Interventions to reduce inequalities in health and early child development in Europe from a qualitative perspective
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Background
Families that face daily challenges due to their socioeconomic circumstances are not able to offer children a nurturing environment. Early years interventions may help interrupt intergenerational transmission of inequalities. The literature suggested the most effective approaches were those that addressed both child and parenting issues.

Methods
The study formed part of the DRIVERS Project. Qualitative research methods investigations were carried out. Data collection was performed by collaborating partner institutions included in the project. Twenty-five individual interviews and six focus groups were carried out with staff running interventions and with users; children, their family or both. A thematic content analysis was performed.

Results
The majority of families and children had disadvantaged backgrounds. Interventions reached beneficiaries using a variety of methods. Programmes provided activities to stimulate children’s learning through structured play and provided support and assistance for parents. In these, parents were actively involved in activities.

Conclusions
Programmes described as being successful, delivered flexible services with activities carried out by multidisciplinary teams. Adapting to and understanding the families’ circumstances and involving parents was seen by staff as important. This had a positive effect on children. It is important to provide access to a comprehensive range of quality early year services to reduce inequalities. These should be tailored to social and economic need and to recognise the knowledge and capacities of parents. Existing early years institutions and structures should be strengthened to promote cross sector working between the social, education and health sectors.

Key messages:
- The establishment of trust based relationships is a key enabler in programme delivery
- Parents should be empowered to develop their own capacities thus strengthening their ability to assist in their children’s learning