

Home-based Interventions Do Not Improve Child Development Outcomes for Preschool Children from Socially Disadvantaged Families



This review finds no impact on child cognitive development

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review assesses the effectiveness of home-based child development interventions in improving children's developmental outcomes. The review summarises findings from 7 studies. Two of the studies were undertaken in the United States each, 1 in Canada, 1 in Jamaica, 1 in Ireland, 1 in an unreported location and 1 in Bermuda.

The early years of a child's life are crucial for their development. Home-based child development interventions aim to boost children's developmental outcomes and reduce the negative consequences of deprivation through educating, training and providing support for parents. This review finds no impact on children's developmental outcomes, however the evidence for this is weak and more studies are needed.

What did the review study?

Young children from a deprived family background are more susceptible to developmental problems and poor health. The aim of home-based interventions is to assist parents in providing a better quality home environment for their children, to prevent or mitigate these adverse outcomes.

This review examines the effectiveness of home-based interventions aimed primarily at improving developmental outcomes for preschool children from socially disadvantaged families.

What studies are included?

Included studies are randomized controlled trials comparing home-based preschool child development interventions with a 'standard care' control, such as primary healthcare services. Outcomes are effects on the development of preschool children including cognition (thinking skills) and social and emotional development.

Participants were parents with children up to the age of school entry who were socially disadvantaged, for example: living in poverty, a lone parent or from an ethnic minority background. A total of seven studies with 723 participants were included.

What are the main results in this review?

The nature of the evidence makes it difficult to



How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies published until October 2010. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in January 2012.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

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About this summary

This summary was prepared by Ada Chukwudozie and Howard White (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2012:1 'Home-based Child Development Interventions for Preschool Children From Socially Disadvantaged Families: A Systematic Review' by Sarah Miller, Lisa K. Maguire, Geraldine Macdonald (DOI 10.4073/csr.2012.1). Copy-editing and layout by Tanya Kristiansen (Campbell Collaboration). Financial support from the American Institutes for Research for the production of this summary is gratefully acknowledged.



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assess the impact on child cognitive development. Evidence synthesis of four of the seven studies finds no effect. But evidence from the other three studies cannot be combined, so the overall finding is inconclusive. Adverse outcomes for parents (for example, disempowerment) were not reported in any of the seven studies, so no conclusion can be reached.

The evidence did not allow conclusions to be reached for secondary outcomes such as child physical development and parenting behaviour.

Home-based child development interventions has no impact on the cognitive development of preschool children from socially disadvantaged families

What do the findings in this review mean?

Evidence from four studies finds that home-based child development interventions have no impact on the cognitive development of preschool children from socially disadvantaged families. It was not possible to synthesize the evidence for socio-emotional outcomes.

However, of the seven included studies, the most recent is from 1989. There was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of most of the studies. Further studies are needed, which should endeavour to better document and report their methodological processes.