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Process Evaluation of
the Zippy's Friends programme; A Social and Emotional Learning
programme

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The Research Team

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Background

- Internationally, an estimated 13% of children and young people have a diagnosed mental disorder (Polanczyk et al., 2015)
- Universal, school-based programs targeting child emotional wellbeing may be an effective and cost-effective method of early intervention in children's mental health
- Further, the importance of social and emotional skills for effective learning is increasingly recognized
- The current study was an independent evaluation of *Zippy's Friends*, a coping and social skills program designed to be delivered with 5-7 year olds, by the class teacher on a whole-class basis

Zippy's Friends Programme

- Universal Programme that's primary aim is to teach children coping skills (key stage 1 pupils)
- Delivered by the class teacher, over the course of the academic year through 24 weekly sessions which last about 45 minutes
- 24 weekly sessions are divided into 6 modules—centered around a set of illustrated stories about a group of friends, their families and Zippy, a stick insect.

Zippy's Friends

- Zippy's Friends is delivered through 24 weekly sessions which focus on different areas of social and emotional competency development:
 - feelings, communication
 - making and breaking relationships
 - conflict resolution
 - dealing with change and loss
 - coping skills
- Sessions involve a story (read by the teacher), and active participation of pupils in discussion, role-playing, games and arts-based activities





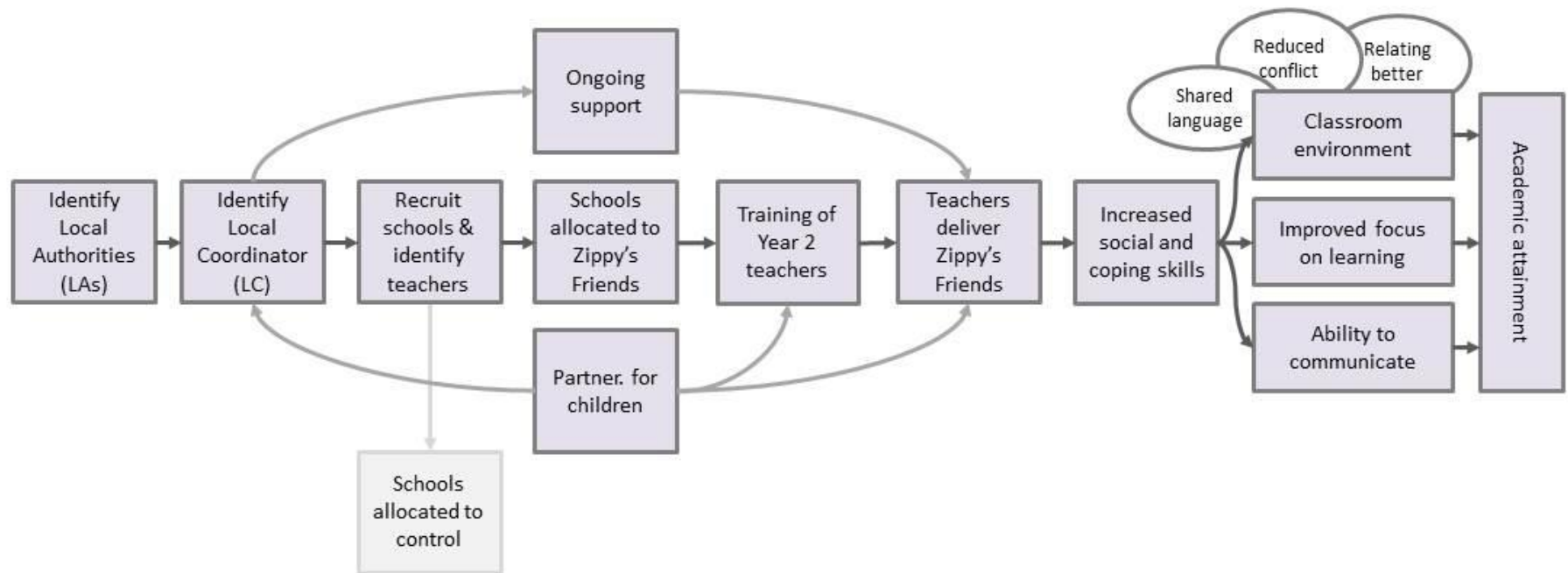
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Logic Model



The evaluation consisted of two components:

1. An efficacy randomised control trial – to determine the impact of Zippy's Friends on academic attainment and emotional self-regulation to (year 2 pupils who are aged 6 to 7)
2. An implementation and process evaluation (IPE) – to better understand the factors associated with implementation fidelity and delivery

1. To support understanding of the trial findings.
2. To understand control group activity.
3. To explain four main programme implementation and fidelity issues:
 - Adherence to the programme manual;
 - Levels of exposure to the programme (dosage)
 - Quality of the programme delivery; and
 - Teacher and pupil engagement with the programme..

Methodology – Process Evaluation



- 2 - schools per local authority (n=10) take part in more in-depth feedback of the process
- Interviews teachers/principals/parents
- Focus groups with pupils
- Implementation logs
- Observations of programme delivery
- Implementation survey
- Control group activity

Key Findings -

- The programme was well received by all key stakeholders
- Training and support for delivery
- Barriers to delivery
- Teacher buy in
- Pupil engagement

Key Findings-

- High priority given to the programme by schools & appeared to be implemented with high fidelity
- Teachers reported perceived benefits of the programme for children which were contradictory to the findings of the impact evaluation
- Control group – reported using a range of SEL programmes and strategies during

Discussion

- No evidence that Zippy's Friends impacts on reading attainment, emotional self-regulation or social skills
- High level of engagement with the program which appeared to be implemented with fidelity in the majority of intervention schools (only 2 out of the 42 intervention schools did not deliver it)
- Teachers reported perceived benefits of the programme for children which were contradictory to the findings of the impact evaluation
- Potential 'John Henry' effects (compensation rivalry) observed in the control group who seemed to increase the amount of social and emotional learning activity after allocation

Contact Details

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