Reviewer’s report

Title: Triple P - Positive Parenting Program for parents of preterm born preschoolers: A randomized, clinical trial

Version: 1 Date: 15 January 2013

Reviewer: Jane Barlow

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My main concerns with this paper are as follows:

I am unclear what the logic was for testing a programme with unproven evidence of effectiveness with a group of children with specialist needs in addition to their emotional and behavioural problems. Why wasn’t a version of Triple P used that had already been proven effective? The consequence of this is that the current study does not show whether the absence of effectiveness is a result of the programme or the study group;

Related to the above point, most of the parenting programmes that have evidence of effectiveness are delivered over a period of 12 weeks, not 4.

I am bemused by the introduction of other forms of treatment post-intervention. This potentially renders the follow-up results to be completely meaningless.

In terms of the justification for the study, it is not clear from the background section why children who were born preterm are different in terms of the development of emotional and behavioural problems, or what the implications of this might be in terms of the provision of parenting support. There is an interesting literature on mechanisms involved with this group of children, which is touched on briefly (reference 6 and 7) but not adequately addressed.

The background literature also does not address well the literature on existing interventions with is rather jumbled in terms of the distinction between preventive and specialist interventions, and the point at which they are offered. It would make much more sense to address the literature on other interventions that have been provided to this population of children at the same time point as the proposed intervention.

I’m not clear why it makes sense to include term infants who suffered from asphyxiation…did they spend extended periods of time in NICUs?

Other methodological concerns are as follows:

a) The failure to register this trial with one of the two organisations that maintain trial registers;

b) The absence of a concealed and independent randomization process;

c) The power calculations do not appear to have been undertaken with reference
to existing studies in terms of the size of change that might be expected; the study is small in terms of numbers and one explanation for the findings is that the study is underpowered;

The discussion does not address why this intervention did not prove effective with this group of children, and this may reflect the confounding that is present in the study design.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests