Delivering the Parenting a Deaf Child Course within a CI population: A Pilot Study

Caroline Gamble and Pauline Cobbold
South of England Cochlear Implant Centre

Introduction

Research has shown that deaf children may experience significantly more behavioural and emotional problems than their hearing peers (e.g., Hindley et al., 1994; Barker et al., 2009). Additionally, although there is evidence in the literature some studies have also reported higher levels of parenting stress in parents of deaf children (Quittner et al., 2010). Parents of deaf children have also been found to be more over-protective in their parenting style, and to find it more difficult to relinquish control (e.g., Knutson, 2004). Although many aspects of traditional parenting programmes would be suitable for parents of deaf children, these families also face additional challenges; the NDCS therefore developed the Parenting a Deaf Child programme and offered training for leaders. However, this programme has not yet been delivered exclusively within a CI service.

Methods

Within SOECIC, all parents of children between the ages of 2 and 6 years were invited to attend the course, providing they were not in the first 6 months of tuning. The course was delivered monthly over four Saturdays, with a half-day follow-up session 3 months later. In order to facilitate both parents being able to attend, a crèche was also provided for the children and their siblings. Topics covered in the sessions included communication; self-esteem; non-directive play; managing behaviour; sibling relationships; and parental self-care. The sessions involved some ‘teaching’ elements and some practical exercises, but the primary format of the sessions was whole group discussion and learning through participation.

The participants were the parents of 8 children between the ages of 3 and 4 years; as both parents were invited the total number of participants was 12. Due to family commitments, one parent dropped out after the first session. A Russian interpreter facilitated one family’s attendance.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the group, the parents completed questionnaire measures in the first and final sessions. The questionnaires used were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE); the Parenting Stress Index (PSI); the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC); and the Conners Early Childhood Behaviour Short Form (Conners). The parents also completed an evaluation form during the final session.

Results

Data from participants who had attended less than 50% of the course was excluded from the analysis, to ensure that any change in scores could be attributed to attending the course (n=9).

Due to the inclusive nature of recruitment, none of the mean scores on the pre-course questionnaires were clinically significant, although the mean score on the PSI was approaching clinical significance (indicating high levels of parenting stress).

Although there was a reduction in mean behaviour scores in all areas, the only significant reduction was in attention and hyperactivity problems (p<.01). There were no significant improvements in parental self-esteem or sense of competence, but there was a significant reduction in levels of parenting stress (p<.05).

Parents’ evaluations of the course were very positive, with the majority of participants reporting benefits and stating that they would recommend the course to other parents.

Conclusions

Over the course of the group, there was a significant reduction in levels of parenting stress.

Although there were only limited improvements in the children’s behaviour scores, this is likely to be due to the fact that there were no clinically significant behaviour problems prior to the course, and therefore a significant improvement would not be expected.

In addition to an overall reduction in stress, the course was received extremely positively by the parents.

Would you recommend this course to another parent/carer?

![Recommended](image)

Has this course improved your sense of confidence?

![Not at all… A great deal](image)

It helped me to reflect on my parenting skills.....

I am more consistent in my approach to managing my son’s behaviour and he is responding better to the consistent...

References


Email: pc@isvr.soton.ac.uk or c.gamble@nhs.net