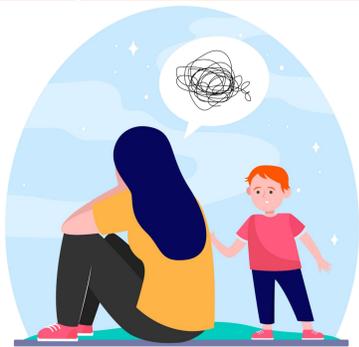


# What works in mental health prevention for families living in poverty?

Cassey Muir<sup>1\*</sup>, Deborah Smart<sup>1</sup>, Mihirini Sirisena<sup>1</sup>, Laura Gray<sup>2</sup>, Louise Howard<sup>3</sup>, G.J Melendez-Torres<sup>4</sup>, Eileen Kaner<sup>1</sup> & Ruth McGovern<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Newcastle University, <sup>2</sup>South Tyneside Council, <sup>3</sup>King's College London, <sup>4</sup>University of Exeter

## Why does this matter?



**Mental health challenges** among children and parents are rising globally, with low-income families disproportionately affected. The impacts are complex, varied, and require intervention at multiple levels.

**Our aim** was to explore how, why, and under what circumstances interventions prevent mental health problems in families living in poverty.

## What did we do?



### Approach: Realist Synthesis Review

#### Search Sources:

- MEDLINE
- PsycINFO
- EMBASE
- CINHAL
- Scopus
- ASSIA
- Grey literature

#### Informed by:

- ✓ Practice & Public Advisory Groups

#### Four Stages:

1. Defining scope & generating initial programme theories
2. Reviewing the evidence
3. Testing & refining programme theories
4. Developing a narrative

## What did we find?



### 5 programme theories from 67 studies with child & parent outcomes

#### 1. Early years

Nurturing early years settings can offset risk and prevent long-term behavioural problems but families facing multiple risks need extra support.

#### 2. Children

Positive parenting strategies help parents manage child's behaviour. Parental confidence and consistent use reduce child behaviour issues.

#### 3. Mums of infants

Mental health support and positive interaction strategies lower maternal anxiety & depression by improving their ability to cope with stress.

#### 4. Adolescents

Strengthening personal resources (e.g., resilience) and protective factors (e.g., relationships, education) across multiple environments prevents mental health problems.

#### 5. Parents of adolescents

Empowering parents to address external risks to their teens (e.g., housing, neighbourhood) reduces parents stress and improves mental health.

## What does this mean?



1. **Start early, scale support to need:** Universal early years support helps but extra support for those facing greater challenges is needed.
2. **Go beyond income alone:** Preventing mental health issues needs more than money, combine material, psychological, and relational support.
3. **Support adolescents across settings:** Mental health support needs joined-up action across home, school, peers, and community.