

Report of the Executive Director for People and Neighbourhoods

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) Stockport

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This summary report marks the 6th anniversary of the Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) programme in Stockport. EPEC is an excellent example of developing community power as part of our ambitions for Stockport Live Well, our neighbourhoods and prevention programme. It highlights key achievements and progress over the past six years. The full impact report will be available in June 2025.

2. Background

- 2.1 EPEC is an evidence-based parenting programme that equips local volunteer Parent Group Leaders (PGLs) to lead parenting groups within their community. By valuing peer-to-peer support and strengthening community connections, EPEC addresses daily parenting challenges and promotes positive family outcomes. Parents learn positive parenting skills to better understand children's feelings, value effective communication, and build resilient family relationships.
- 2.2 EPEC courses are supported by a robust evidence base, developed by parenting specialists at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, academics at King's College London, and co-produced with parents. EPEC offers a cost-effective, community-centred solution that complements existing parenting support services by training local parents as PGLs, creating a sustainable network of peer-led support.

3. EPEC Unique Selling Points

- 3.1 **Peer-Led:** Our peer-led courses create a welcoming, non-judgmental environment where parents feel supported by facilitators with similar experiences. This approach values lived experience, shifts the power balance, and empowers parents to learn from each other, reducing isolation and building community.
- 3.2 **Universal:** Open to all Stockport-based parents and carers, our courses do not require professional referrals (except Being a Parent (BAP) Autism). This inclusive approach, combined with face-to-face and digital delivery, attracts a diverse mix of parents, enriching discussions and fostering empowerment. Partnerships with Yaran Northwest and Stockport Race Equality Partnership enhance support for global majority families.
- 3.3 **Evidence-Based:** EPEC courses are grounded in evidence-based research and evaluated with routine outcome measures, ensuring proven strategies and better outcomes for parents. This builds trust, measures progress and adapts to evolving needs.

- 3.4 **Cost-Effective:** Our PGL volunteers play a crucial role in co-facilitating courses, which helps manage costs effectively. We support our volunteers by reimbursing expenses such as travel, childcare, and lunch during training. This investment ensures our volunteers feel valued, and effective engagement and sustainability of the programme.
- 3.5 **Builds Community Capacity:** EPEC enhances community capacity by developing skills, knowledge, and relationships. PGLs take on leadership roles, strengthening social capital and resilience. The programme's impact extends to both parents and PGL volunteers, fostering personal and professional growth, and leading to long-term behaviour changes and cost savings.

4. Local Strategic Context

- 4.1 EPEC is now a vital part of Stockport's Family Hubs, providing cohesive, non-stigmatising, and accessible support for families. Its peer-led approach aligns with the Family Hubs' vision, offering relatable and transformative support to parents and carers.
- 4.2 As a key component of the Start Well strategy, EPEC promotes parental engagement, positive parent-child interaction, and a supportive home learning environment to enhance school readiness. It also strengthens Stockport's Early Help strategy by building the confidence and economic wellbeing of families from early years onwards.
- 4.3 Additionally, EPEC supports the Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027, aiming to give families the help they need, ensure children have the best start in life, and enable young people to achieve their full potential. EPEC fosters parental engagement and positive family dynamics, contributing directly to these goals.
- 4.4 The Stockport EPEC Hub has expanded its reach, offering a range of courses for families with children from infancy to adolescence. EPEC aligns with Stockport's Council Plan 2024-2027, focusing on investment, regeneration, education, work, skills, and wellbeing in neighbourhoods. By supporting parents and building community capacity, EPEC enhances the overall quality of life in Stockport.
- 4.5 EPEC also builds community capacity by fostering strong social networks, empowering parents, and enhancing community resilience. Its holistic approach leads to long-term positive outcomes in health, education, and employment for families and the community.

5. EPEC Stockport

- 5.1 Since its establishment in May 2018, the Stockport EPEC Hub has played a vital role in supporting parents, empowering them with the skills and confidence to make meaningful changes in their parenting approaches, enriching the lives of local families.
- 5.2 EPEC courses are part of Stockport's universal offer, available to all families living in Stockport. Through a mixture of courses and workshops, delivered both online and face-to-face, these courses help parents cultivate practical communication skills essential for navigating everyday challenges and nurturing confident, happy, and cooperative children.

5.3 EPEC and its 'Marketplace' sessions also provide valuable opportunities for parents to connect with local services and community organisations within the Family Hub network. This includes partners such as DWP, Continuing Education, Locala, Mosaic, and Digiknow.

5.4 Feedback from the National EPEC Hub, parents who have attended courses, and PGLs further highlights the programme's effectiveness and the value of peer-led support. (For full feedback, see Appendix A.)

5.5 Overview of EPEC Stockport Courses:

- **EPEC Baby and Us:** Supporting parents in the earliest stages of their journey, promoting secure attachment and confidence.
- **Being a Parent:** Empowering parents of children aged 2-11 years with practical strategies to navigate everyday challenges while enhancing family relationships.
- **Living with Teenagers:** Equipping parents to build stronger connections and manage the complexities of the teenage years.
- **Being a Parent Together:** Focused on co-parenting strategies, ensuring collaborative and harmonious parenting partnerships.
- **Being a Parent - Autism:** Tailored support for families navigating the unique joys and challenges of parenting a child with autism.
- **Parent Group Leader Training:** Building community capacity by training local parents to lead and deliver our impactful courses.

5.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

The EPEC Hub utilises outcome and quality measures recommended by the National EPEC team. Parent evaluation data, including demographics, is securely collected in Qualtrics with consent, in compliance with GDPR. Weekly evaluations provide ongoing parent feedback to inform planning.

The following Routine Outcome Measures (ROMs) are used before and after course delivery:

- **My Parenting Goal (MPG)**
- **Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWS)**
- **Concerns About My Child (CAMC)**
- **Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale**
- **Training Acceptability Scale (TARS)**
- **Working Well with Co-Parent – *Being a Parent Together only***
- **Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPSS) – *Being a Parent Together only***

- **Family Attitude Scale (FAS)** – Living with Teenagers only
- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)** – *Living with Teenagers only*
- **Sheffield Learning Disability Outcome Measure (SLDOM)** – *Being a Parent (Autism) only*
- **Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ)** – *PGL training only*
- **EPEC Knowledge Multiple Choice Quiz (EPEC KMCQ)** – *PGL training only*

These measures provide ongoing insights into the demographics of EPEC participants and assess the programme’s effectiveness, fidelity, and quality.

ROMs consistently show positive outcomes for parents. For example, the Parenting Scale indicates a reduction in pre- and post-course scores, suggesting improved parenting strategies implemented in the home. In certain cases, Stockport parents demonstrate greater improvement than EPEC parents nationally (see Appendix B).

Self-efficacy questionnaire results from PGL training demonstrate a significant increase in learner confidence in both parenting and group facilitation. Over 90% of parents rate the training highly.

6. Key Achievements

6.1 **Course Delivery and Engagement** - since May 2018, the Stockport EPEC Hub has delivered a total of 104 courses, with 921 parents participating, benefitting 2302 children (70% completion rate). This includes:

- **Baby and Us:** 2 courses delivered, 17 parents engaged, 11 completed.
- **Being a Parent:** 49 courses delivered, 432 parents engaged, 283 completed.
- **Living with Teenagers:** 14 courses delivered, 162 parents engaged, 98 completed.
- **Being a Parent Together:** 9 courses delivered, 91 parents engaged, 70 completed.
- **Being a Parent Together (Workshop):** 9 workshops delivered, 70 parents engaged, 66 completed.
- **Being a Parent – Autism:** 6 courses delivered, 43 parents engaged, 31 completed.
- **Parent Group Leader Training:** 15 training courses delivered, 106 parents engaged, 85 completed.

6.2 PGL Progression

Since launching, we have trained a total of 85 Parent Group Leaders (PGLs). Of these:

- 32 PGLs remain actively engaged with the hub, contributing by facilitating courses, supporting learning circles, networking, and helping at events.

- 13 PGLs have pursued further studies, including qualifications in childcare, learning support, and social work degree.
- 46 PGLs have continued in employment, progressed into new employment, or achieved promotions in their roles. This includes positions such as Early Help Advisor, roles in local schools, early years settings, and community organisations, as well as childminders, counsellors, and intervention workers.

Progression pathways for PGLs often overlap, with some completing training and transitioning into paid or continued employment while also maintaining their roles as active volunteers. Notably, a number of PGLs have secured roles within Stockport Family, including positions as Intervention Workers, Business Support Assistants, and our current EPEC Hub Coordinator.

6.3 Stories of Empowerment

- **Education:** S joined the PGL training in Summer 2019 after hearing about it from another parent. A stay-at-home mother of four girls, S thoroughly enjoyed the training and went on to co-facilitate several courses. Empowered by the experience, S pursued further education, completing her GCSEs and an Access to Higher Education course. She is now in her third year of a BA in Social Work at Manchester Metropolitan University, with the goal of working with families and children.
- **Employment:** H left school at 16 and was employed until the birth of her first child at 18. In early 2021, she enrolled in the Living with Teens course and subsequently completed the PGL training. Motivated to pursue a career in childcare, H completed a Level 1 Entry into Early Years course and secured employment at Ladybirds Nursery while undertaking a Level 3 apprenticeship.
- **Adversity:** B entered care at 15 due to neglect and abuse, eventually moving in with her biological father. Mental health struggles led to homelessness, but support from social services helped her recover. At 23, B became a single parent and faced additional challenges with dyslexia. In 2023, she joined the Being a Parent course, gaining confidence and progressing to PGL training. With ongoing support, B co-facilitated an EPEC course, boosting her confidence and contributing meaningfully to her community.
- **Value of Lived Experience:** Parent S completed PGL training as part of the first cohort of parent volunteers trained by the Stockport Hub in 2018. A local parent with a wealth of lived experience in parenting children with additional needs, S has been a dedicated volunteer ever since. She co-facilitated several courses and continues to be an active volunteer, highlighting the adaptability and significance of peer-to-peer support within the parenting community.

6.4 Partnership Working

- EPEC's success is built on strong partnerships that support parents, PGLs, and local organisations. Key partners, including Stockport Homes Group, Home-Start, Yaran Northwest, and early years settings, have helped embed EPEC in communities, maintain programme fidelity, and enhance supervision.

- Stockport Continuing Education is a key example, attending marketplace events to connect with parents completing EPEC courses. They offer tailored one-to-one support, helping parents access employment, education, and wellbeing resources. Many parents and PGLs have benefited from this collaboration, gaining skills and opportunities for progression. In return, Stockport Continuing Education signposts parents to EPEC courses and volunteer training, strengthening community connections and support networks.

7. Next Steps for 2025/2026

- **Full Impact Report and Celebration Event (June 2025):** This event will provide stakeholders with a comprehensive evaluation of the EPEC programme, highlighting its impact over the past six years. It will also celebrate the achievements of the Parent Group Leaders and the families who have benefited from the programme. This event aims to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of everyone involved and to share the successes and learnings from the programme.
- **Ensure Sustainable Funding:** Build strategic partnerships with organisations whose priorities align with EPEC's mission to ensure sustainable funding for continued growth and development.
- **Continue Scale and Reach:** Expand EPEC's presence across the borough to benefit more families as part of a commitment to peer led approach to community engagement.
- **Recruit Parent Volunteers:** Continue recruiting Parent Volunteers to sustain and grow the programme.
- **Develop PGL Volunteer Pathway:** Create a structured pathway for PGL volunteers with clear recruitment, training, development opportunities, and apprenticeships.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 EPEC is helping us extend our reach to marginalised and disadvantaged communities, improve cultural awareness, and strengthen relationships. By working closely with local services and community leaders, EPEC ensures that its support is accessible to all families. This includes identifying and addressing the unique needs of communities, ensuring that support is inclusive and non-stigmatising.

9.2 Additionally, EPEC collaborates with the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, leveraging their deep connections within the community to reach diverse populations effectively. As such, EPEC is now offering courses in

other languages to better support non-English speaking families, ensuring that language barriers do not prevent access to the support they need or want.

10. Legal Implications

10.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report

11. Human Resources Impact

11.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

12. Environmental Impact

12.1 There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

13. Conclusion

13.1 EPEC Stockport has made a profound impact over the past six years, empowering parents, strengthening communities, and improving outcomes for children and families. The dedication of Parent Group Leaders (PGLs) and the support of strong partnerships have been instrumental in this success. By fostering a peer-led, low-cost, inclusive, and evidence-based approach, EPEC has created a sustainable model of parenting support that resonates deeply within the community.

13.2 As we look to the future, continued investment in volunteer development, community engagement, and strategic partnerships will be crucial. Expanding our reach and enhancing our visibility will ensure that even more families and communities can benefit from EPEC's unique selling points. By ensuring sustainable funding and building on our successes, EPEC will remain a vital resource, driving positive change and fostering resilience in families across Stockport.

13.3 Working together, we will continue to build supportive, empowered communities where every parent has the tools and confidence to be a '**good enough parent**', and every child has the best possible start in life.

14. Recommendations

14.1 Children and Families Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the report.

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Appendix A: Feedback

Feedback from the EPEC National Team (December 2024)

EPEC Stockport has been part of the EPEC network since 2018 and is one of our larger hubs, with a solid, experienced team and a steady supply of volunteer Parent Group Leaders (PGLs). The team has fully embraced the ethos of the EPEC model, creating a caring and nurturing space for PGLs, who in turn provide the same support to parents and their children.

Rachael, Hayley, and Donna are dedicated professionals who actively contribute to the wider network, including training for new hubs and supporting the annual EPEC conference. Activity levels are consistently high, with 5-7 parenting groups and regular PGL training each term, reflecting the team's success in empowering parents to take on supportive roles in their communities.

The team's commitment to recruiting the right parents and ensuring group safety is clear, with parents valuing the non-judgmental peer approach and the practical strategies offered. Feedback shows positive change, and the team works hard to support PGLs in gathering outcomes to evaluate the impact of their work.

Their recent collaboration with Yaran Northwest has further extended EPEC's reach into new parts of the community. EPEC Stockport is a key part of our network, and we greatly value their work in supporting parents and families in the area.

Dr Susannah Price, Clinical Psychologist, EPEC National Link for Stockport
Janet Kirkwood, EPEC National Programme Coordinator

Voice of parents:

- "I had a space to talk without judgment."
- "I wasn't alone and people from all walks of life struggle. It has also led me to do the PGL training and a maths course and for the first time in a long time I feel like mine & my son's journey is gonna change for the better."
- "The group leaders Sue and Hannah were very friendly, they did a lot of role play which helped immensely to view a scenario from a child's perspective. Also, they encouraged us to participate in discussions, we were able to ask questions and learn from other parents."
- "For myself, the way I grew up was totally different from here now. I was trying to do it like home and here I have realised is totally different. I am now doing the correct things. It increased my understanding and I learnt a lot."
- "I learnt we say don't do it but better to say what we want them to do. I feel calmer and don't shout as much. I used to shout even when I didn't want to. I am now calmer."

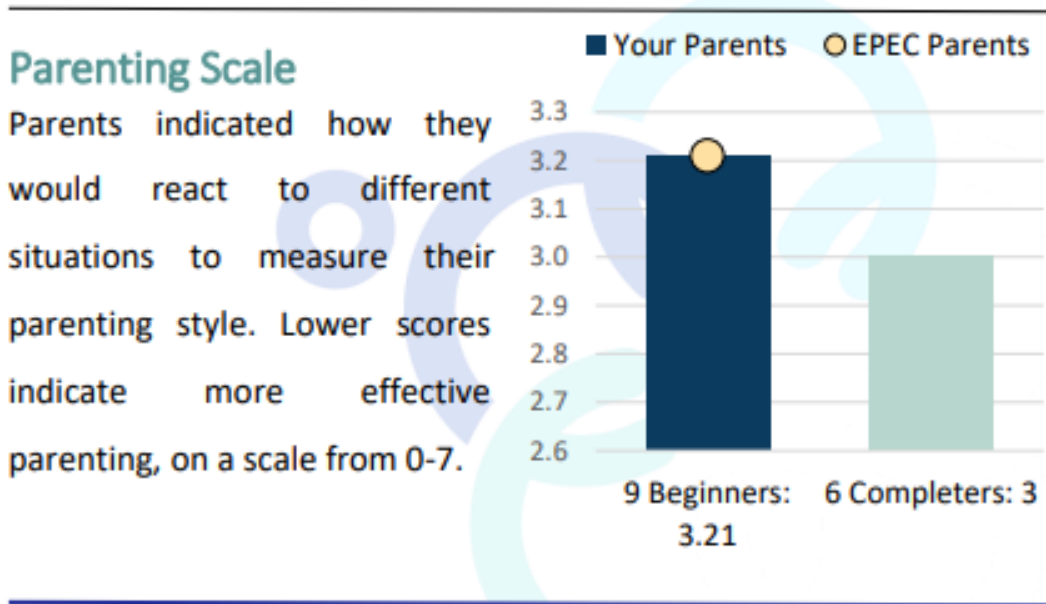
Voice of Stockport Parent Group Leaders:

- “I have been volunteering since 2021. I love it. I enjoy all the different dynamics of different PGLs and what each person brings to each course through their lived experiences... PGL training changed my life and I am not being dramatic when I say that. I think we should be proud that we offer the parents of Stockport some really effective parenting support in difficult times when they feel stuck. We bring together parents to learn and to support each other which at the end of the day is the most empowering part of the courses.”
- “At first I was really apprehensive, the group leaders made me and the group feel welcomed and settled. The content was really interesting and it has taken my confidence to a whole new level. I have volunteered for 2 years now and I have participated in online and in person groups. Being a parent, Living with Teenagers and Being a parent - Together. Best part of being a PGL is sharing experiences with others and knowing you’re not alone.”
- “Training as a PGL was brilliant, I enjoyed the hands-on facilitation, allowing us to get involved. The group I was with really helped with my confidence and self-belief.”

Appendix B Routine Outcome Measures

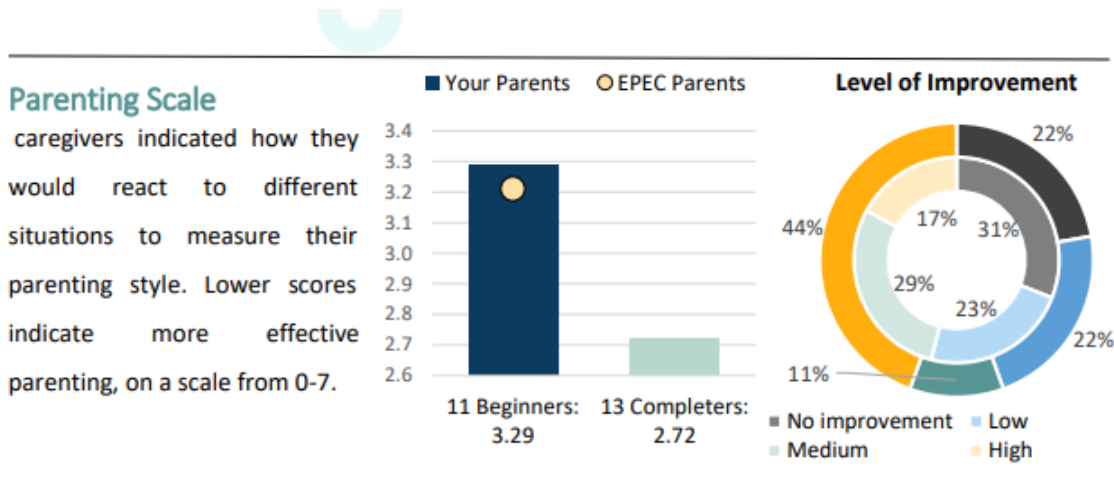
Parenting Scale examples

- Being a Parent – Autumn 2023



- Being a Parent – Spring 2024

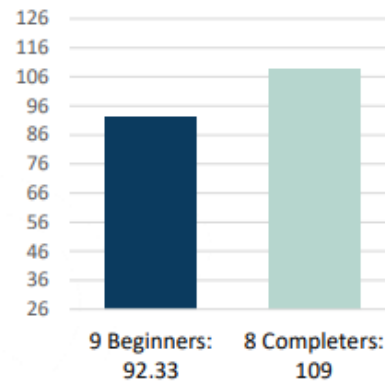
Data now includes reference to the level of improvement for Stockport parents (outer ring) and EPEC parents Nationally (inner circle)



Parent Group Leader Training example – Summer 2024

Self-efficacy

PGLs were presented with 21 specific tasks that are desirable when leading an EPEC group. They were asked to rate their ability in achieving these tasks, from 'not at all' to 'extremely well'. Scores can range from 21 to 126. **Higher scores** indicate that the PGL has **more confidence** in their ability to undertake PGL tasks.



Knowledge Change

PGLs answered a multiple-choice quiz about parenting theory and methods, and facilitation of EPEC parenting groups. There were 23 questions in total, each with 1 correct answer out of a possible 4 options. Scores can range from 0 to 23. A **higher score** represents a **better level of knowledge** about EPEC parenting theory and practice, as well as group facilitation methods.

