidelines about when and how to refer parents onto other services should the need arise.
Element 2: What are the content and activities of the programme?

PPET rating:  ****  *Strong theoretical framework and content with some limitations*

How is the programme delivered?
FLNP is delivered by two practitioners to groups of six to 10 parents over 10 weekly sessions. Each session lasts two hours.

Where is the programme delivered?
FLNP can be delivered in a wide range of settings, depending on the host agency and the characteristics of the parents attending the programme. It is expected that the host agency will provide food, transportation and a crèche service for parents so that they can attend all sessions.

What do parents learn during the sessions?
FLNP has two primary aims:
- To help parents and carers understand their own emotional needs
- To help parents learn positive parenting practices.

Each session promotes four ‘constructs’ thought to support the programme's aims:
- The importance of parents’ self-awareness and self-esteem
- Parents’ empathy for their children’s feelings and needs
- Appropriate expectations for children’s behaviour
- Appropriate choices and consequences to encourage positive child behaviour and discourage unwanted child behaviour.

Parents attending FLNP can also receive credits through the Open College Network. This accreditation is provided with the aim of encouraging parents to pursue further education.

What is the scientific basis for the content?
FLNP is based on social learning theory, experiential learning, cognitive behavioural theory, attachment theory, humanistic (Rogerian), ecological theory and social constructivist theory.

How does the programme work? (What is the theory of change?)
FLNP assumes that when parents have high levels of self-esteem and self-awareness, they are in a better position to respond sensitively to the needs of their child. In addition, FLNP assumes that a self-aware and self-secure parent will be more receptive to learning effective parenting behaviours.
**Short-term goals:**
In the short term it is expected that parents will:
- Be more self-confident
- Have better communication skills
- Have an improved attitude and empathy towards their child
- Be more responsive, sensitive and nurturing
- Develop appropriate expectations of themselves and their child
- Be open to discipline approaches which are fair, firm and kind
- Adopt consistent behaviour management strategies with clear boundaries
- Support their children’s self-esteem.

**Long-term goals:**
In the long term, it is expected that parents and children will experience:
- A better relationship
- Reduced risk of physical and mental health problems
- Greater responsibility for their own actions
- Increased access to social networks and services
- Reduced risk of intergenerational transfer of abuse and neglect
- Increased likelihood of further education and employment
- Reduced risk of child antisocial behaviour and substance misuse.

**How do parents learn?**
At the beginning of the course, parents are provided with *The Parenting Puzzle*, which provides an overview of the programme content and creates a framework in which parents can exchange ideas and support one another. Parents also learn through role-play exercises, group discussion, homework and DVD vignettes. The programme’s strong emphasis on parental self-awareness means that parents have fewer opportunities to practise parenting skills than they do in other courses with similar goals.

**Parental engagement:**
Practitioners use a variety of methods to keep parents engaged and motivated during the programme, including home visits, telephone calls, texts and cards. Collaborative working between parents during the sessions also helps keep parents engaged.
**Element 3: How are practitioners trained and supported?**

**PPET rating: **
Prepared for developer directed dissemination

**Practitioner qualifications:**
Both practitioners are expected to have a QCF Level 4/5 qualification, with a minimum qualification of a QCF Level 3. Practitioners are also expected to have had previous experience of working with parents and good emotional literacy skills.

**Practitioner training:**
Practitioners attend four days of training over a two-week period. The training days occur in blocks of two days, with spacing in between to allow for reflection and practice.

The training provides many opportunities for practitioners to practice presenting the material to parenting groups. However, the training does not cover the theories underpinning FLNP’s key principles.

Practitioners additionally receive a group leader manual covering the programme format and activities. The manual does not cover the theories underpinning the programme, however, nor does it describe the programme’s specific outcomes.

**Accreditation:**
Accreditation is awarded at the end of the four-day training. Practitioners must demonstrate competence with feedback from their peers and a tutor during practice sessions. Practitioners who do not demonstrate key skills are provided with a development plan and follow-up training six months later with the lead facilitator.

**Systems for maintaining fidelity and quality assurance:**
Programme fidelity is supported by the following processes:
- The programme manual, that provides step-by-step instructions about how to set-up and deliver the programme
- Joint delivery by two practitioners
- Follow-up training for issues pertaining to programme fidelity. Practitioners must sign a letter saying they agree to attend this training.

FLNP would benefit from further systems for supporting fidelity, including fidelity checklists. While the developers provide forms to help practitioners monitor their delivery, the forms do not specifically reflect programme content.
Supervision requirements:
The developers suggest that practitioners meet with their supervisors twice for 1.5 to two hours during the course of the programme. The host agency is responsible for ensuring that this supervision takes place.

FLNP recommends that supervision is provided by the local FLNP co-ordinator. It is recommended that the supervisor has a minimum QCF Level 6 qualification and be trained and accredited in the FLNP programme with experience of running at least three groups.

Practitioners are also encouraged to contact the FLNP developers directly by email or telephone if they have any questions.

Wide-scale dissemination:
Experienced practitioners can apply to become a freelance parent group leader trainer (PGLT). PGLT training involves:
• Observation of the full four-day practitioner training
• Two mentored full four-day trainings
• A final full four-day supervision training.

Implementation support:
• Host agencies receive a copy of the FLNP Quality Standard Guidance prior to sending practitioners on training
• The local commissioner and/or agency manager is invited to attend the practitioner training on the fourth day
• Regional meetings with FLNP co-ordinators also take place between two and three times a year.
Element 4: The strength of the programme’s evidence

**PPET rating: **** Preliminary evidence of effectiveness**

FLNP has *preliminary* evidence of improving child and parent outcomes through its published monitoring data, involving the use of standardised measures of parent and child behaviour completed before and after parents attend the course. The details of this study, as well as a recently completed randomised controlled trial, are described briefly below.

**Population, study design and measures**

**Study 1. Family Links Report (2012)**
This study involved the use of monitoring data routinely collected through the implementation of FLNP in England. Two hundred and sixty-three parents representing 342 children with an average age of six completed standardised measures of parent and child behaviour before attending the programme and then immediately thereafter.

**Study 2. Family Links Research Team (2011)**
This study considered the implementation of FLNP through the Flying Start programme in south Wales. One hundred and forty-three parents with children between the ages of two and four were randomly assigned to FLNP and a wait list control group. Both groups of parents completed standardised measures of parent and child behaviour before and after the programme and at a nine-month follow-up assessment. A five-minute speech sample and a videotape of the parent and child interacting at mealtime was also collected and coded at each assessment point.

**Significant outcomes**

Parents reported significant improvements in their wellbeing and their children’s behaviour.

There were no significant differences between the FLNP group and the control group on any of the measures. It should be noted, however, that the sample for this study included parents of children between the ages of two and four, when previous evaluations had considered children who were of primary school age.

**Additional research:**
FNLP routinely collects monitoring data programme outcomes as part of the ongoing delivery of the programme.

**References:**