

In a randomised trial in the UK, researchers evaluated the effect of family support workers on family functioning in families of children with cerebral palsy. The support workers did not have any clinically significant effect on parental stress or family needs. One of the aims of the qualitative study was to examine how the intervention fitted into the context of the families' lives.

Sources of qualitative data included interviews with parents; the diaries that parents and family support workers were asked to keep during the intervention period; and meetings between the support workers and other research team members. An experienced qualitative researcher carried out a thematic analysis of the data.

The qualitative study concluded that parents generally reported high satisfaction with the intervention. Perceived benefits were particularly the establishment of a trusting relationship and the feeling of being supported, but also the provision of information such as getting advice about access to benefits and medical treatment.

The qualitative data was published in the same report as the randomised trial, and authors discussed the apparently contradictory results, including a discussion of the qualitative data and the choice of quantitative outcome measures.