



Children's Services

Parenting Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset

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Foreword

This Parenting Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset has been developed by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and was approved for implementation at its meeting on 12th December 2006.

The development of the strategy was a priority within the preparation of the Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 09 and is central to our work to improve the life chances of our children and young people in accordance with the Every Child Matters Outcomes.

Maurice Lindsay
Chair, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
1st March 2007

Introduction

The promotion of good parenting is now a key priority within local children's services. Being a parent is an important, complex and challenging task and one for which most, if not all, parents and carers feel ill-prepared. This is not surprising since parents typically receive little preparatory training or guidance. The recognition that all parents and carers need access to some degree of advice, support or specific help in order to successfully undertake their parenting role is the starting point for this Parenting Strategy.

“Being a parent is wonderful, exciting, rewarding and scary.....”

A local parent

Some parents access the help they need informally through family and friendship networks; others draw on support more widely and benefit from organised services. Our aspiration is that *all* parents and carers who need organised services have timely access to the right level of information and support, that the services make a positive difference to families and that staff who provide services are well trained and supported. Whilst the Council and its partners provide a wide range of information and other services that parents and carers benefit from, the focus here is on services which specifically seek to help them to develop their skills and confidence in how they relate to and support their children, enabling them to become more effective in meeting their children's needs and improving their life chances.

Throughout this Strategy, the term “parents and carers” is used to include mothers, fathers, carers or any other adults who have responsibility for caring for children, including children in Care. The role of parents and carers in improving children's life chances is emphasised in the five outcomes introduced in Every Child Matters. Parents and carers who do the following, in a consistent, loving and affirming way, are likely to be providing good parenting:

- **Be healthy**
Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices
- **Stay safe**
Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability
- **Enjoy and achieve**
Parents, carers and families support learning

- **Make a positive contribution**
Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour
- **Achieve economic well-being**
Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active

This Strategy supports these outcomes and is fundamental to the achievement of Bath and North East Somerset's vision for all children:

We want all children and young people to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help they need to do this

Children and Young People's Plan 2006-9

Within the Children and young People's Plan, the local priorities include delivering:

- Improved achievement, health and well-being for families in the relatively deprived communities in Bath and North East Somerset
- Through targeted support, confident and successful parents and carers

The Parenting Strategy is commended as a framework to assist all partner agencies who are supporting parents and carers in a variety of ways and to parents and carers as a commitment to the standards of practice that we are working towards – and already achieve in many instances.

The Strategy will be delivered via a multi-agency Parenting Strategy Group, reporting to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The delivery plan is published separately from this overarching document.

“Parenting is an enigma, it's a challenge that you will keep on re-visiting. Am I doing it right? What am I doing right?”

A local parent

Section 1: Background to the Strategy

1.1 Why do we need a Parenting Strategy?

Many parents and carers in Bath and North East Somerset have benefited from an excellent range of parenting support services. Some agencies have long regarded parenting support as core work and have developed specialist programmes and practices, gaining a local reputation for initiative and quality. However, not all parents and carers have had access to the services they need and with increasing public awareness and government emphasis on the importance of parenting support, it has become clear that this needs to be addressed by a strategic inter-agency approach.

1.2 What is the national parenting agenda?

The national agenda draws on an increasing body of evidence that parenting has a significant impact on children's life chances. This is accompanied by continuing research into what sort of parenting is effective and how best to promote this, and there is growing recognition that parenting support should be available at an early stage in the child's life.

The Children Act 2004 establishes that the five outcomes in Every Child Matters, referred to in the introduction above, should be achievable for every child. Government recognises the importance of good parenting in achieving these positive outcomes:

“Families are in most cases the key determinant of positive outcomes for their children, and good parenting is a major factor in improving children and young people's life chances. The Children Act explicitly requires the Local Authority to have regard to the importance of parents and carers ”

DfES (“Interagency co-operation to improve the well-being of children: Children's Trusts”)

Arrangements for the provision of children's services need to attend to the Government Inspectors' benchmark for Every Child Matters, in ensuring the following:

- Parents are offered a range of services before there is perceived to be a danger to the child
- Parents are helped to ensure their children are healthy

- Children and young people's mental health is supported
- Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision-making and to support the community
- The broad range of family needs is addressed in an integrated way

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004 requires agencies to work together to ensure that parents and carers receive information and support to maximise their children's life chances and keep them healthy and safe.

The Schools White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils 2005, introduces a role for Local Authorities in championing the role of parents in having increased support and access to information and involvement in decision-making.

The responsibilities of families are highlighted in the Respect Action Plan 2006. This sets out how the government intends to tackle anti-social behaviour, including by creating a framework to support families through:

- The expansion of Children's Centres and Extended Schools
- Increased funding for parenting support work
- Improving Local Authority delivery of parenting provision
- Creating pathfinders to develop these ideas
- Launching a national network of intensive family support schemes
- Development of National Occupational Standards and a National Parenting Academy to assist staff to improve the range and quality of parenting interventions
- Legislation to widen the range of agencies which can apply for a Parenting Order
- Working with the Youth Justice Board and other partners to ensure recommendations on parenting are built into Pre-Sentence Reports and National Standards

In October 2006, the Department for Education and Skills published Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England, requiring strategic approaches to the development of a continuum of parenting support services.

1.3 How was the Parenting Strategy written?

The process began when staff attending a local Youth @ Risk Conference in 2001 highlighted the need to ensure that parenting support was properly planned and resourced. In response to their feedback, a bid was made to the Community Safety Partnership for funding to extend services for parents of 8-13 year olds who were at risk of offending. This led to the establishment of the Parent Support Scheme, which provided some direct services and helped to share information about what services were available. The project was supported by a multi-agency Steering Group made up of parents and workers.

Parenting support was identified as one of the initial priorities for the Local Preventative Strategy and later incorporated into the Children and Young People's Plan 2006-9. The work was closely linked with another early priority to ensure the participation of children, young people, parents and carers in the design and delivery of services. All parent groups across Health, Education and Social Care were consulted on the vision and priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership set up a multi-agency sub-group to produce and deliver a Parenting Strategy. The aim was to promote child and family well-being by enabling parents and carers to meet the overall needs of their children and families. A core group of strategic managers from the voluntary sector, Health, Education, Social and Housing Services, Police, Community Safety and the Youth Offending Team met regularly for 18 months to identify and begin to address key issues. A larger open reference group was also established, building on the earlier Parent Support Service Steering Group, to take a lead in mapping services, raising ideas and providing feedback. These meetings were very well attended by staff from a wide range of agencies and by parents. The whole participative process was overseen by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, which received regular update reports and was asked to endorse elements of the Parenting Strategy along the way.

1.4 How does the Parenting Strategy link with other Strategies?

(a) All policy changes affect children and young people and have implications for parenting, directly or indirectly. The Parenting Strategy, and particularly the work being undertaken on parental participation, needs to be regarded as a key component of the overarching Local Community Strategy. All services will need to consider how their work impacts on parents' ability to improve their children's life chances.

(b) Within Children's Services:

- Much of the focus of parenting support will be the Children's Centres being developed throughout the Authority. Particular links are being developed with Extended Services provision for schools and work on pathways development.

- The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy includes work undertaken to support teenage parents. Whilst they are likely to have particular needs as young people themselves, it has been agreed that the core principles contained within this Strategy should apply to work undertaken with them as much as to older parents. Teenage fathers are not always identified, but when known, agencies should be mindful of their needs as parents and plan for how these will be addressed. The government has pledged incentives to encourage teenage parents to attend parenting classes
- The Parent Support Team helps parents with school admissions and transport-related issues and this remains a distinct area of work
- The Family Information Service provides a wide range of information about support and services for parents. This also remains a distinct area of work, which underpins much of this Strategy.

(c) Within Adult Services

Continuing work will develop the interface of this Strategy with planning for adult services, including in the following areas, in order to support parents to work for positive outcomes for their children.

- Transition arrangements
- Disabled Parents Policy
- Advocacy for parents
- Family Learning Strategy

(d) Within the Community Safety and Drugs Partnership

- Work in addressing anti-social behaviour needs to take account of the needs and responsibilities of parents of young people about whom there is concern.
- Domestic abuse prevention and support
- Substance misuse initiatives

1.5 What is already happening locally?

There have been excellent parenting services in parts of Bath and North East Somerset for a number of years and many of these services can link their practice to positive outcomes for children. The following examples are drawn from local services that have received positive feedback from parents:

- (a) Be healthy - Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices

“The parenting group offers support in order to encourage parents to promote a united front around issues such as bedtime routines, boundaries, a healthy diet, love, support, encouragement, motivation, stimulation and effective communication.”

(b) Stay safe - Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability

Between April 2005 and April 2006, 177 families were referred to the 117 Project. Of these, 34 parents received individual parenting sessions and 50 joined the weekly parenting groups, with an average of 16 attending each week. From the 177 families concerned, only 3 young people were accommodated and, following intensive support, one has since returned home

(c) Enjoy and achieve - Parents, carers and families support learning

“The team provide Managing School Programmes as well as focused personal development, self esteem and anger management sessions to children and young people between the ages of 10 and 17. The work provided by the team builds on self esteem without which achievement would not be possible. The parenting group concentrates on building self confidence through awareness of setting and achieving realistic targets through effective communication and promotion of ten core parenting tools.”

(d) Make a positive contribution - Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour

“The Early Relationships Project, SureStart South West Bath run Mellow Parenting groups up to three times a year. These are for ‘difficult to reach parents, to help parents to develop positive relationships with their children and promote positive behavioural strategies.”

(e) Achieve economic well-being - Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active

“The team aim to empower families to explore solutions to achieve financial independence where possible.”

(f) Parent participation

The ISOS Family Group is a parents’ group with the Community Bus crèche for children of families in the Snow Hill area. It consists of a breathing space for parents to meet, supported by a facilitator funded independently of statutory services, at the request of parents. The group arose from the collaborative effort of three parents in Snow Hill who felt the need, the health visitor, the local school and a B&NES community development worker. The parents are central to all aspects of the planning, fund raising and running of this group, including interviewing and employing the facilitator and deciding activities. The primary intention is to promote community connections, a place to be oneself and high quality play for the children. It has been meeting weekly in school term since Spring 2000.

Section 2: Vision, Values and Principles

2.1 Vision and Values

The Local Preventative Strategy set out a commitment to the promotion of child well-being by enabling children and young people to develop their full potential, and to the promotion of family well-being by enabling parents and carers to meet the overall needs of their children and families.

The vision and values for all services that affect the life chances of children and young people within Bath and North East Somerset build on the Local Preventative Strategy and are set out in the local Children and Young People's Plan 2006-9. The framework established places children at the heart of all work undertaken with them and applies equally to all services provided to parents. The local vision is that all children and young people do better in life than they ever thought they could. The accompanying commitment is that services will give children and young people the help that they need to do this.

The key values linked to this are that all children and young people should enjoy:

- A positive sense of personal identity and self-worth
- Belonging to a family “in the widest sense” and also to a community
- Good health
- A safe, healthy, child-friendly environment, including appropriate housing, play and leisure facilities
- Freedom from bullying
- High quality learning opportunities and educational achievement for everyone
- Freedom from poverty
- A right to privacy
- Equal access to services
- Respect

It is recognised that parents and carers will be able to meet the overall needs of their children and families when their own needs are being met. To empower them in their parenting, the following values are important:

- Ask them what they want for their children and young people

- Recognise the responsibilities and rights of children
- Recognise their responsibilities and rights as parents
- Support them to play a full part in any plans and services for their children and young people
- Help them to build on their own positive parenting
- Match the parenting support provided with their own assessed needs, taking account of specific individual need (eg teenage parents)
- Be clear how we are making a difference
- Apply the learning from their feedback to the development of practice and services
- Link with access to adult and other specialist services

2.2 Principles

The fundamental principles underpinning the vision and values and guiding the delivery of service priorities for children and young people, also apply to work with parents, as follows:

- (a) Rights and responsibilities
- Recognise and value children's and young people's rights as set out in the UN Convention on the rights of the Child (1989), ratified by the UK in 1991
 - Recognise and value the responsibilities of parents, carers, the community and young people themselves towards children and young people
 - Improve public understanding about standards and access to services
 - Work with parents should be anti-discriminatory and should value and build upon parents' existing strengths, knowledge and experience

(b) Participation

- Secure and monitor the active participation and involvement of children, young people and their parents and carers in all processes to make plans and improve services
- Listen to, consult and involve children and young people and give their views equal weighting to those of adults
- Acknowledge that parents and carers have unique knowledge and information about their children
- Feed back to those who were consulted in order to explain decisions and the reasons for them
- Provide support and training where needed to children, young people and their parents and carers to enable them to participate in planning, reviewing and evaluating

(c) Partnership

- Continue to build strong and efficient partnerships with public, private, voluntary sector organisations and community to groups in order to deliver high-quality, integrated, cost-effective services
- Build effective partnerships with children, young people, parents and carers
- Build on the current practise of interagency working to secure local co-operation and co-ordination and accountability

(d) Equity

- Ensure that all children, young people and parents have the same access to support and services, respecting gender, cultural diversity and individual needs
- Implement strategies for equality of opportunity which promote social inclusion and which oppose all forms of discrimination
- Consider all policy and service developments from an equalities perspective
- Focus resources in areas and or with groups with greatest need

- Parenting education and support should be available to all those in a parenting role

(e) Focus on prevention

- Ensure that a comprehensive range of universal services is available to support parents and carers in meeting the overall needs of their children and families

(f) Evidence Based Practise

- Always use available evidence or best practise models
- Use reflective practise and evaluation
- Incorporate a holistic approach, drawing evidence from a wide range of sources
- Incorporate feedback from parents where there have been positive outcomes
- Anyone who works with parents should have specific training for that purpose

Section 3: Local Standards for Parenting Services

The vision, values and principles set out in Section 2 underpin these specific standards for the planning and delivery of local parenting services:

1. Parents should have access to a range of services, from universal provision of information and advice through to selective services for those with greater needs
2. The seeking and provision of help for parents and carers is viewed positively, as a fundamental necessity, not as an indication of failure
3. The importance of natural community support systems is recognised and their use is strongly encouraged
4. Each service-provider should incorporate the shared local values and principles for parenting work into its own practice
5. Parents and carers must be able to participate fully in the development and delivery of services. Professionals should work in partnership with parents and carers with agreement about communication and clear understanding about the method of accountability.
6. Different agencies should work in partnership, with agreement about communication and clear understanding about the method of accountability. Co-planning and delivery of services is encouraged.
7. Access to parenting support is needs-led and the level of support required will vary over time. Services should be available at the right time and at the right level to address identified need. The Common Assessment Framework will inform initial assessment of parental need.
8. Services should be accessible and provided in a range of settings and geographical areas, on a voluntary basis wherever possible
9. Services should be inclusive, non-judgmental and meet the diverse needs of parents and carers.
10. Staff delivering parenting interventions must be supported by appropriate training, consultation and supervision.
11. All services, including any structured interventions, should draw on the best available research evidence of what is effective
12. Services should be subject to monitoring and evaluation to ensure that parents and carers are satisfied and that outcomes are positive for them and, most importantly, for their children.

Section 4: Local Needs Analysis

Local standard 1: Parents should have access to a range of services, from universal provision of information and advice through to selective services for those with greater needs

4.1 What is currently available?

The Parenting Reference Group set out to gather information about all known, established parenting support services within the voluntary and statutory sector in Bath and North East Somerset. It is acknowledged that this will not have included all work undertaken in schools and within the context of faith groups and other settings.

A total of 58 questionnaires were sent out and 13 responses were received, highlighting the following:

- 13 different programmes are available, most with a clear theoretical basis for their chosen approach
- Programmes are delivered by staff from a wide range of professional backgrounds
- Some geographical areas are better served than others – the main hubs for delivery are the designated Family Projects
- Access is poor for families living in rural areas, with transport available for some, but not all

Further information about this survey will be made available on the Change for Children website. It will need to be followed up, as we do not yet have a definitive picture of all services available. The Family Information Service and 1Big Database provide the most up-to-date information about current services.

4.2 What are parents and carers saying they want?

At a consultation event held with parents and carers to facilitate the development of the Participation Strategy, the following key points were made:

(a) Participation

- Parents and carers are keen to participate at all levels. Those who are involved with a Family Centre have greater opportunities for this, as all Children's Centres have 25% parent and carer involvement in committees and this is viewed very positively

- There is a lack of discussion with parents around changes in services, in advance of them occurring, and a need for greater co-operation between services and parents. Parents would like the Council to consult with them before services/budgets are cut
- When scheduling public meetings, crèche facilities need to be available
- Parents and carers would like to be involved in shaping specific parenting posts and in recruitment processes
- Parent groups would like an opportunity to comment on all new local strategies and policies – and to choose which to engage with. Some were also interested in having opportunity to comment on national strategies and policies

(b) Information

- Parents and carers stressed the need for greater communication about what services are available
- The Family Information Service was highlighted as having a potentially greater role in communicating available supports. Consideration needs to be given as to how the Family Information Service can highlight what services are available in the region and where/how this can be accessed. Suggestions included making welcome packs available at all General Practitioner surgeries, Libraries, Schools and Children Centres
- The leaflets produced by the Council in advance of the October school holidays in relation to recreational activities were seen as very helpful and parents and carers would be interested in similar publications for the other holiday periods. Generally, parents still value hard copy information. There is a question about the level of parental access to the internet and how this can be maximised, perhaps via schools and extended services
- Access to 1Big Database needs continual promotion

(c) Support

- Parent Partnerships and other Parenting Groups are seen as very supportive. Where parents and carers were involved in parenting groups, they received a lot of support

- Parents and carers indicated the need for continual promotion of Children's Centres as universal services for all parents. Sure Start has been perceived as only being for needy/at risk families, although this is not government policy and not how they have been advertised locally

4.3 What gaps / priorities have been identified?

(a) Range of programmes

In Section 8, below, a list of externally validated parenting programmes is provided. Three of the ten evidence-based parenting programmes promoted by the DfES Sure Start Guidance are already available locally – these are 'Triple P' and 'Mellow Parenting' and Webster-Stratton (with a fourth, 'Strengthening Families' being considered for parents on Parenting Orders). A priority will be to match parental need and choice by supporting an increase in the number of evidence-based programmes available locally.

(b) Access

Patchy provision of transport, crèche facilities and access to programmes, particularly in the more rural parts of Bath and North East Somerset, continue to present difficulties. Implementation of this Strategy will need to take account of opportunities within the four developing Local Area Partnerships for more local delivery of services.

(c) Prompt support

There is no ready access to information, guidance or counselling for parents when things go wrong.

Section 5: Court Ordered Parenting Support

Local standard 8: services should be accessible and provided in a range of settings and geographical areas, on a voluntary basis wherever possible

Whilst most parenting support is offered and accessed on an entirely voluntary basis, there are occasions when, in the interests of addressing the child's behaviour, parents can be required to participate. Parenting Orders can be imposed by a Criminal Court, Family Court or Magistrate's Court, acting under civil jurisdiction when there has been a problem with a young person's behaviour. Being placed on a Parenting Order does not mean that a parent has a criminal conviction and is not intended as a punishment – these Orders are made to enable parents to build their skills so that they can respond more effectively to the challenges of parenting. There are an increasing number of circumstances when Parenting Orders can be made, but the main circumstances are as follows.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made Parenting Orders available in any Court proceedings where

- a Child Safety Order has been made (these are in respect of children aged under 10 years old)
- an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) or Sex Offender Order (SOO) has been made in respect of a child or young person aged under 18
- a parent has been convicted of failing to ensure their child attends school
- a child or young person aged 10 - 17 has been convicted of a criminal offence
- a Referral Order is made and a Referral Order Panel refers a parent back to Court for failing to attend panel meetings or comply with the contract agreed

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (ASBA) made provision for Parenting Orders to be available on application to the adult Magistrates' Court by:

- the Youth Offending Team (YOT), where a child or young person has engaged in criminal conduct or anti-social behaviour
- a Local Education Authority (LEA), where a child has been excluded from school for serious misbehaviour

Parenting Orders can be made for up to 12 months and should consist of the following elements:

- A parenting programme designed to meet parents' individual needs. This is not a punishment but a positive way of bolstering parental responsibility and helping parents develop their skills so they can respond more effectively to their child(ren)'s needs.
- The second element, not always used, specifies ways in which parents are required to exercise control over their child(ren)'s behaviour to address

particular factors associated with their offending. Examples would be escorting their child(ren) to and from school every day to ensure attendance, or ensuring that a child is at home during certain hours.

- **Local Practice**

- (a) Voluntary basis where possible

In situations where a Court has power to make a Parenting Order, the local underlying principles should still be applied. Parenting support is generally believed to be more effective if it is provided on a voluntary basis and therefore this should always be considered and offered first. The local Youth Court accepts this principle. Sometimes, a Parenting Order provides a framework within which a parent begins to access support which can continue on a voluntary basis when the Order has ended.

- (b) Consistent delivery of Parenting Orders throughout Authority

Consistency between services responsible for holding Parenting Orders is important, so that parents access equivalent quality services. The Education Welfare Service and the Youth Offending Team share a commitment to develop consistency in terms of assessment, delivery and enforcement of Orders and both are establishing detailed guidance for staff. This will be supported by a protocol with Police concerning enforcement.

- (c) Models for delivery

There are a number of models for providing support for parents who are subject to Parenting Orders. Generally, the Parenting Order will be held by a member of staff who ensures that the legal framework is adhered to and that services are delivered. The programme of support can be made available in the following ways:

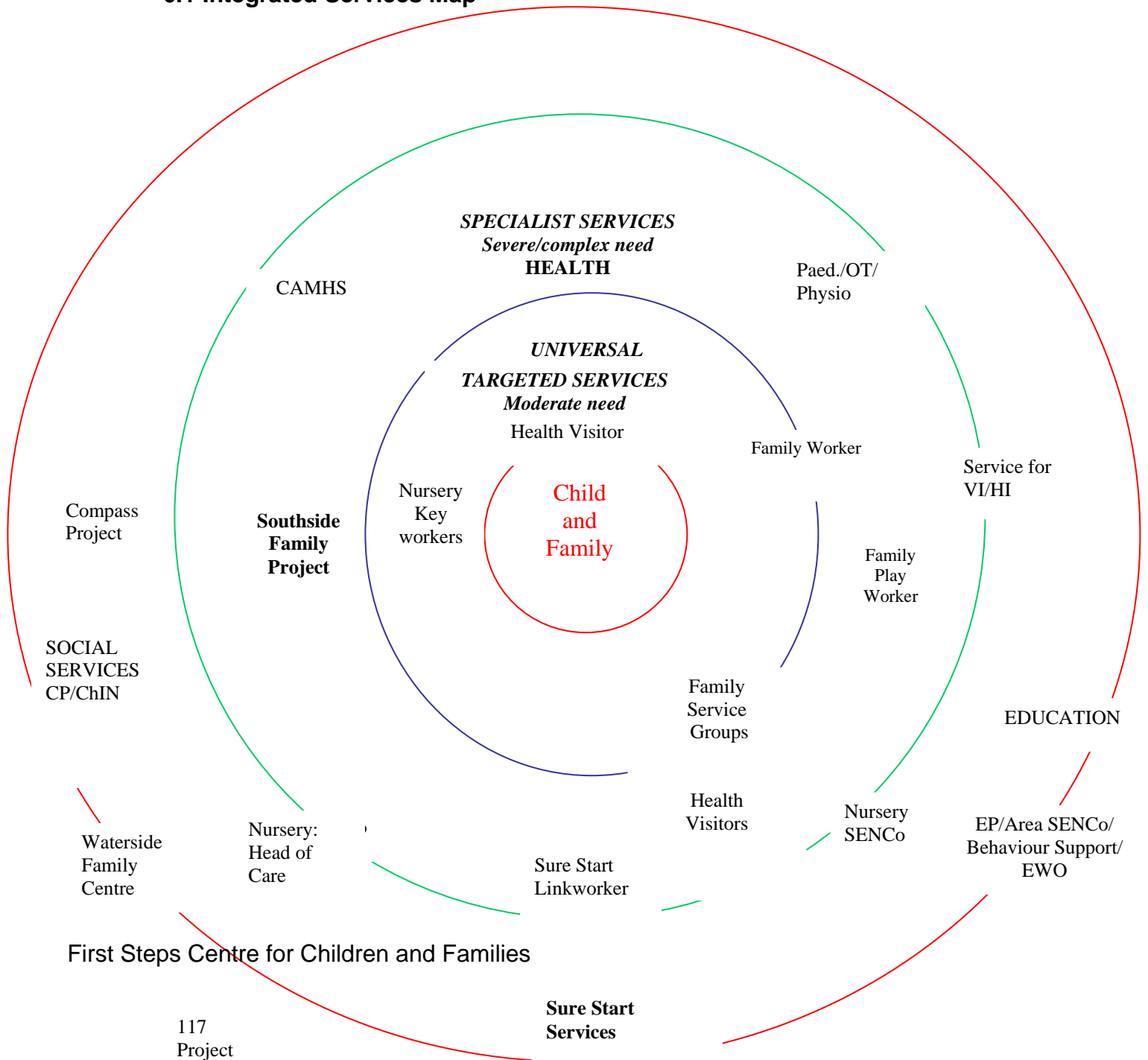
- Developing in-house provision. The Youth Offending Team is doing this through the appointment of a dedicated Parenting Worker, who provides direct services and will work in partnership with other agencies
- Accessing external provision, such as places on an established course, or via a Service Level Agreement.
- Commissioning a bespoke programme if there is insufficient provision available locally. At present, there are no plans to do this.

Section 6: Models of Parenting Need

Local standard 7: Access to parenting support is needs-led and the level of support will vary over time. Services should be available at the right time and at the right level of need.

Two models are presented to assist understanding of level[s] of support.

6.1 Integrated Services Map



Use of the Integrated Services Model

- (a) The First Steps Centre found that many families accessing services from the Centre were also accessing services from a range of agencies.
- (b) The Centre needed a way of recording the agencies involved to avoid duplication or gaps in services. Each agency involved is highlighted.
- (c) The map also provides a checklist of agencies that may need to be invited to planning and review meetings or contacted if concerns arise. A contact name is recorded under each agency.
- (d) The map also helps us consider the level of need and which agencies should be involved. The form of the model was to reflect that our starting point is the child and family and that sometimes when families need to access specialist services these may be harder to reach. This underpins our commitment to bring services to the child and family rather than signpost them on to services.
- (e) The 3 levels relate to Every Child Matters and can be adapted for any agency providing services for families.

6.2 The Needs-Led Parenting Pyramid

[a] This model identifies 4 broad levels of parenting support:

- Level 1: Provision of good quality information available for all parents designed to prevent problems developing
- Level 2: Brief interventions providing anticipatory guidance or help with mild or short term problems
- Level 3: More intense interventions/support for enduring multiple or more severe problems
- Level 4: Enhanced/multiple interventions where parenting is affected or complicated by other significant factors or sources of distress.

The model proposes that that whilst most parents may access level 1 services, comparatively few will require the highly specialist level 4 services. A spectrum of parenting support services are required ranging from generic services available to all parents through to highly specialist services required by a few.

The Needs-Led Parenting Pyramid

4: Enhanced Interventions

Aims: To provide interventions where parenting is affected or complicated by other significant factors or sources of distress

Target: Parents of children with severe and enduring problems presenting within a complex situation (e.g. parental depression, drug misuse, learning difficulties; CSA; offending; domestic violence)
Possible Content: Extended multiple level interventions focusing upon the development of effective parenting skills, addressing parental problems, building positive parent/child relationships

3: Focused intensive interventions

Aims: To provide more substantive interventions (6-10 sessions) for enduring, multiple or severe problems

Target: For parents of children with moderate/severe difficulties (individual or group formats).

Possible Content: Active focus upon specific skills training and relationship enhancing activities, building self esteem

2: Brief interventions

Aims: To provide brief (1/3 sessions) interventions for short-term mild/moderate behaviour difficulties

Target: For parents of children experiencing mild/moderate difficulties or anticipatory guidance for those dealing with developmental transitions (e.g. toileting, sleeping), building on their existing knowledge

Possible content: Explore parent's individual situation, clarify their preferred approach, build upon existing parenting practice, provide necessary advice & support

1: Universal provision of good quality and effective information

Aims: To provide parents with information about effective parenting practices; to acknowledge that being a parent is difficult; validate current parenting practices; provide timely information to prevent problems developing; empower parents by providing a range of options to inform their parenting, encouraging parental resilience and self belief

Target: All parents, with information readily available and accessible

Possible content: Information about looking after yourself; general positive approaches to parenting and relationship building; specific difficulties and how to deal with them

The model is needs led. Parents will therefore get access to the level of parenting support they require at any one time. They do not have to systematically work their way through the different levels. Similarly the model is dynamic in the sense that the need for, and level of, parenting support will change over time.

Use of the Need-led Pyramid

(a) We all need help to be successful parents

Although the parenting task is complex and requires many different skills, parents and carers typically receive little preparatory training/guidance. This Strategy recognises that *all* parents need access to some degree of advice, support or specific help in order to successfully undertake their parenting role.

The seeking and provision of help for parents is seen positively, as a fundamental necessity, rather than an indication of failure

(b) Community support systems

A number of parents and carers already have access to a variety of valuable information, guidance and support systems. This may be provided through many sources including:

- partners
- extended family members
- friends
- faith groups
- books/magazines
- television or radio

The parenting strategy recognises the importance of natural community support systems and strongly encourages their use.

(c) Some parents and carers do not have ready access to this support, may find it unhelpful or insufficient to meet their needs. Implementation of the Parenting Strategy needs to take account of the fact that the type and extent of help parents may require at any one time will vary. For example, some parents may need:

- Specific information at one particular point of time, e.g. how to help their child become potty trained or how to develop a good night-time routine.

- Short term support through a difficult period e.g. if a relationships breaks down or child starts at school.
- Support and guidance over a few months for more persistent problems, e.g. how to cope with regular temper outbursts or defiance.
- Longer term support and guidance where, for example:
 - parents have their own problems (e.g. mental health problems or alcohol misuse) that make the task of parenting their child even more difficult.
 - children present with very challenging behaviour or multiple problems that require extended help.
- Encouragement to enhance resilience to face the task of parenting

Provision of parenting support needs to be comprehensive and to consider the different needs and types of inputs parents may require

(d) Most parents need information but few need long term specialist help

Despite receiving no specific training, it is important to recognize that the majority of parents and carers do an extremely good job in raising their children. Acknowledging this highlights that whilst many may require access to good quality information that can inform and validate their parenting practice, comparatively few require on-going specialist help and support.

It is therefore important to strike a balance between universal services (i.e. those that are widely available to all parents) and selective services (i.e. those that are provided for parents with greater needs).

A range of information and support needs to be available including both universal services which are available for all parents through to selective services for those with greater needs.

(e) Parenting support must be provided in a way that parents want

Section 7: Assessment of Parenting Need

Local standard 7 (b) Services should be available at the right time and at the right level to address identified need. The Common Assessment Framework will inform assessment of parental need

There is local commitment, in response to feedback from parents and carers, to work towards the ready availability of information and advice for all parents, regardless of their circumstances. This will need to be addressed in a variety of ways, including web-based information, but parents are highlighting the need for immediate, hard-copy information, too. The universal way of communicating information in this area will be via the Family Information Service, which is developing as a 'one-stop shop' with outreach services.

However, some parents will need additional services, at a level informed by the two models above. Staff need to work with parents to hear their views about the strengths and problems they are experiencing. This will inform an initial assessment of whether parenting support services would make a difference and if so, what sort of intervention should be offered. The Common Assessment Framework, designed as a standardised universal assessment tool for all children and young people who may need additional assistance to meet the Every Child Matters outcomes will be the starting point for assessment of need in relation to parenting. It will enable the assessment of parenting needs whilst retaining a clear focus on outcomes for children. As Bath and north East Somerset rolls out use of the Common Assessment Framework, it will need to promote its use for assessing parenting.

1. Parents and carers

- (a) Basic care, ensuring safety and protection
Provision of food, drink, warmth, shelter, appropriate clothing, personal, dental hygiene, engagement with services, safe and healthy environment
- (b) Emotional warmth and stability
Stable, affectionate, stimulating family environment, praise and encouragement, secure attachments, frequency of house, school, employment moves
- (c) Guidance, boundaries and stimulation
Encouraging self-control, modelling positive behaviour, effective and appropriate discipline, avoiding over-protection, support for positive activities

2. Family and environmental

- (a) Family history, functioning and well-being
Illness, bereavement, violence, parental substance misuse, criminality, anti-social behaviour, culture, size and composition of household, absent parents, relationship breakdown, physical disability and mental health, abusive behaviour

(b) Wider family

Formal and informal support networks from extended family and others, wider caring and employment roles and responsibilities

(c) Housing, employment and financial considerations

Water / heating/ sanitation facilities, sleeping arrangements, reason for homelessness, work and shifts, employment, income / benefits, effects of hardship

(d) Social and community elements and resources, including education

Day care, places of worship, transport, shops, leisure facilities, crime, unemployment, anti-social behaviour in area, peer groups, social networks and relationships

Within agencies providing targeted or specialist services, there will additional assessment to help agreement with parents about precisely what areas of work need to be undertaken. This more detailed assessment is most likely to be needed by services that are working with parents subject to Parenting Orders or other contracts. For example, a key risk factor relating, in combination with other risk factors, to offending, is the issue of inconsistent parenting, which may need to be explored in greater detail. This will also enable effective evaluation and help in determining whether positive outcomes for children follow the parenting intervention.

Section 8: Effective Parenting Programmes

Local standard 11: All services, including any structured interventions, should draw on the best available research evidence of what is effective

At present, there is a range of parenting programmes available within Bath and North East Somerset. This is viewed positively, on the basis that these programmes are well received by parents and carers and that it offers potential to match parenting need and learning style with provision. There is support for these programmes to continue to be offered, provided that they demonstrate they follow effective practice principles and contribute to positive outcomes for children.

At the same time, there is a clear encouragement from government and from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to consider the use of programmes that have been independently evaluated as effective. A list of such programmes has been published within Sure Start guidance and three of these are already available in Bath and North East Somerset. Within Children's Services, any commissioning of new parenting services or training for staff needs to be informed by Sure Start guidance and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) 2006 advice, in order to invest in programmes that are most effective in leading to positive outcomes for children. Decisions must also be co-ordinated, taking account of models being considered by partner agencies. This guidance is also commended to other local agencies who may be commissioning parent support services.

The programmes currently recommended are as follows:

1. Nurturing Programme

Aims to increase the confidence of parents in their parenting by building empathy, developing realistic expectations and addressing behaviour management.

(www.familylinks.org.uk)

2. Strengthening Families

7-week programme with booster sessions designed to reduce environmental risk and enhance protective factors by helping parents develop their parenting skills.

(www.parenting-forum.org.uk)

3. Family Caring Trust

Programme for parents of children aged 0-6 which focuses on behaviour, discipline and stimulating children's development and learning.

(www.familycaring.co.uk)

4. PIPPIN

Programme for parents having their first child, based on attachment theory. It offers antenatal and post-natal components.

(www.pippin.org.uk)

5. Mellow Parenting

Supports parents whose relationships with their young children are under severe stress. Enables parents to find their own solutions to family management problems through mutual support with a minimum of 'expert' guidance from professionals

(www.acamh.org.uk)

6. Webster Stratton Incredible Years

Aims to identify, intervene with and support families of young conduct problem children, or children at risk of developing conduct problems, to improve their long-term prognosis

(www.incredibleyears.com)

7. Triple P

Focused on children's behaviour, with a strong emphasis on developing positive attitudes, skills and behaviour that help prevent problems arising and fosters family relationships

(www.triplep.net)

8. Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Based on a strengths-based 'facilitative model.' Aims to help families develop strong ethnic and cultural roots; positive parent-child relationships; life skills, self-esteem, self discipline and social competence; and an ability to access community resources.

(www.reu.org.uk)

9. PEEP Learning Together Programme

Supports parents and carers as their children's first and most important educators. It provides a combination of different activities to support children's learning in every day situations.

(www.peep.org.uk)

10. Parents as First Teachers

Supports parents of children under five. Increases knowledge of their children's development and potential, enables them to gain confidence in their role as parents, builds better family relationships and sets foundations for improved behaviour and community involvement.

(www.paft.org.uk)

The guidance published by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2006) is as follows:

NICE guidance for the treatment of conduct disorders in children aged 12 years or younger, or with a developmental age of 12 years or younger

(a) Group-based parent-training / education programmes are recommended in the management of children with conduct disorders

(b) Individual-based parent-training / education programmes are recommended in the management of children with conduct disorders, only in situations where there are particular difficulties in engaging with the parents, or a family's needs are too complex to be met by group-based parent-training / education programmes

(c) It is recommended that all parent-training / education programmes, whether group or individual-based, should:

- Be structured and have a curriculum informed by principles of social-learning theory
- Include relationship-enhancing strategies
- Offer a sufficient number of sessions, with an optimum of 8-12, to maximise the possible benefit for participants
- Enable parents and carers to identify their own parenting objectives
- Incorporate role-play during sessions, as well as homework to be undertaken between sessions, to achieve generalisation of newly rehearsed behaviours in the home situation
- Be delivered by appropriately trained and skilled facilitators who are supervised, have access to necessary ongoing professional development, and are able to engage in a productive therapeutic alliance with parents
- Adhere to the programme developer's manual, and employ all the necessary materials to ensure consistent implementation of the programme

(d) Programmes should demonstrate proven effectiveness. This should be based on evidence from randomised controlled trials or other suitable rigorous evaluation methods undertaken independently

(e) Programme providers should also ensure that support is available to enable the participation of parents and carers who might otherwise find it difficult to access these programmes

Section 9: Commissioning Parent Support

Promoting the welfare, well-being and achievement of children and young people and improving outcomes, needs to be at the heart of commissioning activity. In developing an approach for parenting support, there must be compatibility with the principles and practices adopted within the overall delivery of Children's Services. Commissioning will be:

- Based on a comprehensive understanding of current and future needs and provision available, building on the mapping undertaken in relation to this Strategy
- Developed through an inter-agency approach, with effective co-ordination (there may be a need to actively commission services)
- Based on strong and effective partnerships with providers, including in-house, voluntary and independent sectors
- Part of an integrated strategy for wider services for parents, children and young people
- Responsive to the views of parents, carers and their children
- Developed on the basis of messages from research, national guidance and good practice and robust information about the quality, cost and effectiveness of provision
- Subject to effective monitoring and evaluation processes to inform review and future commissioning

Currently, most funding for parenting work is held within single agencies. Some have appointed staff to take on dedicated parent support roles and others support staff to extend their skills into this area of work as part of a wider range of responsibilities and / or employ specialist staff on a sessional basis.

The Parenting Strategy will require some dedicated capacity to begin to implement and monitor. Initial funding has been made available via the Youth Justice Board Prevention Fund, Early Years and Extended Schools Services and one of the early priorities is the appointment of a Co-ordinator to take this work forward. As the Children's Service is developed, we will need to consider how to incorporate government's expectation that we identify a single commissioner of parenting support services, who will also act as a champion for parenting support within Bath and North East Somerset.

Section 10: Parent Participation

Local standard 5: Parents must be able to participate fully in the development and delivery of services. Professionals should work in partnership with parents with agreement about communication and clear understanding about the method of accountability

1. Introduction

In July 2005, a multi-agency working group of the Children Young People's Strategic Partnership was established to promote the participation of parents and carers in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009. The group also set out to develop a strategy to promote the meaningful participation of parents and carers in actively shaping services across Bath and North East Somerset. This is now incorporated into the overall Parenting Strategy.

The strategy's primary aim is to encourage each agency to develop its own participatory structures and practices. For parent and carer's participation to become embedded in the new Children's Services, it must become a part of everyone's every day practice.

2. Consultation around the Children and Young People's Plan

Questionnaires were sent to all known parent and carer groups across Health, Education and Social Care in Bath and North East Somerset. All groups were facilitated, either by agency staff and or the Change for Children Project Officer to complete the questionnaires. In total, 41 completed questionnaires were returned And the contribution they made can be viewed in the Children and Young People's Plan which is available on the Bath and North East Somerset website at www.bathnes.gov.uk. The parent and carer groups who contributed received feedback from agency staff or the Change for Children Project Officer. Throughout this process, parents and carers expressed their clear commitment to being involved in further discussions around service design and delivery.

3. Development of the Participation Strategy

The multi-agency working group agreed that no progress could be made on developing a strategy around the participation of parents and carers without parents and carers being present to lead on and shape any such discussion. Some desktop research was undertaken in relation to parent participation. The Strategy for Consultation and Communication 2005 completed by the Parent Partnership Service, the work undertaken by the Disability Council Strategy and

the Strategy for the Participation of Children and Young People were also considered.

A workshop was held in November 2005 and 2-3 parents/carers from each of the known parent/carer groups, across health, education and social care as well as relevant professionals, were invited to attend. In all, 22 people attended the workshop, 10 of whom were parents/carers. From the workshop, a series of recommendations were developed, focusing on the importance of good information systems for parents and carers and their having the opportunity to influence decisions through their current routes.

It was acknowledged that this group may not be a representative sample of all parents groups and that any proposed participation strategy would need to be widely distributed for further consultation.

4. Definitions, Models and Principles

(a) What do we mean by participation?

The word 'participation' is often used to describe very varied activities in very differing circumstances. Participation here is not simply about being listened to or consulted – it is about being involved in decision-making and change.

Participation is about a process, not an isolated activity or event (Shenton, 2004). It should form an integral part of daily practice. Frontline staffs are already in contact with parents and carers on a regular basis and this 'informal listening' should be encouraged, developed and used to inform practice. This can be complimented by formal mechanisms for listening to parents and carers.

Through the consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan and the Participation Workshop, parents and carers had the following specific things to say in relation to their involvement in decisions:

- The Council should come out and consult with parents/carers before services/budgets are cut.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how the Family Information Service can better highlight what services are available in the region and where/how this can be communicated. Suggestions included availability of welcome packs at all General Practitioner surgeries, Libraries, Schools, Children Centres.
- If scheduling public meetings, crèche facilities need to be facilitated so that parents and carers could actually attend.
- In developing new facilities consideration needs to be given to the needs of families (No crèche facilities at Bath Spa).
- That draft strategies are sent to parent groups for comment/feedback.

(b) Why involve parents and carers?

The purpose of participation is to ensure better outcomes for children and also for the organisation and the community. Legislation and national policy now require agencies to be more participative and our performance will be evaluated on how well we do this.

(c) Which parents and carers should have the opportunity to participate?

All parents and carers in Bath and North East Somerset should have the opportunity to participate if they wish.

Concern about overloading parent groups was raised at the workshop parents and carers responded that it was up to them to look at the agenda, and decide if something needed to be prioritised for discussion and / or feedback at their meetings

(d) What decisions should parents and carers participate in?

Many voluntary, social care and education services have long been committed to the participation of parents and carers across Bath and North East Somerset.

The involvement of parents and carers in decisions around service design and delivery was strongly promoted in the Children Act 2004. Bath and North East Somerset is fully committed to promoting greater involvement of parents and carers in decision making across all children services.

(e) How should parents and carers be rewarded for their participation?

Paying parents and carers for their involvement may be appropriate in some cases but there are many other ways to recognise parents and carers' contributions, for example by accrediting learning, providing training opportunities, celebrating successes. Parents and carers should not be out of pocket as result of their participation. Money will need to be available to pay for transport, refreshments and childcare and interesting ways of working with them.

(f) To what extent to should power be shared between professionals, parents and carers?

Parents and carers should participate in the planning, delivery, management, governance and evaluation of services. The following non-hierarchical model can help to identify what level of participation is appropriate at different times and in different contexts.

It also supports the Strategy for Consultation and Communication 2005 as developed for parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs.

An important principle here is that agencies need to be realistic about parents and carers potential to influence decisions and be honest with them about any limitations, without using this as a way to opt out of participatory practice.

MODEL FOR PARENT PARTICIPATION

There are 4 key principles which underlie successful participation:

1. **Key Principle One: Define what participation means (Ladder of Participation –Wilcox 1994):** be clear and honest with parents about what is being offered.
 - a. **Participation** is about parents playing a full part in the decision making process and is usually continuous. parents are given a significant voice in the planning and decision-making process
 - b. **Information** is about giving information and not expecting any feedback: first step in involving services users: not consultation or participation
 - c. **Consultation** is about offering parents some limited choices about what you are going to do: you have a fairly clear vision but wish to consult on, offer some options, and invite feedback and comment.

2. **Key Principle Two: Using a variety of approaches,** approach will vary according to the level of engagement with parents from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances, and level of participation (range of approaches can be used to suit different types of projects and parents).
 - a. Partnership Building-Forums; issue of whether parents can be representative of other parents.
 - b. Presentation and promotion
 - c. Communication and Feedback

- 3 **Key Principle Three: Overcoming an imbalance of power and control:** 5 key steps that can be taken to level the playing field:
 - a. Build a constituency of parents –those active in a local multi-disciplinary group, to include EU workers and their families and BME groups
 - b. Equitable access to information, same as professionals!
 - c. Practical support-expenses: Childcare: Timing: other access issues; creating the right environment

 - d. Building parents' confidence and skills:

 - e. Support for professionals who consult within a culture of participation

- 4 **Key Principle Four: Visible action:** provide parents with feedback and evidence of action following consultation, including making reports available as appropriate

Adapted from the Council for Disabled Children-Contact a Family Professional Guide

5. **Creating a Participation Culture**

The evidence base suggests that agencies wanting to undertake meaningful and sustainable participation will need to change. It is not simply about creating a number of elite participation workers or services, but about a whole change to the ethos and culture of the organization. This change needs to happen within senior management, frontline staff and across policy and practice.

Participation is a way of working, rather than an event, a project an unachievable dream or a tick box ... [it is] a culture of participation from top to bottom and side to side' (Shenton 2004, p6).

Work on children's and young people's participation is more developed within this Authority and a lot could be learned from practitioners who have developed skills in this area. It is an aspiration that parent participation initiatives may one day be linked with the work undertaken on children's participation, in order to produce an integrated service user participation strategy.

Section 11: Staff Development and Training

Local standard 10: Staff delivering parenting interventions need to be supported by appropriate training, consultation and supervision

Key to the commitment to provide effective services for parents is the need to ensure that staff are well supported and trained. Anyone working with parents should have specific training for that purpose, underpinned by child protection training. Good practice also requires opportunity for reflection and a personal evaluation of how effective skills and approach have been, within the context of staff supervision. This will include consideration of how gender, cultural diversity and different needs reflect on the work undertaken.

Local Children's Workforce Development will need to take account of the needs of staff involved in delivery of parenting programmes. Agreed standards will help in provision of quality services for parents and enable different agencies to work readily in partnership. This work will be supported by use of the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents, developed by Parenting UK, which define the competence, skills, knowledge and understanding required by those who work with parents.

The Standards include the following:

- Principles and standards for new services
- Job Descriptions and Person Specifications
- Supervision agreements and annual performance reviews
- Training plans and provision
- Specifications for commissioning

There are a number of training courses now available for parent educators which enable those who work with parents to meet the core competences. However, these courses require a financial investment by either employees or by staff themselves. The cost of the training will require an investment by funders in developing a pool of accredited trainers. It will also require a commitment by workers to their own personal development by undertaking training.

Section 12: Monitoring and Evaluation

Local standard 12: All services should be subject to monitoring and evaluation to ensure that parents are satisfied and that outcomes are positive for parents and, most importantly, for their children

1. Commitment

Local commitment to evaluation involves establishing a cycle of continuous improvement in outputs and outcomes. This dynamic process will inform the development of the Strategy itself in the longer term, and developments in effective practice, training and commissioning in the short / medium term. It follows that information from evaluation needs to be fed back and acted upon at all levels – including individual children and parents, parents' focus groups [or equivalent], practitioners, operational and strategic managers, trainers, commissioners and politicians. We have the opportunity to embed a principle of continual learning from the local Sure Start programme and the Children's Centre programme about how parenting work impacts measurably on children's lives.

We also anticipate that B&NES will contribute to a wider body of knowledge about effective parenting work, through sharing our good practice at a number of levels including meetings, consultations, conferences and publications.

2. Principles

[a] All parenting work should be evaluated (at least at an individual level)

[b] There must be clarity at the outset about aims – what differences would parents and workers count as measures of success?

[c] Aims must be fully owned by children, parents and workers, within an overall context of the 'five Every Child Matters outcomes' and the 25 associated aims.

[d] Children and parents must be able to participate in the evaluation methodology and process and have chance to feed back on this, as well as on services and the Strategy itself

3. Implications

[a] Development of skills in agreeing aims, monitoring and individual evaluation needs to form part of practitioner training

[b] Resources needed for follow-up and longer-term evaluation and analysis

[c] There needs to be co-ordination and steering of monitoring and evaluation processes and dissemination of knowledge.

