

# Obstacles to Completion of the Strengthening Families Programme: A Service User's Perspective

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A family skills training programme is a very interesting, important and indeed complex field to carry out research in. Such programmes can have a great impact on family life. This Strengthening Families Programme (SFP) is a fourteen week family skills programme which brings together parents and their teenage children for one evening a week, with the hope to ameliorate negative behaviour patterns within the family. The programme targets problems such as disharmony between parents and their children, poor communication issues and it also hopes to target alcohol and substance mis-use by both parents and children.

## Key Questions for this study:

1. What are the obstacles for families in completing the SFP from the service user's perspective?
2. Does the programme actually strengthen families and complete its objectives?

## Findings:

The main obstacles for families engaging with SFP were found to be:

- Young people's unwillingness to engage
- A fear of the unknown
- Stigma associated with parenting programmes
- Feelings of failing as a parent
- The unknown of the SFP
- Lack of willingness of children to participate



## SFP does strengthen families.

1. Improved family communication

"It has made a big difference to my two. Home life is better now and we use the coping skills at home which really helps. We communicate more, we are able to sit at the table and eat together. We get on better. No shouting and roaring anymore. It is more relaxed. My daughter wanted to come back and do it again".

"We communicate a lot more. Years ago I used to always do family day, or our time. And they do that with the group and we get feedback. Sometimes life gets in the way. The group kind of makes you do it, it focuses on the importance of spending time with your family; Quality time".

2. Reduces problem alcohol and drug use

"It changed my life. It did change my life. You have to be open; you cannot be telling lies to yourself"  
"I go to AA three days a week now".

This study may also have significance for future social work practice as the SFP may be a tool that could be accessed by social workers and could improve family dynamics of parents and children who come into contact with social work services in a very cost effective way.

## Suggestions for future research:

How to make the parenting programme more attractive for fathers and young people to engage with.

