

An exploratory study on the links between family learning and parenting programmes in local authority settings

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Executive summary

1. The background and methodology

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned this exploratory research to identify the overlaps and positive synergy between family learning¹ and parenting skills programmes in local authority settings. The brief included identifying the barriers to effective working and making recommendations on how policy can be developed to support more effective joint working. Fourteen recommendations are included in this report.

The research was carried out between October 2006 and March 2007. The methodology included: a desk review of current policy; a paired seminar attended by a family learning manager and a parenting practitioner / manager from invited local authorities; three in depth case studies in local authorities and supplementary interviews and follow up of areas of identified best practice in additional local authorities.

2. The policy framework

Policy initiatives and changes in this area are extremely fast flowing. Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) offers a new vision for children and families and is based on five outcomes for children: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-being.

The context of change presents a very challenging working environment for many practitioners. Local authorities are undergoing major restructures to meet the new agendas, reviewing methods of working, establishing Children's Trusts, implementing children and young people's plans (CYPPs), developing Extended Services, expanding the number of Children's Centres and implementing the Respect Agenda. In addition, there has been the introduction of new major initiatives to work with and increase the focus of involving parents² in service design and their children's learning. This is set in a framework of workforce reform, a move towards integrated service

¹ In this report we are using family learning as the overarching term to include the LSC funded family programmes of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy and Wider Family Learning and programmes funded through other streams using the same intergeneration learning approach.

² We include under the category of parents, other carers and parental care-givers.

provision, integration with Local Area Agreement and CYPPs, a review of professional qualifications for staff teaching in adult learning and developing work on a framework of qualifications to meet the national occupational standards for working with parents and family learning.

The latest report from the Social Exclusion Task Force (June, 2007): *Reaching Out: Think Family* re-enforces the positive impact of intergenerational learning and the significant impact of the level of parental interest in a child's education in raising attainment. It identifies significant opportunities to extend the Every Child Matters approach of integrated provision beyond children's services to all services, including adult services and working with families at risk. The findings in this research indicate that this would be welcomed by practitioners and managers.

3. An overview of the key challenges for Local Authorities

Developing a joint strategy

Some local authorities are developing a cross-directorate and multi-agency joint parenting support and family learning strategy. It gives the advantage of being able to build a complete picture of support for families at all levels of intervention. This is the approach adopted in Suffolk County Council and Essex County Council.

Language and terminology

Government policy documents are sometimes unclear in their use of terminology and definitions of parenting support, parental involvement, family support, family learning and the overarching nomenclature for all provision.

Practitioners interviewed across local authorities and partner organisations also had a different understanding of the terminology in use depending on their background.

New structures in many local authorities have dismantled the traditional concept of a lifelong learning division and the speed of policy change has not yet enabled sufficient debate to maintain a coherent structural ethos for lifelong learning. Parenting skills programmes are not always seen as a key plank of intergenerational learning along with family learning. Both parenting skills programmes and family learning programmes have distinctive features and both cross directorate

boundaries. However, both relate to adults gaining new knowledge and skills and have significant impact on improving life chances for themselves and their children.

Departmental location of services within a local authority

The location of family learning provision, and in some cases parenting skills provision, has proved challenging for many authorities. It is a strength of this area of work that it bridges provision for both adults and children and contributes to many Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.³ However, restructure in some locations has left services feeling displaced or not regarded as a core activity and this is causing a disjointed approach to provision for families.

Partnership working

A clear message from this research is that the best practice in joint working and partnership has taken many years to develop. The research highlighted the change in focus of some partnership arrangements where resources were being moved from universal and preventative provision to more targeted interventions. For example, the changing roles of school nurses and health visitors means less scope to be involved in the joint delivery of family learning and parenting skills programmes in some localities.

Local Area Agreements

For the majority of local authorities participating in this research Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are not the key driver for multi-agency provision in this area of work. In some authorities the strategic links are in place but there has not yet been time to follow through to action plans which impact on managers at an operational level.

In many local authorities the Children and Young People's Plan is being used more effectively than the LAA to develop multi-agency working. However, effective practice has been identified on the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth.

Funding and resources

³ Haggart and Spacey (2006), Linking the thinking in family learning. Embedding family learning across policy areas. Leicester: NIACE, <http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/Family/Default.htm>

Ensuring a consistency of resourcing of programmes remains a challenge in some areas, particularly with funding pressures on adult learning and more general local authority budgets.

Concerns were raised about short-term funding initiatives in local authorities that have been particularly successful in attracting additional project funding to support this area of work. They stressed the damage on communities of start / stop partnerships, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation.

Quality improvement and commissioning

Multi-agency working across parenting skills and family learning programmes is bringing challenges as to the types of quality improvement frameworks to be used and the methods of ensuring consistently good experiences for the participants. Existing expertise built up around subcontracting is not always being transferred into the developing commissioning approach.

Some local authorities are using imaginative combinations of funding and expertise across directorates to address this issue.

The curriculum offer

Local authorities are finding it a challenge to keep a broad and balanced curriculum, particularly for parenting skills programmes. Concerns were expressed about the dominance of the evidenced based / manual based parenting skills programmes when other programmes are also available and sometimes more appropriate.

Practitioners expressed concerns about the need to develop systems to ensure that families are referred to the most appropriate programme for their needs.

Publicity

From each of the detailed case studies parents and carers were very clear about needing easier access to information on courses, programmes and how to gain support. Learners expressed the desire for different types of local publicity that attracted fathers, reduced the stigma of parenting courses and enhanced the understanding of employers.

Measuring progression

The research highlighted that a new approach to measuring progress and outcomes is needed for learners in this area of work to meet their personal circumstances and way of learning.

4. Recommendations

A key task of the study was to seek participants' recommendations for policy changes. These have been combined with the analysis of data from the study into a set of fourteen recommendations.

One: Develop closer working across government departments on parenting and family learning initiatives

Two: Agree the definitions and terminology to be used and adopt a consistent approach across policy documents

Three: Promote a recognition of the equal and inter-related nature of all work with parents and families in policies relating to the current change agenda

Four: Enhance the support for preventative work in the new agendas

Five: Develop a quality framework for both parenting skills and family learning with effective recognition of the costs involved

Six: Provide further guidance on ensuring effective partnership working

Seven: Require that parents and carers and voluntary sector representatives are actively involved in the development of the joint parenting support and family learning strategy

Eight: Ensure that there is a flexible curriculum for parenting skills programmes

Nine: Improve national publicity on parenting

Ten: Implement a training strategy for all staff in the schools sector on working with families

Eleven: Ensure that all staff providing courses in parenting skills and family learning are trained for purpose

Section one: executive summary

Twelve: Commission long term research on the impact of parenting skills and family learning

Thirteen: Commission research on the methods of recording the social benefits of family learning and parenting skills programmes

Fourteen: Set up a reference group of expert practitioners in the field to inform Government discussions

2

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach.

5. The background and the research questions

This research was commissioned by DfES to make an exploratory study of the overlaps and synergy between family learning and parenting skills programmes in local authority settings. The research focus(s)ed on group sessions and excluded one to one interventions and individual support.

The research was carried out between October 2006 and March 2007.

The key research questions were identified as:

- a. How do the programmes link strategically and operationally in selected local authority settings?
- b. What are the perceptions of practitioners around the programmes and how do these differ between practitioner groups?
- c. How are the programmes funded?
- d. What do learners gain from the programmes?
- e. What are the current challenges for local authorities around this area of provision?
- f. What changes in policy and procedures would make for more effective provision?

6. The case studies

The main evidence for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews and document reviews as part of in-depth case studies in three local authorities. The main case studies were identified by the research team and the project advisory group and were chosen because they were identified as Local Authorities leading the field in developments in this area of work. The full detailed case studies of

Coventry City Council, Essex County Council and Suffolk County Council can be found in appendices one, two and three.

Within each case study semi-structured interviews were held with senior council officers in Children and Young People's Services and in Adult and Community Services or equivalent. Operational staff and a small number of key partners were also interviewed. Where possible we spoke to a small group of parents on parenting skills courses and/or family learning courses. Interviews followed a base framework of questions whilst exploring the issues from the position and perspective of the interviewee. (Appendix four)

7. The seminar

A key research question was to explore the perceptions and understanding of parenting skills and family learning by those working in local authorities, the partners and families. Each person brought a different perspective and understanding depending on their background and current role or rationale for attending the course.

We held a research seminar that enabled the differences in positionality to be explored and captured. A family learning manager and a manager responsible for working with parents from nine local authorities were invited to attend. This paired seminar enabled the sharing of different perspectives within the local authority.

From the desk research and consultation with the advisory group, we produced a diagrammatical concept model of how working with parents and family learning services could fit together and overlap (Appendix five). Following consultation with the Family Learning Local Authority group (FLLAG)⁴ of expert practitioners it became apparent that each local authority would have a different concept map.

At the seminar, participants were asked to design and debate a model for their own local authority. Participants also completed detailed questionnaires. Examples of these and an analysis of responses are included as Appendices six and seven.

⁴ FLLAG is a consortium of Local Authority Family Learning Officers working to keep family learning at the heart of policy, planning and practice throughout England and beyond. It meets three times a year to share and disseminate information, identify and respond to national, regional and local agendas and create a powerful voice to influence policy.

Nine councils participated in the seminar: Cheshire County Council, Essex County Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Leeds City Council, London Borough of Harrow, London Borough of Waltham Forest, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council and York City Council.

8. Additional data

As the study progressed we identified specific areas in other local authorities that would be of benefit to include. Additional interviews were carried out in: Newcastle to focus on the links with the new Parent Support Advisors, on the Isle of Wight to capture joint working and the Local Area Agreement and information was sought from Portsmouth on their approach to quality and Local Area Agreements.

We also attended the first national conference for parenting commissioners organised by Parenting UK to support our understanding of the different stages of development in local authorities in progressing towards appointing a parenting commissioner and developing a strategy.

9. Advisory group

The study benefited from a small external reference group of key stakeholders with representatives from the Access and Progression team, Department for Education and Skills, Parenting UK and the Learning and Skills Council.

The policy framework

This section provides a brief overview of the current policy in the area of family learning and parenting skills programmes in order to locate the context of the research. A more detailed analysis is included as Appendix nine.

10. A period of rapid change

Policy initiatives and changes in this area are extremely fast flowing. There are many and various programmes and initiatives to support the Children for Change and the Every Child Matters agendas.

Every Child Matters offers a new vision for children and families and is based on five outcomes for children: Be healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-being.

Local authorities are undergoing major restructures to meet the new agendas, reviewing methods of working, establishing Children's Trusts, implementing children and young people's plans (CYPPs), developing Extended Services, expanding the number of Children's Centres and implementing the Respect Agenda.

Bentley and O'Leary (2006) argue:

"If outcomes for children are to improve then the change must take root in the everyday interactions between professionals, young people, families and communities. This requires considerable changes in professionals' practice..... requiring professionals to understand their roles through the prism of outcomes for children rather than by particular professional practice or practitioner groupings." (p.21)

11. Workforce reform agenda

Workforce reform is a key aspect of the new agendas. Every Child Matters reforms have introduced a common assessment framework and the requirement to share information amongst professionals. The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce (DfES, 2005) sets out the knowledge needed by people (including volunteers) whose work brings them into regular contact with children, young people and families.

The Children's Workforce Development Council supports the implementation of local integrated children's workforce strategies. A range of National Occupational Standards for Care, the Children's Workforce, Working with Parents and Family Learning now exist. Qualifications are being developed from these standards.

The Respect Action Plan (Home Office, 2006) announced the establishment of the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP), due to be launched in October 2007. NAPP's role is to support the training and development of the parenting workforce, act as a national centre for advice and research on parenting and parenting support and to support the Government's developing parenting agenda.

Equally, there is reform to the qualifications frameworks for those working to develop the skills of parents as adult learners. From September 2007, all new teachers in the publicly funded lifelong learning sector will be expected to have completed the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS) course. They will then be expected to work towards a further teaching award appropriate to their role. The requirement for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers to qualify as specialists will continue.

12. A new focus on the role of parents

Within this change agenda there is a renewed policy interest in the importance of the role of parents both in supporting their children's learning and in relation to their behaviour. New guidance to local authorities has been issued on parenting support, on the nomination of a Parenting Commissioner and on financial support available to develop a local authority parenting strategy.

Every Parent Matters (DfES, 2007) sets out the policy initiatives promoting the development of services for parents and the actions needed to involve parents in the shaping of services for families. In addition, it outlines forthcoming initiatives in this area.

During the period of the research there has been the introduction of a £40 million national pilot for Parenting Support Advisers (PSAs) in over 1200 schools in 20 local authorities with the highest indices of deprivation. A wider roll-out is planned in 2008.

New pilots have been introduced in selected local authorities to support parents of young children to develop and support at-home learning.

13. The Respect Agenda

The Respect Agenda runs in a parallel policy development to Every Child Matters. Along with the introduction of NAPP, The Respect Action Plan (Home Office, 2006) has a focus on anti-social behaviour. It provides a clear steer on supporting families, improving behaviour and attendance in schools, and developing a new approach to what it defines as the “most challenging families”.

From that plan, a national network of family intervention projects has been established using long-term, multi-agency strategies for families needing high levels of support.

14. The skills agenda

Equally, for those working with parents as adult learners, there is a clear policy dominance of the skills agenda, following the Leitch review of skills (HM Treasury, 2006). The report focuses on the need for skills for economic prosperity and whilst it recognises the links between educational attainment and family background, there is scant policy direction on engaging adults and families into learning to build social cohesion and social mobility.

15. Social exclusion

The Social Exclusion Task Force review for families at risk has published its first report, *Reaching Out: Think Family* (June, 2007). The report re-enforces the positive impact of intergenerational learning and the significant impact of the level of parental interest in a child's education in raising attainment.

It identifies the need to “*think family*” both in terms of providing a tailored flexible service to the individual family with multiple needs and service structures. It identifies the significant opportunities to extend the Every Child Matters approach of integrated provision beyond children's services to all services, including adult services and working with families at risk.

16. Request for stability

It is a challenging time for those implementing the new policies. Many of the senior local authority managers interviewed as part of this research requested the stability to implement the changes. The Children's Commissioner, Sir Al Aynsley-Green, backs this view. In

Section three: policy framework

evidence to the Education and Skills Select Committee (June, 2007) when asked if Children's Trusts were the right model for making progress, he replied:

"The jury is still out because these are a new species. What I can say is that I know the majority of the 150 directors of children's services, who are motivated, inspirational people. I have been to many of their localities. Being given the authority to pull services together is a step forward, and already I see very good things happening in the trusts that I have been to. The jury really is out and will be for another three or five years before we know what is happening; so my plea to Government and politicians is this: please have some stability in the system; let us see the impact of what is being done before the whole system is turned upside down again by further organisational or structural changes."

Addendum:

Prior to publishing this report, the new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown has restructured the Department of Education and Skills into two new departments: the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The Respect Agenda moves from the Home Office to the DfCSF.

4

The different local structures

This section provides a summary of the organisation models adopted by the case study local authorities.

17. The planning structures and location of services

Each of the case study local authorities has adopted a different approach to the organisation of its services. These are detailed in full in appendices one, two and three.

Each local authority has a strategic partnership that combines multi-agency expertise in the locality.

In Coventry, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has established a series of sub-groups that focus on improving outcomes and processes. The local authority has adopted a sixth local outcome for Every Child Matters following consultation with children and young people: *Having supportive families, friends and communities*. The aims for the sixth outcome are: to tackle isolation and enable everyone to feel loved and cared for, to tackle challenging behaviour, promote emotional well-being, to develop positive relationships: in the home, in schools, in the community and to support families to stay together.

Family learning, defined as including both family learning and parenting programmes, is located in the Children and Family Education Service and is part of the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate. As part of the re-organisation of Children, Learning and Young People's services this will change to a Children's Neighbourhood Services management structure. The structure will include three geographical divisions.

Since April 2006 the Adult Education Service in Coventry has been located in the Community Services Directorate along with services for Older People, Adults and Housing Strategy, and Culture, Leisure and Libraries. Family learning is one of the six priority areas for the Adult Education Service in its current development plan. Coventry has a unique approach to ensuring that learners on family learning and parenting skills programmes benefit from the expertise in both the Children, Learners and Young People Service and in the Adult Education Service. The Children and Family Education Manager with

Section four: the different local structures

responsibility for Family Learning programmes is a member of the strategic management team of both services: the Adult Education Service and the Children and Families Education service. These arrangements enable effective joint working between the two services at an operational and management level, even though they are in different directorates of the Council.

In Essex, the County Council has taken a Children's Trust approach, rather than establishing a formal Children's Trust, to support the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Local Area Agreement. It consists of a County Partnership Board that reports to the Essex strategic partnership and 11 Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships based in the districts and 25 Local Delivery Groups (LDGs). The LDGs are groups of schools working together, linked with a range of services, to enable a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people, and their families and schools across neighbourhoods to raise achievement and reduce risk and vulnerability.

The Council agreed in December 2006 to establish a single Directorate for Schools, Children and Families Service. The new directorate brings together the Schools Service, Children and Young People's Service and Children's Service. It has four strands: Localities, Schools Improvement and Early Years, Vulnerable Children and Young People and Strategy and Business. The Parenting Commissioner will be based in the Strategy and Business division but the role will spread beyond this with elements of parenting integrated into all four strands. Parenting skills programmes are provided across this division and with the Council's partners.

Family learning is part of Adult Community Learning which has recently been relocated from Community Services to the External Relationships and Partnerships Directorate as part of the County Council's restructure of adult and children's services. The Adult Community Learning service is currently undergoing a further restructure to its provision to meet the demands of reductions in Learning and Skills Council funding. Since the research visit, the service has moved into the Adult Services directorate.

Whilst in Suffolk, the Children and Young People's plan (CYPP) has been produced following widespread analysis of local need. The views of children, young people, parents and carers have been taken into account. The key strategic priorities of the plan are set around the five Every Child Matters themes. These are backed by detailed business

Section four: the different local structures

plans. The Children's Trust Partnership will also act as the LAA Block Board for Children and Young People. The priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan link very closely with the Suffolk Community Strategy, LAA and the County Council's four year plan.

The Council is in the process of establishing 18 locally managed community clusters. These will bring together all partners and organisations to improve the well-being of children and young people in the areas model. Integrated multi-disciplinary staff teams will work through Children's Centres on a locality cluster basis.

The Children and Young People's Services Directorate brings together the County's education, social care and vulnerable children's services, including early years services, school improvement and support, enrichment and extended schools services, special needs assessment and support, family support, safeguarding services, Connexions and youth services. The Youth Offending Service will be fully integrated into this directorate from April 2007.

Family learning and parenting skills are linked in the same division as part of Adult and Community Learning which is based within the Adult Community Services Directorate. The Council is currently restructuring the Adult and Community Learning service to be much more closely merged with the other sections of the Adult Community Services workforce. It is moving to a locality based model.

Suffolk has a strong cross-department and multi-agency approach. Close working links are maintained between the Family Learning and Parenting provision and the relevant areas of the Children and Young People's Directorate.

Interviewees in both Suffolk and Essex stressed the complexity of implementing the new agendas across large rural areas and replicating structures across the districts of the county.

18. Developing a strategic approach

In Essex, a strategy group was formed in 2006 to ensure effective links between Family Learning and Parenting Support. The group currently includes representatives from Adult and Community Learning, Libraries, Social Care, Early Years and Childcare, School Improvement, Special Educational Needs and Psychology, and Extended Schools. It is planned to extend membership to include key external partners. As a starting point the group has taken the existing

Section four: the different local structures

Family Learning strategy and expanded it to include parenting support. The group ensures the strategy reflects and informs local delivery; brings together stakeholders to share information and promote coordination; collates/summarises policies and ensures they drive the strategy appropriately; and assures the quality of provision for families.

There is a draft cross directorate plan to align responsibilities and for taking the strategy forward. It states the roles and responsibilities of Adult Community Learning, the Family Learning and Parenting Support Strategy Group and the Schools Service and Children's Service.

It is envisaged that the strategy group will have a lead role in enabling and steering the commissioning process and will also become the focal point for funding, accountability and monitoring. It will draw on the existing group members' skills and expertise in quality systems and subcontracting.

In Suffolk, an extensive survey of work with parents was carried out in 2005. It highlighted the wide range of activities and partnership arrangements that were being carried out in the county but that the approach was not always consistent or taking place in a planned and coherent way. The key findings included the need for organisations to develop more effective systems of working together. A working group was formed to develop the strategy. The group included a wide range of key professionals from Adult and Community Services, Children and Young People, representatives of voluntary services and Suffolk Parent Carer Network.

The strategy establishes a framework for those working with parents and families. There is a set of common standards for work to support parents. The strategy proposes to link all agencies providing a range of services for parent/carers including: (H)health screening, advice and support for all prospective parents during pregnancy and after birth on becoming a parent, one-to-one, informal and drop-in support when needed, structured parenting programmes and family learning opportunities, information guidance and support and access to specialised services.

A County Strategic Group will be established with key representatives from relevant agencies in Children and Young People and Adult and Community Services directorates, Health and other partners including parent groups. This will focus on involving parents in decision making, ensuring a spread of services, supporting the commissioning process,

Section four: the different local structures

initiating quality improvement systems, ensuring effective workforce development and ensuring a continuing base for local research.

In Coventry the Council is still developing its parenting support strategy. A “Parents as First Educators” strategy already exists, this includes parenting and family learning programmes. There is also a service plan for Family Learning. It is intended that all of these strategies will be brought together, although at the time of the research the precise format had not been decided. Senior managers are clear that the overall strategy also needs to include aspects of the Adult Learning strategy, particularly as adult learning is now split across directorates.

19. On-going restructures

Since this research all three local authorities involved in the detailed case studies are undergoing further organisational restructures.

5

The challenges of language

This section looks at the use of terminology and its impact in a multi-agency setting.

20. Policy documents

Government policy documents are sometimes unclear in their use of terminology and definitions of **parenting support**, **parental involvement**, **family support**, **family learning** and the overarching nomenclature for all provision. Different policy documents from different government departments use terminology in varying ways.

For example, the Extended Schools Core Offer clearly defines **parenting support** as the overarching term to include a range of programmes:

“parenting support including information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes and family learning sessions” (DfES, 2005 p.)

The Parenting Support Guidance (DfES, 2006) defines **parenting support services** as:

“any activity or facility aimed at providing information, advice and support to parents and carers to help them in bringing up their children” (p 3.).

Whilst in the new Every Parent Matters publication (DfES, 2007) there are no definitions provided to make the distinctions between **parenting support** and **family support**. In many documents there is a presumption that **family support** or **support for families** relates to more targeted interventions and **parenting support** to the more universal provision and the terms change depending on the level of need along the continuum. However the majority of documents lack explicit definitions and/or glossaries and terms are often used interchangeably. The place of the learning programmes, whether for family learning or parenting skills is often unclear. The revised practice guidance for Sure Start Children’s Centres (DfES, 2006) includes

Section five: the challenges of language

family learning programmes under its description of **employment support** and its parenting skills programmes under its description of **parenting and family support**.

Our review of the literature revealed the following terms in use: **Parenting, Parenting support, Family support, Parent education, Parent training, Parental support, parental involvement, Family support, Family programmes, Family education, Family learning, Wider family learning, Family literacy, language and numeracy, Working with Parents** and **Skills for Families**.

21. Local use of terminology

Professionals interviewed across local authorities and partner organisations also had a different understanding of the terminology in use depending on their background. Some authorities have spent time and energy defining their programmes, the interactions between programmes and in developing a common understanding of the language and terminology they use. A key message was that this is not an easy process, it is time-consuming and involves exploring the boundaries of professional identities.

Interviewees stressed the importance of having a wider concept of parenting to include both parents, carers, grandparents and siblings. For some it was seen as particularly important to use language and terminology that reduces the stigma of the popular concept of parenting classes. Many stressed that terms such as parental and family support had connotations of the child protection role and were not appropriate to use for universal programmes.

In Coventry, the Children and Families Education service use **Family Learning** as the overarching definition for Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN), wider family learning and parenting skills programmes. Whilst in Suffolk, the strategy has been entitled “**Working with Parents and Parental care-givers**.” This is used to encompass the whole range of activities with parents and is seen as wider than **parental support**. The term parental care-givers includes foster carers. It is seen as being broader than a “parenting strategy” and it is felt important to use terms that encompass a wide range of practitioners.

In Essex, the Family Learning and Parenting Strategy group has been clear to define family learning in its widest sense and are currently defining parenting support as part of its work:

The Essex Family Learning and Parenting strategy group definition of family learning:

Family Learning encompasses programmes and activities, with clearly measurable outcomes, that enable adult and children in family relationships to: learn about themselves and their communities, help them to acquire new skills and knowledge, enjoy family life, communicate and recognise that learning is a lifelong activity which is fun.”

22. A shared professional view

A key message from the interviews was the need to understand the difference between family learning and parenting programmes whilst ensuring the complementary role each has in supporting the other.

Interviewees recognised the need to increase the understanding of family learning in parenting skills courses and the need to adopt the principles of an adult learning approach in the provision of some courses.

In some areas, the move in the discourse in policy documents from family learning to parenting skills is being reflected by a change in the balance of local provision, for example, extended schools concentrating on parenting skills courses in preference to family learning programmes. Staff stressed the need to promote the understanding and different roles of both types of programmes.

23. What happened to the concept of lifelong learning?

New structures in many locations have dismantled the traditional concept of a lifelong learning division within the cluster of education services. In many locations the speed of policy change has not yet enabled sufficient debate to maintain a coherent structural ethos for lifelong learning.

Section five: the challenges of language

There is a whole debate to be had by policy makers, professionals and learners both locally and nationally to ensure that parenting skills programmes are seen as a key plank of intergenerational learning along with family learning. They both have distinctive features and both cross directorate boundaries, however, both relate to adults gaining new knowledge and skills.



In Coventry this time of change is being used to review its methods of engaging families and communities in learning. Staff are using some of the new parent/ family interventions to break the cycle of disadvantage by empowering communities through learning by offering them help to develop strategies to cope and change.

It is proposed that the concept of lifelong learning is integrated into the new parenting strategy.



24. Parents views

Parents on courses generally highlighted the negative stereotypes associated with the concept of parenting skills courses often portrayed in the media, however it was reported that the media popularity of programmes such as “super-nanny” has enabled some families with the highest levels of need to see interventions in a more positive way.

6

Funding the programmes

This section provides an overview of the funding currently in use to provide parenting skills and family learning programmes.

25. An overview of funding

There are multiple funding streams for both parenting skills programmes and family learning programmes. A detailed analysis is included as Appendix eight. Many of the funding streams are currently still at the pilot stage, for example, the Parent Support Advisors programme, the Early Learning Partnerships and the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders.

Two of the three case study authorities in the study are facing severe financial reductions at a local authority level, and all three authorities are facing reductions and uncertainty in Learning and Skills Council funding.

26. Types of funding in the case study authorities

Table one illustrates the range of main funding streams accessed in the case study authorities:

Table one: Funding streams

	Coventry	Essex	Suffolk
Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP)	P		
RESPECT funding	P		P
LSC Personal and Community Development Learning	P & FL	P	P
LSC Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy	FL	FL	FL
LSC Wider Family Learning	FL	FL	FL
LSC Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities			P & FL
Extended Schools Funding	P & FL		
Excellence in Cities	P		

Section six: funding the programmes

	Coventry	Essex	Suffolk
Early Years Development Funding	P		
New Deal for Communities	P & FL		
SureStart	P & FL	P & FL	
Children's Fund	P		
Transitions Pathfinder		P	
Parenting Orders funding			P
European Social Fund			FL
Ormiston Trust			FL
Partnerships and in kind funding	P & FL	P & FL	P & FL

27. Funding challenges

Local authorities raised concerns of the tensions between disjointed and inconsistent funding streams and the need to maintain an overall strategic vision of provision in this area.

For example, in Coventry the RESPECT funding for parenting programmes is managed by the Youth Offending Team whilst the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder is managed by the Children and Families Education Service.

Whilst in Newcastle, the Learning and Skills Council Family Learning Funding is managed by the Chief Executives Department, the Parent Support Advisers pilot is managed by the Head of Inclusion and Pupil Support in Children and Young People's Directorate and the RESPECT agenda for parenting is managed by the Regeneration Directorate.

Some local authorities chose to fund a small number of parenting skills programmes through the Learning and Skills Council's Personal and Community Development Learning funding stream. These programmes are not classed as a Skills for Life programme and this means that some parents on programmes fall into a fee paying category. This causes a considerable challenge in some areas.

Section six: funding the programmes

In Essex, additional funding is brought into family learning and parenting provision through working with partners, for example, use of premises in a joint project with Harwich Hospital, childcare support. Senior staff ensure that partners understand the need to bring resources to the table as part of good partnership arrangements when planning programmes to meet joint outcomes.

For most local authorities involved in the study demand outstrips the capacity to provide courses through the above funding streams.



Findings: the learner voice

This section shares the key messages from the interviews with learners.

28. An overview of interviews with families

In each of the case studies we requested an interview with a group of learners on a family learning programme and a group of learners on a parenting skills programme. Where this was not possible we carried out interviews with individual learners who had attended the programmes. Whilst our sample was relatively small, 32 in total, there was consistency in the views of the learners across the case study authorities.

29. Publicity and marketing

In each of the locations parents expressed the need for clearer and easier to access information on parenting skills and family learning programmes.

Parents discussed the national media publicity on parenting skills courses. They felt that this was often very negative and portrayed them as failing. They wanted the recognition that being a parent *“is a really hard job and they are doing their best”* and actually choosing to attend parenting skills courses should be seen as a positive attribute.

We found a gender imbalance on programmes with the majority of learners being female. One male learner felt that marketing could be better focused. He felt that the notion of a parenting course could be seen as stigmatising. He suggested that it would better to market courses as managing children’s behaviour, the chance to talk to other parents and focus some advertising for fathers.

30. Gaining easy access to services

When asked where they would turn for help parents gave a range of answers including family, health visitor, key worker, GP, Sure Start staff and the Youth Offending Service. One parent felt that after attending a confidence and assertiveness programme that she would now be confident to turn to the health visitor for support whereas she would not have done in the past.

In a few cases, learners expressed a lack of understanding on the local estate about the role and purpose of the local children's centre.

Some parents on the family learning programmes identified a gap in universal services to support them once their children were aged one and would like more automatic support as their children grow older.

Other learners raised issues of lack of available childcare as a barrier to learning. One parent had started new employment since joining the course. This parent felt that employers' attitudes acted as a barrier to continued attendance.

31. Learning journeys

Interviews with parents highlighted the many differing learning journeys. Parents move between college courses, parenting skills programmes, wider family learning programme, family literacy, language and numeracy programmes and employment depending on personal circumstances and over varying periods of time, but never in neat straight lines. We have defined these as *spiky learning journeys*. For example, one mother was attending a family literacy programme with her youngest child who was diagnosed on the autistic spectrum. She had previously dropped out of an engineering course, had recently started a nursery nursing programme and was working to gain her level 2 National Test in literacy as part of the Family literacy programme and to support her nursery nurse course.

Parents highlighted the key role their tutor had played in supporting them to move onto other learning opportunities. We found tutors had ready access to information and advice about other learning opportunities in the community.

One manager explained that parents would often attend a parenting skills course to deal with a specific issue relating to their child/ren at a particular time and progression from this course may not be wanted or appropriate. This causes a particular problem in relation to parenting skills programmes funded through the Learning and Skills Council.

32. Learning outcomes

All learners articulated personal gains from the programmes. Many felt that the courses had enabled them to understand their children better and be better parents. Various benefits were reported including being able to take a step back, better communication with children, not losing their temper or *“getting wound up.”* The learners enjoyed the support of the group. One parent reported her child had said: *“Mummy you feel happier.”* Another learner stated: *“I’ve been given the tools to really listen to my children and have increased confidence to bring them up.”*

Other learners identified long-term changes in patterns of family behaviour. For example, one parent stated: *“My husband’s mother, she’s really pro-smacking, and I just don’t do that. What this gives you is other things you can do.”*

However, *An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Parenting Programmes for Parents on Statutory and Voluntary Parenting Orders* (2003: Smeeth) in Suffolk reported that whilst most parents reported positive changes in parenting competencies as a result of taking part in the programmes, there was little evidence of changes in children’s behaviour. The evaluation indicates that the long term effectiveness of the programmes may lie in helping participants to parent their other children. It recommends that a tracking process is built into parenting programmes to help establish whether participation in the programmes produce any long-term improvements for parents and their young people.

One parent in a school who had improved her own skills and now acted as a volunteer described the family learning programmes as throwing a *“pebble into a pond”* with the ripples of learning and increased confidence spreading out into the local community.

8

The challenges for local provision

This section reviews the challenges faced by practitioners and shares examples of best practice.

33. The learners' views

Publicity

From each of the detailed case studies learners wanted easier access to information on courses, programmes and how to gain support. Learners expressed the desire for different types of local publicity that attracted fathers, reduced stigma of parenting courses and enhanced the understanding of employers.

Coventry City Council has used project funding from the Parent Early Intervention Project to create and recently launch a one-stop central point for information, publicity and support on all parenting and family learning matters throughout the city.

34. The operational perspective

Measuring progression

Many learners in this area have “*spiky learning journeys*” and move between college courses, parenting skills programmes, wider family learning programme, family literacy, language and numeracy programmes and employment depending on personal circumstances and over varying periods of time, but never in neat straight lines. Managers are currently struggling to develop systems to capture and measure this, capture the wider community development elements and meet the requirements of funding and inspection bodies.

Section eight: The challenges for local provision

Resources

Ensuring a consistency of effective resourcing of programmes remains a challenge in some areas. The availability of childcare was critical to all courses and providers sometimes need to ensure that partners are fully committed to the project to ensure parents in some school settings have adequate accommodation.

Parenting skills courses funded through the Learning and Skills Council are not automatically free depending on income levels. In some areas this hampered the inclusion of “*hard to reach*” parents.

Quality improvement

Multi-agency working across parenting skills and family learning programmes is bringing challenges as to the types of quality improvement frameworks to be used and the methods of ensuring consistently good experiences to the participants. The learner focused quality agenda has been a hard fought journey in the adult and community learning sector. This approach is not always being replicated in some of the new work. Existing expertise built around subcontracting is not always being transferred into the developing commissioning approach.

Some local authorities are using imaginative combinations of funding and expertise across directorates to address this.

At Essex County Council the Family Learning and Parenting Support Group has started work on developing an overarching quality framework. The group has taken the range of quality framework needed for the provision that falls under its remit, for example, the Common Inspection Framework, Building Blocks of Quality, Inspiring Learning for All, National Standards for Childcare and Early Years and mapped these against the five Every Child Matters Outcomes. Twelve additional Essex framework requirements have been included for providers, for example, DDA compliance, asset plan, CRB checks, staff skills audit, parent/child feedback strategy.

Section eight: The challenges for local provision

The curriculum offer

Local authorities are finding it a challenge to keep a broad and balanced curriculum, particularly for parenting skills programmes. Concerns were expressed about the dominance of the evidence based / manual based parenting skills programmes and the need to ensure effective measurement and evaluation of the impact on children and families of a full range of programmes from universal to high level interventions. Services felt that some of the programmes they had developed focussed on local needs were not always being considered.

Professionals working with families needing a high level of intervention stressed the differences in needs and curriculum for targeted interventions to universal programmes. Concerns were expressed to develop systems to ensure that families are referred to the most appropriate programme for their needs and that differences in issues such as attendance rates were recognised and acknowledged in monitoring systems. For example, one interviewee reported the unsuitability of the concept of the “*naughty step*” for a family where the child had an attachment disorder. Family learning staff were keen to ensure that it was recognised that much of their work was carried out with families needing level 2-3 interventions.

Staff recognised the challenge of addressing compulsory attendance on parenting courses and the need to build an ethos of learners wanting to attend and making the decision to commit to the courses.

35. The strategic perspective

Policy changes

Policy change in this area is rapid, wide-ranging and encompasses many different aspects of provision. Staff find it challenging to join up the policies into a coherent local structure when the funding streams, policies and targets are not joined up at a national level. Additional challenges exist when implementing the changes across a two-tier authority.

Ensuring a coherent strategic approach

Some authorities are developing a joint parenting support and family learning strategy. All acknowledge that the journey to joint strategic working in this area and often across directorates in the local authority

Section eight: The challenges for local provision

has been a challenging one, but paying enormous dividends. One interviewee stated: *“the lack of mutual professional knowledge is the single biggest barrier to effective inter-agency working.”*

Staff highlighted the need for additional training and CPD to ensure effective multi-agency working.

Local authorities found that developing a joint strategy supports the development of coherent local provision for the range of families and types of interventions. Learning points from local authorities are to allow enough time for inter-professional debate and to sort out a clear framework and understanding of the terminology used.

Suffolk County Council have developed a county strategy for working with parents and parental care givers. It offers a coherent framework for everyone working with parents and families. It includes guidance on involving parents in planning, delivering and reviewing services. It promotes common standards across all areas.

In some authorities the restructuring whilst moving towards new Children’s Trust and Adult Services provision has developed artificial barriers between the types of provision. In the move to develop new programmes for Children’s Centres and Extended Services there are examples of *“re-creating the wheel”* and not learning from existing practice of what works and what does not.

In all three detailed case studies further restructuring is taking place affecting the staff delivering this provision and providing additional uncertainty.

Strategic positioning

A clear message from the three detailed case studies is that with such rapid policy change and internal restructuring it is critical to review the strategic positioning of family learning programmes. In particular, to ensure that the role of family learning, as contributing to the school improvement agenda and other strategic objectives is recognised and developed.

Section eight: The challenges for local provision

Where effective practice was most evident there was a clear understanding of the different roles and remits of the two areas but also very clear models too for joint working and exploiting the overlaps between the two programme areas. Some services, for example, the Isle of Wight, have produced publicity materials outlining these roles, links and responsibilities.

Partnership working

In all of the case studies the examples of sound and effective partnership working have been developed over a number of years. In Essex work has developed from an early Education Action Zone; on the Isle of Wight joint working started with a Single Regeneration project. The Coventry approach has taken seven years to build and is based on a lengthy history of work on parenting programmes. Partners stressed the time it takes to build up these working relationships and establish levels of trust.

Colleagues at the research seminar stressed that everyone had a tremendous will to work together on the new agendas but needed further guidance on the “how to” across complex new agendas and structures. They also stressed the need for capacity built into job roles to make this happen.

Concerns were raised about short-term funding initiatives and the damage on communities of start / stop partnerships, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation and the additional work and skill needed to overcome the local cynicism for initiatives.

The research highlighted the change to some partnership arrangements where the focuses of resources were being moved from universal and preventative provision to more targeted interventions. For example, the changing roles of school nurses and health visitors have hampered their ability be involved in the joint delivery of family learning and parenting skills programmes in some localities.

Local Area Agreements

For the majority of local authorities participating in this research Local Area Agreements are not the key driver for multi-agency provision in this area. In some authorities the strategic links are in place but there has not yet been time to follow through to action plans which impact on managers at an operational level. Varying requirements from regional

Section eight: The challenges for local provision

government offices have impacted on local flexibility to include targets for this area.

In many local authorities the Children and Young People's Plan is being used more effectively than the LAA to develop multi-agency working.

However, the research identified effective developments in the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth.

Two years ago on the Isle of Wight the priorities of the Council changed with a change of political leadership. There is a commitment from the Council to increase enrolments for adult learning on the island and to deliver family learning in every school on the island. The island had an early Local Area Agreement and family learning is included in this.

Family Learning features in all four blocks of Portsmouth's LAA and a target has been set for parenting courses. This has enabled the Adult and Family Learning Service to provide expertise to improve the quality of data available through their Management Information system, the quality of provision, and to begin to measure impact through their learner post course postcard tracking system.

The role of the lead practitioner

There is uncertainty about how the role of the lead professional and the family's ability to choose provision will impact on this area of work.

9

Policy recommendations

This section draws together the views of managers, practitioners and learners in the field about the policy changes needed to improve their work.

36. Recommendation one: Develop closer working across government departments on parenting and family learning initiatives

Participants requested closer working across government departments on parenting and family learning initiatives with:

- a clearer focus on joint targets across agencies to diminish difficulties around competing agendas,
- simpler outcomes and targets that can be decided at local level and passed out between services and partners,
- clearer co-ordination of funding at a national level with more emphasis on secured long-term funding,
- the joining up of pilot initiatives,
- clearer guidance on the use of funding allocated to extended services,
- more guidance on commissioning,
- a clearer recognition of the differences between types of authorities and the challenges faced by county councils.

And several pleas from strategic managers:

“Ask for recognition from Government of the huge job we’ve got to make sense of and implement the new policy agenda. It takes time.”

“Recognition of the wide range of family learning and parenting support available and that there is a wider range of options to meet varying needs”.

37. Recommendation two: Agree the definitions and terminology to be used and adopt a consistent approach across policy documents

Research participants highlighted the differences of use of terminology in policy documents and the need to establish a clearer set of definitions to support their work and ensure that there is no confusion between the distinctive roles of family learning, parenting skills and individual parenting support interventions.

38. Recommendation three: Promote a recognition of the equal and inter-related nature of all work with parents and families in policies relating to the current change agenda

Participants emphasised the need for a balanced approach across policy developments for both parenting support and family learning.

The research has highlighted the need for the debate about the respective roles of parenting support, parenting skills programmes and family learning and a clearer recognition as to how family learning supports the Every Child Matters agenda.

Participants suggested the following actions to support this recommendation:

- a recognition that family learning and parenting support each other and can sit together: *“bolt the two strategies together more effectively”*,
- support with more written guidance and practical strategies to make the new agendas happen, with the guidance informed by practitioners on the ground,
- a clearer recognition of family learning’s contribution to the Every Child Matters agenda,
- improved integration of family learning and parenting policies with the extended services agenda,
- a requirement that the parenting support strategy in every local authority includes family learning.

39. Recommendation four: Enhance the support for preventative work in the new agendas

This research has highlighted the valuable contribution of parenting skills and family learning as preventative work with families, for example, some courses have given parents and carers the skills and confidence to seek help and address concerns at an early stage. However, participants highlighted the trend towards moving resources to more targeted interventions and the adverse effect of this on the more universal preventative services for families at lower levels of risk. The change was particularly being felt in relation to health provision. Participants requested a review of this approach and the impact of these changes on local families.

40. Recommendation five: Develop a quality framework for both parenting skills and family learning with effective recognition of the costs involved

Local authorities are facing challenges to develop a wide-ranging quality framework that puts the family at the centre and meets all the needs of funding and inspection regimes. There is no consistency of approach in the move towards commissioning and existing expertise built up around subcontracting is not always being used.

Participants highlighted the need for the new quality framework to:

- work across all agendas and outcomes,
- be built around effective quality indicators,
- include staff time for developing and ensuring implementation of effective quality improvement agendas,
- for funding streams to have an element dedicated specifically for the quality improvement role and evaluation against common criteria.

41. Recommendation six: Provide further guidance on ensuring effective partnership working

Participants stressed that everyone had a tremendous desire to work together on the new agendas but needed further guidance on the “how to” and capacity built into job roles to make this happen. Elements of this guidance were suggested as:

- support to ensure multi-agency working at the delivery stage of both family learning and parenting skills programmes,
- a clear steer that both family learning and parenting programmes should be delivered in a wide range of venues and not just schools because of the impact on “school-phobic” parents and children,
- dedicated resources to make partnership working happen,
- resources for multi-disciplinary support teams to be based around local schools, children’s centres and health centres.

42. Recommendation seven: Require that parents and carers and voluntary sector representatives are actively involved in the development of the joint parenting support and family learning strategy

The views of learners and voluntary sector partners have been critical in shaping this research, in particular the responses to needing clearer publicity, views about programmes, progression and the images of courses and the developments for partnership working. In one authority, a democracy project seeking the views of learners has shaped the response to Every Child Matters and the development of a sixth ECM outcomes relating to families staying together, communities and a wider sense of intergenerational learning.

43. Recommendation eight: Ensure that there is a flexible curriculum for parenting skills programmes

Concerns were frequently expressed about the focus on the promotion of the manual based parenting skills programmes, for example, Webster-Stratton and Triple P, when other programmes developed locally to meet local needs may have equal merit and be appropriate to use.

Local authority staff requested a balanced local curriculum to ensure that all models were included. Participants requested a recognition of the need for a responsive, flexible and attractive parenting skills curriculum particularly where there was a compulsory attendance and a need to sustain effective engagement.

44. Recommendation nine: Improve national publicity on parenting

Parents and professionals alike highlighted the impact of negative publicity about parenting. Parents wanted a clear recognition that they were doing a hard job and *“doing their best”* and professionals highlighted the difficulties of the images in the media of parenting skills courses being seen for *“parents who are failing”*.

Parents highlighted the need to have publicity for fathers and to sell the message of the benefits of parenting skills programmes to employers.

Equally practitioners wanted to ensure that the new Parenting Commissioners were well informed about the full and incredibly wide range of work in this area.

Section nine: Policy recommendations

A key element throughout the research was the need to foster greater recognition of parenting skills programmes as an element of adult learning.

Practical solutions suggested to achieve this recommendation were:

- positive national publicity on parenting to reduce the current perceived stigma on attending parenting skills programmes,
- better publicity for parents about children's centres and Sure Start,
- national advertising focused at fathers,
- national advertising focused at employers to enable working parents to attend courses,
- make it the norm for parents to access services.

45. Recommendation ten: Implement a training strategy for all staff in the schools sector on working with families

Interviews highlighted gaps in understanding across agencies on working with families. Specific actions to support this recommendation are:

- build sessions on family learning, working with parents and the role of an extended school into the initial training of all teachers,
- provide a similar capacity building programme for all staff working on the Extended Services agenda and the Parent Support Advisors programme developed and delivered by parenting skills and family learning experts,
- multi-agency training.

46. Recommendation eleven: Ensure that all staff providing courses in parenting skills and family learning are trained for purpose

The research interviews identified varying levels of staff training prior to delivering programmes, in some cases with as little as three days training before delivering parenting skills programmes. Qualifications are currently being developed for Working with Parents matched to the National Occupational Standards⁵. Similarly, development work is taking place to create qualifications for family learning staff linked to the Family Learning National Occupational Standards. It is planned that there will be a

⁵ This is being developed by Parenting UK, for further information see <http://www.parentinguk.org/>

Section nine: Policy recommendations

common set of modules for working across parenting and family learning with additional specialist modules⁵.

Interviewees were keen that joint multi-agency training takes place locally and that effective referral systems are built into the training.

47. Recommendation twelve: Commission long term research on the impact of parenting skills and family learning

Practitioners highlighted the need for a longitudinal study on the impact of parenting skills and family learning programmes to explore the life-changing impact of both programmes. Participants were clear on the need to gain long term evidence of the outcomes and effectiveness of both areas of work.

48. Recommendation thirteen: Commission research on the methods of recording the social benefits of family learning and parenting skills programmes

The research identified the challenges of measuring and capturing progression in this field, in particular in relation to the outcomes related to gains in community coherence, the wider family and in terms of the building blocks of social mobility. Providers highlighted their need for support in developing a systematic approach in this area.

49. Recommendation fourteen: Set up a reference group of expert practitioners in the field to inform Government discussions

This research has highlighted many of the realities of the challenges of implementing policy on the ground. Practitioners wanted to share their experiences of attempting to weave all the policy changes together so that they support local families.

⁵ See NIACE Family Learning Matters Topic Paper No 2.

Appendix one: Detailed case study: Coventry City Council

50. The context

The city of Coventry has a population of 300,848 and covers an area of 38 square miles. 21.7% of the population are from Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities. The population has a changing profile of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers, for example, in 2005/06 approximately 1000 school age children and young people arrived in the city. The population is younger than average, with 42% under the age of 30.

The economic profile of the city has changed from the previous manufacturing base to a more diversified range of businesses and service industries. The city has been successful in reducing unemployment rates. However, there is an increasing gap between the areas of affluence and the poverty in areas of deprivation. Coventry now ranks 64th out of the 354 authorities in terms of socioeconomic deprivation and there is considerable deprivation and economic disadvantage in the north and north east of the city, with smaller pockets in other locations. Figures from the 2001 census show that 9% of Coventry's population and 20% of the city's 0-19 year olds live in areas ranked within the top 10% most deprived in England.

Nearly one fifth of children and young people live in households where there is overcrowding, unemployment or a lone parent. 10% of babies born in Coventry in 2004 had low birth weights.

In 2005-06, 37.8% of young people in Coventry's schools achievement 5 or more grades A*-C including English and mathematics at GCSE or equivalent, compared to the national average of 45.8 %.

51. The City Council and its strategic approach

In the Corporate Performance Assessment for 2006 Coventry City Council is judged to be improving well with a 3 star overall performance rate. The assessment recognises that the Council is making faster progress than many other councils. It highlights that the strong and committed leadership and a good understanding of user and community need are helping the Council to perform well. It recognises that good partnership working is increasing the Council's capacity.

The Council's performance framework operates through three levels: the Corporate Plan, cabinet member strategic plans and operational plans. The Council has seven corporate objectives including: improving

Appendix One detailed case study - Coventry City Council

the quality and efficiency of services, ensuring the best quality education for all, regenerating the city, promoting health, independence and choice for all citizens, creating a city where people feel safe and confident and no-one is disadvantaged by the neighbourhood in which they live, making the city clean and green and actively promoting equality so that people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.

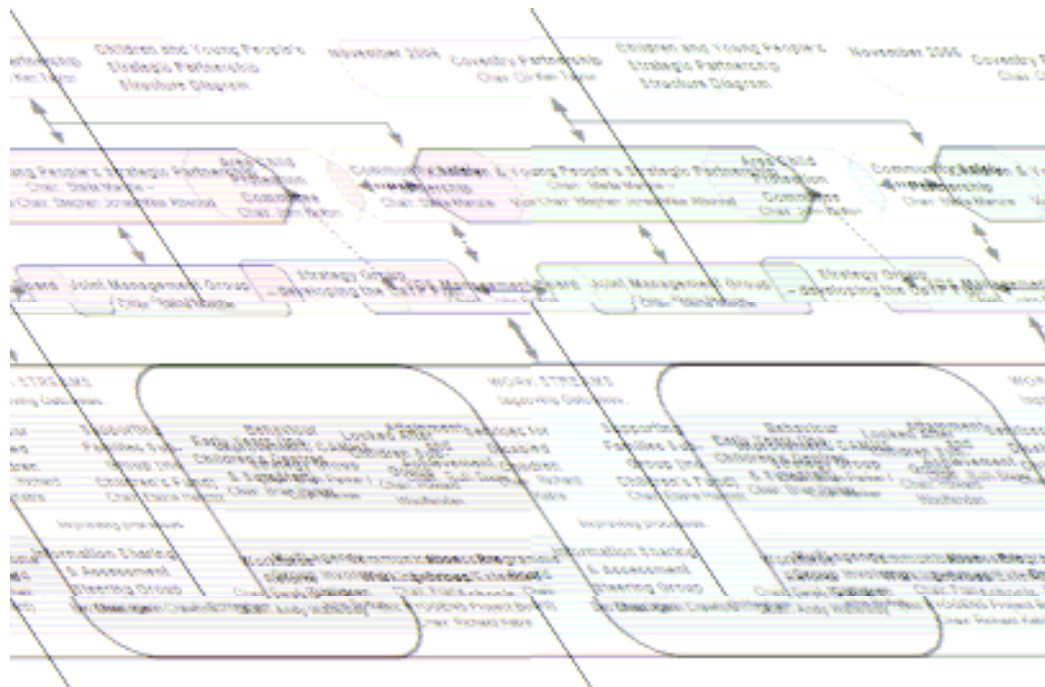
The Local Area Agreement (LAA), 'Progress through Prevention', contains eight strategic themes spread over the four blocks of children and young people, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities and older people, and economic development and enterprise. Each of the eight themes has a supporting group that develops and co-ordinates the work priorities, for example, the priorities of the Learning and Training (for adults) theme include encouraging access to education and training for more adults and providing people with the skills needed for employment, business success, innovation and growth. The priorities in the LAA link with the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan.

Coventry Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CCYPSP) is a multi-agency group representing interests across education and learning, schools, social care, health, Connexions, police and the voluntary sector. It was established in 2003 and is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council with the Joint Chief Executives of the Primary Care Trust as the Vice-Chairs. It reports to the Coventry Strategic Partnership. See Figure 1 below.

The CCYPSP has established a series of sub-groups that focus on improving outcomes and processes. For outcomes these include: Early years (including Children's Centres & Sure Start), Services for disabled children, Looked after children, Supporting families (including Children's Fund), Behaviour improvement/Children Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) Strategy group and Attainment and achievement. For processes these include: Multi-agency group involving children, Accessible services / extended schools, Informing Sharing & Assessment Steering Group, Workforce Reform, Communication Working Group and the Programme Board. However the sub group structure is currently being refined to improve reporting arrangements for the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and in line with the CPA assessment.

Appendix One detailed case study - Coventry City Council

Figure 1: Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership structure diagram.



Coventry Children and Young People's Commissioning Board is a subgroup of the CCYPSP. It ensures that services are jointly and efficiently commissioned. Its objectives include leading on the strategic planning of services for children, young people and their families and carers, including the production, review and revision of the CYPP.

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) brings together a large number of plans from different agencies into a single, strategic, overarching plan for all children and young people's services across Coventry. Developed through the work of the CCYPSP, it is shaped around the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

Coventry has adopted a sixth local outcome for Every Child Matters following consultation with children and young people: having supportive families, friends and communities. The aims for the sixth outcome are: to tackle isolation and enable everyone to feel loved and cared for, to tackle challenging behaviour, promote emotional well-being, to develop positive relationships: in the home, in schools, in the community and to support families to stay together.

The CYPP has eight aims, seven of these link closely to the LAA. The aims reflect the vision of the Children's and Young People's Partnership developed with children and young people to ensure that services work together to find out what children want to make their lives better and work to keep families together.

Appendix One detailed case study - Coventry City Council

The Joint Area Review (JAR) of Coventry's services for Children and Young People was carried out in 2006. The outcomes for children and young people in Coventry and the management of the service were judged to be good. The report highlighted strong partnership working. All of the ECM outcomes were judged to be good, with the exception of "making a positive contribution" which was judged as outstanding.

52. The structure of family learning and parenting support in Coventry

Coventry has a long history of delivering parenting programmes in a multi-agency setting.

The Supporting Families Subgroup was convened in January 2005. The current nominated Parenting Support Commissioner reports to and supports this group. The group carried out an audit, funded through the Children's Fund, to assess the number and types of services in Coventry falling under the umbrella of Family Support. The audit highlighted a wide range of courses but identified geographical gaps in provision in parts of the city and issues of consistency in the way some programmes were delivered.

Following the audit, a Quality Standards Group was established to bring a considered approach to the planning and overview of parenting programmes in the city. The group comprises a champion for each of the main parenting programmes operating in the city, these are: Handling Children's Behaviour (NCH, the children's charity (NCH) Cornerstone), Webster Stratton's Incredible Years (Social Care), Hanen Programme – You Make the Difference (Education & Speech Therapy), Solihull Approach (PCT and Sure Start), Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (Youth Offending Service (YOS) & Children and Family Education Service), Living with Teenagers (YOS), Family Links' Nurturing Programme (CAMHS) and Speak Easy (NCH).

From 2002-2005 NCH Cornerstone with CAMHS ran the Parent Support Network Project. As part of the project a high profile conference took place in 2005 and the key message from this was that parenting programmes are only truly effective when they are delivered in the way that the originators intended i.e. with fidelity, and the group has adopted this approach. The Quality Standards Group has developed quality standards for all of the programmes that it endorses or funds.

With funding from the Children's Fund, Parent Group Leader training has been provided for more than 50 workers over a range of disciplines in the Family Links Nurturing programme.

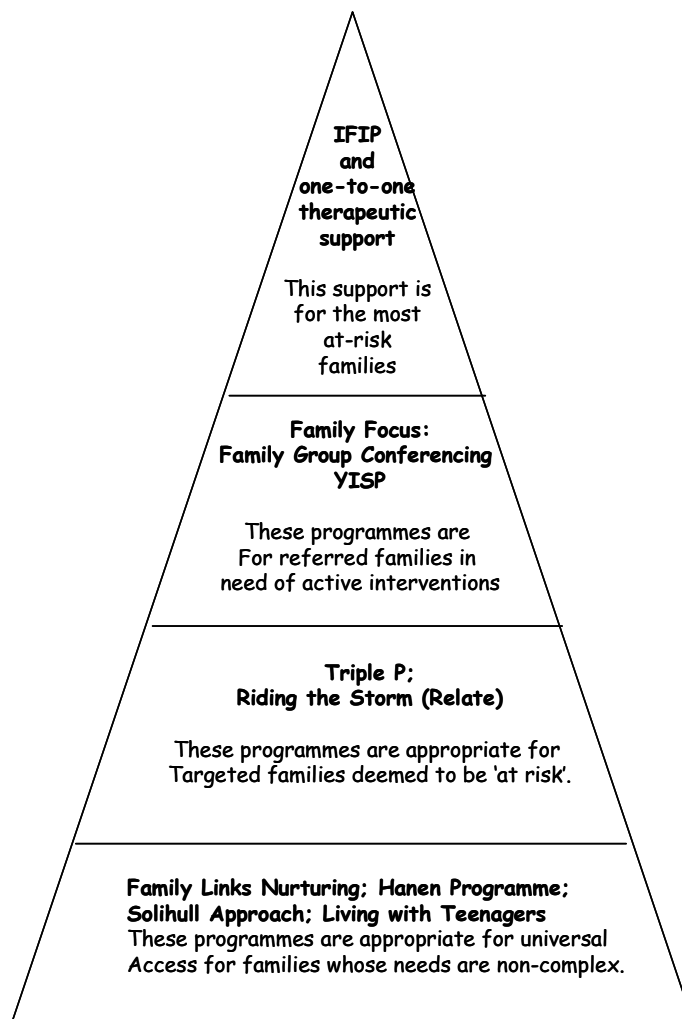
The Council has also been successful in attracting additional project funding through the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP) and

Appendix One detailed case study - Coventry City Council

this will enable an infrastructure across the city to support parenting programmes. It will concentrate on Triple P programmes targeted at families deemed to be at risk.

Types of parenting skills programmes are linked to the levels of need. There are specific programmes for families with priority needs known to a number of organisations, for example, the Family Focus project funded through neighbourhood renewal funding and the Intensive Family Intervention Project funded through RESPECT and operating through the Youth Offending Team. (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Parenting skills programmes linked to levels of need



IFIP =Intensive Family Intervention Programme
YISP = Youth Inclusion and Support Panel

The Council is still developing its parenting support strategy. A “Parents as First Educators” strategy already exists, this includes parenting and family learning programmes. There is also a service plan for family

Appendix One detailed case study - Coventry City Council

learning. It is intended that all of these strategies will be brought together, although at the time of the research the precise format had not been decided. Senior managers are clear that the overall strategy also needs to include aspects of the Adult Learning strategy, particularly as adult learning is now split across directorates.

Family learning is located in the Children and Family Education Service and is part of the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate. The service is currently delivered through three operational districts, each headed by a Children and Family Education Manager and reporting to a Strategic Officer. One of these managers takes the strategic lead for family learning across the city.

The Children and Family Education Service delivers social and personal development programmes for primary aged children, family learning programmes to support parents/carers in their role as first educators of their children and crèche programmes to enable parents/carers to access City Council Adult Education programmes and Family Learning programmes.

As part of the re-organisation of Children, Learning and Young People's services this will change to a Children's Neighbourhood Services management structure. The structure will include three geographical divisions, each with a children's, early years, young people's and neighbourhood social care team, with a citywide specialist social care team responsible for safeguarding and intake team, children with disabilities, YOS and Looked after Children.

Family learning programmes cover intergenerational programmes and programmes to support parents/carers. Programmes are delivered in 70 venues including schools and community settings. The success of delivery relies upon strong partnership working with schools, extended schools clusters, Sure Start, Children's Centres and other agencies. For example, the service works with the transport museum on Coventry Kids in the Blitz.

The curriculum is wide ranging and includes Family literacy/ESOL, Family numeracy, Family finance, Keeping up with the children, Family science, Family ICT, Explore and learn programmes, Footsteps into Books, into Number and into Our World, Storysacks, Making and playing games, Learning in the Early Years, Language and Play, You make the difference – parent child interaction programme, Healthy families, Family first aid, Parenting courses, Speakeasy for parents, Fun for fathers and Baby and me.

The curriculum offer has over 20 different programmes that are accredited through the Open College Network. Other accredited programmes such as the Family Links Nurturing programme are delivered as well as the full range of Family Literacy and Numeracy qualifications.

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There were 2772 parent and carer enrolments and over 1200 children involved on programmes during the academic year 2004/05. 28% of these parents/carers were from BME groups. The overall achievement rate was 90%, retention rates were 90% and 94% of learners identified they would go onto another learning opportunity. 95% of parents said they felt more confident in supporting their child's learning as a direct result of their engagement on a programme.

Family Learning was judged Good, Grade 2, when inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004. The service was one of the lead authorities on the national Skills for Families project. It has also led on the development of a national benchmarking group of local authority officers involved in family learning. This group has recently renamed as the Family Learning Local Authority Group (FLLAG).

Since April 2006 the Adult Education Service in Coventry has been located in the Community Services Directorate along with services for Older People, Adults and Housing Strategy, and Culture, Leisure and Libraries.

Family learning is one of the six priority areas for the Adult Education service in its current development plan. Priorities for family learning include: maximising the opportunities being created by the development of the new Children's Service and Every Child Matters outcomes, ensuring that programmes are part of the new regional web-based service directory, reviewing existing programmes and develop new programmes that are appropriate to the needs of parents/carers, contributing to the development of quality standards for parent/carer programmes, increasing the number of learners, reviewing the current strategy and implementing changes, working with partners in children's services to ensure progression routes for parents/carers onto Adult Education service programmes, raising the profile of family learning and the benefits to both adults and children, embedding the initial assessment framework into all family learning programmes, and recruiting more male learners.

Coventry has a unique approach to ensuring that learners on family learning and parenting skills programmes benefit from the expertise in both Children, Learners and Young People and in the Adult Education Service. The Children and Family Education Manager with responsibility for Family Learning programmes is a member of the strategic management team of both services: the Adult Education Service and the Children and Families Education service. She is fully involved in quality processes such as Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) and producing the Self Assessment Report. She is also currently based in the same office as the Head of Adult Education. Staff attend joint training, for example, on the Observation of Teaching and Learning and Adult Education staff with literacy and numeracy expertise teach on FLLN programmes. At a

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district level there are joint meetings between staff from both services. These arrangements enable effective joint working between the two services at an operational and management level, even though in different directorates of the Council.

The Adult Education Service was judged as Good for Leadership and Management and for the majority of its curriculum areas, with one area being judged as satisfactory at the inspection by Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004. The service also piloted the new arrangement for inspection of Adult and Community Learning in 2006. The unpublished pilot report, whilst recognising the good family learning programmes highlighted a lack of corporate strategic support for this work. Since the inspection the partnership has developed a 'parents as first educators' strategy led by CFES.

53. Funding

As outlined above the parenting support programmes in Coventry are funded through a number of different routes, for example, the RESPECT funding is with the Youth Offending Team, and the PIEP programme is managed by the Children and Families Education Service.

The programme of family learning and parenting programmes co-ordinated by the Children and Families Education manager is funded through the following streams: LSC Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL), LSC Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN), LSC Wider Family Learning, Extended Schools funding, Excellence in Cities, PIEP, Early Years development funding, New Deal for Communities, Surestart and Children's Fund. However there is uncertainty about future levels of funding from the LSC and there has been an overall reduction of £400,000 from the LSC contracts in 2006-07.

Staff in Coventry are proud of the multi-agency working on preventative work that has taken a number of years to establish and has been driven from the grass roots level. However, a number of interviewees commented with regret on recent changes to the pattern of this work, in particular on the reduced time available in job roles dedicated to preventative work, in particular, the roles of school nurses and health visitors.

54. The challenges of language: terminology used in Coventry

Currently there is no overarching title in use in Coventry that encompasses the full range of programmes of parenting support, parenting skills, family learning programmes and different strands of inter-generational learning.

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Discussion as part of the research elicited a range of views between various professional groups as to what parenting and family work encapsulates. A number of terms were rejected as being too narrow, for example, family support, parenting and working with parents.

There was an overwhelming consensus as to whatever the eventual nomenclature that it would need to be positive, attractive to the parents and families using provision and linked to Coventry's sixth Every Child Matters outcome of ensuring supportive family, friends and community.

The differences between family learning and parenting programmes were recognised alongside the roles each had in supporting each other.

Family learning is used by the Children and Families Education Service as the overarching definition for Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy, wider family learning and parenting skills programmes.

55. Learner voice

Two groups of learners were interviewed: one group combining those attending two parenting groups and one from a family learning programme.

When asked where they would turn to for help parents gave a range of answers including family, health visitor, key worker, GP, Sure Start staff and the Youth Offending Service. All parents felt it was hard to gain information on parenting skills programmes and on further learning opportunities. Parents interviewed on the Family Links programme were soon to receive a "What next" session to support progression opportunities.

Parents gave a very clear message about marketing and the image of the children's centres in local communities, for example one parent had heard a discussion that illustrated a lack of understanding about the role of the centres where a parent had thought it was "*where they take your children away*".

The parents on the family learning courses at a SureStart Centre expressed how the course had supported them to change patterns of intergenerational behaviour, for example, one parent stated: "*My husband's mother, she's really pro-smacking, and I just don't do that. What this gives you is other things you can do.*"

Other parents discussed the different images between centres, for example, at some local centres they felt that it was purely focused on childcare for working parents and had not felt it was possible to drop-in for support.

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Parents on the Family Links parenting skills course had all attended on a voluntary basis. They all felt that the course had enabled them to understand their children better and be better parents. Various benefits were reported including being able to take a step back, better communication with children, not losing their temper or “*getting wound up.*” The learners enjoyed the support of the group. One parent reported her child had said: “*Mummy you feel happier.*”

One parent felt it was difficult to attend courses as a dad and the feeling was that parenting skills courses were for mothers. However, he was made to feel very welcome, although it was “*nerve-wracking stepping through the door.*” He felt that as a result of the course that the time he did spend with his children was of better quality. He would recommend it to other dads. He felt that the notion of a parenting course could be seen as stigmatising. He suggested that it would be better to market courses as managing children’s behaviour, and the chance to talk to other parents. He also felt some advertising should be focused on fathers.

One parent had started new employment since joining the course. This parent felt that employers’ attitudes acted as a barrier to continued attendance.

Parents on the Family Learning programme identified that there was a gap in universal services to support them once their children were over one year old and would like more automatic support as their children grow older.

All parents were keen to engage in further learning. One parent was going on to do an ICT course and hoped to use a qualification to return to work now her children were growing older. Another parent had put her name down for the next available ICT course, whilst one had also undertaken the Webster-Stratton course. Parents on parenting skills programmes were considering family learning activities.

56. Good practice

Coventry makes good use of consultation with children, young people and learners. The additional Every Child Matters outcome resulted from a consultation project seeking the views of children about the vision for the Children and Young People’s Partnership. It is envisaged that this will support the city to engage families and communities in learning and use some of the new parent / family interventions to break the cycle of disadvantage by empowering communities through learning to give them strategies to ‘cope’ and ‘change’.

The Quality Standards Group is developing a basic quality standard for parenting skills course. The city’s approach is to ensure that there is fidelity to all programmes offered. The LSC funded family learning and parenting skills programme delivered by CFES adhere to quality

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standards of the Common Inspection Framework. Key staff recognise the challenge of developing a quality framework that all agencies can sign up to but without compromising rigour.

Coventry has adopted a unique approach to ensure there are clear operational links between family learning, parenting skills and adult learning even though based in different directorates of the Council.

We found much evidence of the commitment to strong multi-agency working that has been developed over a number of years. Parenting skills courses are dual taught by two people from different agencies. This enhances the experience of parents and carers and also gives learners a clear message that agencies in Coventry work together.

There is much evidence of staff embracing the new agendas and exploring different ways of working with new initiatives. For example, the PIEP programme has enabled work with the parents/carers of children in the 8-13 year old group. Through PIEP there will be a central information and outreach service for all parenting activities that will address the concerns identified by parents. New outreach workers will be employed to support parents who miss any session or cover any additional areas on a one to one basis. The extended schools service has funded a worker who will support schools to introduce Share, a family learning programme and ensure they meet effective quality standards.

57. Challenges for local provision

From the learners

Publicity: Learners expressed a desire for easier access to information on other programmes, courses and support.

Publicity: They also expressed a need for different types of publicity, for example, to attract fathers, to enhance the understanding of employers and to encourage more positive attitudes.

Consistency of resources: Parents identified a different focus between the centres.

An extension of universal support: Parents in one centre requested more universal support for when their children reached the age of one.

From operational staff

Measuring progression: staff are currently reviewing and identifying the most effective systems to measure learner progression from the programmes. In Coventry staff want to view progression in the widest sense of learning to match the definitions of the sixth Every Child Matters outcome and are considering how to capture and recognise

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multiple ways of progression whilst still meeting the requirements of the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Staff expressed concerns that the current management information system (MIS) is not sophisticated enough to meet their needs.

Resources and accommodation in schools: in some school settings appropriate accommodation for parents is not always available when the courses are taking place.

Quality improvement: Coventry are currently grappling with developing quality standards across all programmes which other agencies can sign up to but also meet the needs of the various quality bodies, for example, Ofsted.

Addressing compulsory attendance on parenting course: staff recognise and address the difficult area of compulsory attendance on courses and build an ethos of learners wanting to attend and commit to the courses.

From staff at a strategic level

Policy changes: staff operating at a strategic level stressed the challenge of joining up the planning of programmes in a rapidly changing policy environment especially when planning, funding and targets are not joined up nationally.

Promotion: A challenge is to increase the understanding throughout the Council of the role of family learning in strengthening school improvement and its contribution to other strategic objectives.

The role of preventative work: staff raised concerns about resources in the city being moved from preventative and universal provision into more targeted interventions. Discussions highlighted the challenges of measuring the outcomes of early intervention work and the need to consider the impact over a longer timescale.

Local Area Agreements: to date the LAA is not yet driving provision in this area. The strategic links are in place and these will impact on delivery at a local level in the future.

Developing the joint strategy: staff recognise the challenge of developing an effective strategy and action plans for parenting support, family learning and parenting skills that mirrors existing good practice at operational level and maintains Coventry's wider view of learning in communities and includes all the new agendas, for example, extended schools and children's centres.

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Integrating the role of the lead professional budget holder: the challenge of integrating the same philosophy for families to choose the services in this area was highlighted.

58. Recommendations

Interviewees in Coventry recommended the following policy changes to ensure better and more effective provision:

- the clear co-ordination of funding at a national level with more emphasis on secured long-term funding
- a more joined up approach from government departments on parenting initiatives
- joint targets across agencies to diminish difficulties around competing agendas and targets
- clear definitions and use of terminology in policy documents
- a recognition by government that parenting support should not be expanded at the expense of family learning
- a requirement that the parenting support strategy includes family learning
- a clear requirement to ensure multi-agency working at the delivery stage of both family learning and parenting skills programmes
- a clear requirement that parents and carers should be actively involved in the development of strategy
- long term research into the impact of parenting programmes
- a clear steer that both family learning and parenting programmes should be delivered in a wide range of venues and not just schools because of the impact on “school-phobic” parents
- a clearer requirement for preventative work
- a critical consideration by government of the implications of moving funding away from preventative work

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- positive national publicity on parenting to reduce the current perceived stigma on attending parenting skills programmes
- better publicity for parents about children's centres and Sure Start
- a recognition that parenting skills courses need to be attractive with a flexible curriculum to sustain effective engagement, even when attendance is compulsory.

Interviewees in Coventry

Strategic Officer, Children and Family Education Service

Parenting Commissioner

Tutor and two groups of parents on Family Links courses

Tutor and one group of parents on Family learning programme

Family Learning Curriculum Group

Children and Family Education manager

Family Centre Manager NCH Cornerstone Centre

Family Support Manager Social Care

Primary Mental health worker with CAHMS

Head of Neighbourhood Services

List of documents reviewed

Adult Learning Inspectorate (2004): Inspection report, Coventry LEA, ALL, Coventry

Audit Commission (2007) CPA assessment

Coventry City Council (2006) Achievement and Attainment Sub Group – Parents as First Educators Strategy (Plus some supplementary documents)- internal document

Coventry City Council (2006) Adult Education Service Development Plan 2006 – 2009, revised 2006

Coventry City Council (2006) Cabinet Member Children, Learning and Young People Strategic Plan 2006/07 – 2008/09

Coventry City Council (2006) Cabinet Member Culture, Leisure and Libraries Strategic Plan 2006/07 – 2008/09

Coventry City Council (2006) Coventry's Parenting Strategy – internal document

Coventry City Council (2006) Children and Family Education Service Briefing and structure charts

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Coventry City Council (2006) Family Learning Programmes Directory, Children & Family Education Service.

Coventry City Council (2006) 1st draft Children and Family Education Service – Development Plan 2006-2009

Coventry City Council (2006) Supporting Families Sub Group Action Plan 2006 – 2007 – internal document

Coventry City Council (2006) Work Programme for PEIP from Year beginning April 2006

Coventry City Council (2006) Working Together to Enable Children and Young People to have supportive families friends and communities: Report of the Coventry Sixth Outcome Conference.

Coventry Children and Young People's Commissioning Board (2006) Constitution/Terms of Reference

Coventry Parenting Support Network (2005) Building Positive Parents: Building Children's Futures. A proposal for comprehensive provision of positive parent-child interaction interventions for Coventry.

Coventry Partnership (2006) Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 2010 and appendices

Coventry Partnership (2006) Progress Through Prevention. A "refreshed" Local Area Agreement for Coventry (including Coventry's Community Plan)

Ofsted (2006) Joint Area review, Coventry Children's Service Authority Area, Review of Services for Children and Young People.

Miscellaneous documents: Examples of marketing materials

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59. The context

Essex is predominately a rural county which includes both affluent areas and some of the most deprived areas in the country. There are 12 district councils within Essex, with a population in 2004 of just over 1.33 million. The county has 40 areas that feature in the 20% most deprived in the country. In some areas economic deprivation is combined with a difficulty in accessing services. The south of the county is much more heavily populated and tends to have lower levels of educational attainment. Essex is subject to high levels of development pressures. Recruitment of sufficiently qualified staff in the children's workforce is a constant challenge.

Overall educational attainment is relatively high but a significant number of children are still not achieving Level 4 Key Stage 2 Maths and English. Essex has a skills deficit. Its citizens are more likely to have no qualifications and less likely to have a degree level qualification than nationally or regionally.

60. The County Council and its strategic approach

In the Corporate Performance Assessment for 2006 the County Council was judged to be improving well and demonstrating a 4 star overall performance. The new senior management team are delivering a wide-ranging change programme. The financial situation of the Council remains a challenge and the authority has set itself a target of delivering overall savings of £100 million over the period of 2006-07 to 2008-09.

The revised corporate plan has 27 key priorities in four strategic objectives areas: ensuring services improvement, strengthening community leadership, enhancing Essex's reputation and guaranteeing value for money.

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) gives priority to its children's and young people's work in one of the four delivery blocks. This block is responsible for school attainment targets, looked after children, youth work participation, acceptable behaviour contracts, the impact of crime on under 19s, and play strategies. The County Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CCYPSP) leads the Children and Young People's block. The LAA priorities for Children and Young

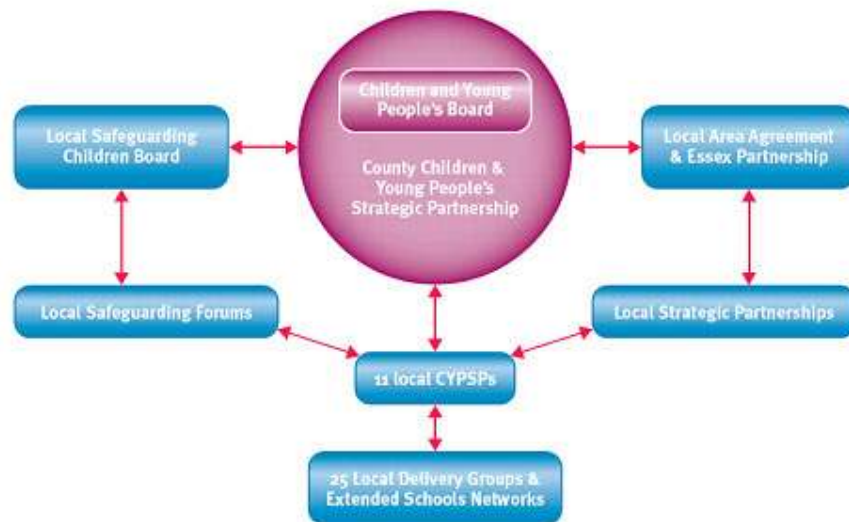
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People have been aligned with those in the Children and Young People's Plan. The CCYPSP has service level agreements with local Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships (CYPSPs).

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) has a vision to create a better future for all children and young people, their families and those who support them. Working with parents and carers is integrated as a priority throughout the plan. The County Council has taken a Children's Trust approach, rather than establishing a formal Children's Trust, to support the delivery of the CYPP and the LAA. The Trust approach consists of a County Partnership Board that reports to the Essex Strategic Partnership and 11 CYPSPs based in the districts and 25 Local Delivery Groups of schools.

Figure 3: Essex County Council: Children's Trust Approach

CHILDREN'S TRUST APPROACH



The CYPSPs are multi-agency partnerships involving the responsible statutory and voluntary agencies that commission and/or provide services to children and young people. Under the Change for Children Agenda the CYPSP network will provide the framework and mechanism to address the combined requirements of Every Child Matters, the DfES's five-year strategy for Children and Learners, and the Department of Health's National Service Framework for Children.

The Local Delivery Groups (LDGs) are groups of schools working together, linked with a range of services, to enable a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people, and their families and schools across neighbourhoods to raise achievement and reduce risk and vulnerability. One function of the LDG is to facilitate

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school participation/representation in CYPSPs. Most CYPSP areas in Essex have more than one LDG.

61. The structure of family learning and parenting support in Essex

Family learning is part of Adult Community Learning which has recently been relocated from Community Services to the External Relationships and Partnerships Directorate as part of the County Council's restructure of adult and children's services. The Adult Community Learning service is currently undergoing a further restructure to its provision to meet the demands of reductions in Learning and Skills Council funding. The current proposed restructure includes the family learning provision.

Adult and community learning classes are provided at a number of venues, including some community colleges, through a structure of four geographical divisions. There is a central Family Learning Manager who oversees the strategic direction and the co-ordination of the County's family learning provision. The service currently has six full-time equivalent family learning co-ordinators who are managed by and based in the local districts. Family Learning was graded as Good, Grade 2, at the inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004.

The Council agreed in December 2006 to establish a single Directorate for Schools, Children and Families Service. The new directorate brings together the Schools Service, Children and Young People's Service and Children's Service. It has four strands: Localities, Schools Improvement and Early Years, Vulnerable Children and Young People and Strategy and Business. The new Parenting Commissioner will be based in the Strategy and Business division but the role will spread beyond this with elements of parenting integrated into all four strands.

Essex County Council provides a wide variety of parenting skills provision for parents and carers. These range from intensive programmes for parents with the highest level of need, for example, The Safe Group, Parenting Support Groups, Parenting Teens group to open access programmes including workshops on dealing with anger; assertiveness; sibling rivalry; raising girls/boys; understanding the genders; confident children. Other local providers also deliver the manual based programmes, for example, Webster-Stratton, Incredible Years.

There is an equally wide-ranging family learning curriculum for parents/carers and children to learn together including Early Start, Keeping-up with the Children, Family Numeracy, Family Literacy, Dad's Clubs, story sacks, family creative crafts, family ICT, fun days. Families United with a local football club, languages, science, health and fitness. Parents and carers can gain a variety of types of accreditation including the National Tests in Literacy and Numeracy, eDDC computer

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qualifications, Open College Network qualifications and a range of key skills modules.

In 2005-06 Family Learning provision was delivered with a 171 partners, including schools, health, community and sports organisations and the voluntary sector.

Essex is also one of the pilot areas for the Transition Pathway Information Project that ensures families receive effective information at school change over periods. The family learning staff facilitate these sessions.

62. The integrated strategy for Family Learning and Parenting Support

A strategy group was formed in 2006 to ensure effective links between Family Learning and Parenting Support. The group currently includes representatives from Adult and Community Learning, Libraries, Social Care, Early Years and Childcare, School Improvement, Special Educational Needs and Psychology, and Extended Schools. It is planned to extend membership to include key external partners.

The group has taken the existing established Family Learning strategy and expanded it to include parenting support. This is seen as a working document to initiate activity and there are plans to revise the strategy in response to changing policy priorities. It provides an outline of family learning and parenting support, describes the role of the different parties in ensuring the provision of high quality services, and provides guidance to CYPSPs and delivery partners of what is required for such provision. It includes actions for the county council, the strategy group and local districts, CYPSPs and delivery partners.

The purpose of the group is to ensure the strategy reflects and informs local delivery; brings together stakeholders to share information and promote coordination; collates/summarises policies and ensures they drive the strategy appropriately; and assures the quality of provision for families. It is envisaged that a key role for the group will be to feed into countywide Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, although the existing structures of the partnership need to be revisited to ensure this happens. It is recognised that this group is in its infancy and currently evolving and that it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. Interviewees were clear on the number of challenges faced by the group to ensure that the needs of all families are met across the range of those with acute needs to universal provision.

There is a draft cross directorate plan to align responsibilities and for taking the strategy forward: it states the roles and responsibilities of Adult Community Learning, the Family Learning and Parenting Support Strategy Group and the Schools Service and Children's Service.

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The Family Learning and Parenting Support Group has started work on developing an overarching quality framework. The group has taken the range of quality framework needed for the provision that falls under its remit, for example, the Common Inspection Framework, Building Blocks of Quality, Inspiring Learning for All, National Standards for Childcare and Early Years and mapped these against the five Every Child Matters Outcomes. Twelve additional Essex framework requirements have been included for providers, for example, DDA compliance, asset plan, CRB checks, staff skills audit, parent/child feedback strategy. The group is currently seeking feedback on the framework.

It is envisaged that the strategy group will have a lead role in enabling and steering the commissioning process and will also become the focal point for funding, accountability and monitoring. It will draw on the existing group members' skills and expertise in quality systems and subcontracting. The group does not have its own funding and is beginning to address the challenges of quality monitoring in these circumstances where accountability lies elsewhere. The group facilitated some of the Sure Start Revenue Grant for programmes at LDG level. This highlighted the need for consistent monitoring and reporting requirements from all of the funding recipients.

The next stage for the group is to develop the action plan for the implementation of the strategy.

63. Funding

Essex shares the challenges of other Local Authorities of the need to operate in a reduced funding environment. In particular the challenges of the cost reduction programmes of the County Council, a reduction of the changes to the current levels of Children's Centres funding and changes for Adult Community Learning in relation to Learning and Skills Council funding.

Learning and Skills Council funding represented approximately 55 per cent of the total budget of the Adult Community Learning Service. The County Council provides support in kind with resources and services.

Additional project funding is provided through the Sure Start grant and through major project funding, such as the Transitions Pathfinder. A small number of the Parenting skills programmes are funded by the Learning and Skills Council. These programmes are not classed as a Skills for Life programme and this means that some parents on programmes fall into a fee paying category. This causes a considerable challenge to staff on the ground in attracting and maintaining learner numbers on universal parenting skills courses, particularly in Sure Start

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areas. Other programmes are funded through the Extended Services provision.

The County Council seeks additional external funding to support programmes. However, the co-ordination of a strategic Essex-wide approach to the application of funds for Family Learning through the Big Lottery has proved difficult.

Additional funding is brought into family learning and parenting provision through working with partners, for example, use of premises in a joint project with Harwich Hospital, childcare support. Senior staff ensure that partners understand the need to bring resources to the table as part of good partnership arrangements when planning programmes to meet joint outcomes.

64. The challenges of language: terminology used in Essex

The Essex Family Learning and Parenting Strategy group has been clear to define family learning:

Family Learning encompasses programmes and activities, with clearly measurable outcomes, that enable adult and children in family relationships to: learn about themselves and their communities, help them to acquire new skills and knowledge, enjoy family life, communicate and recognise that learning is a lifelong activity which is fun.

It is planned to develop a similar definition of parenting support as part of the work of the strategy group. The strategy group has enabled professionals from different disciplines to start the exploration process of finding a common terminology. Interviewees expressed a number of differing concepts around understanding of the language of parenting and family learning.

In Essex there is a clear recognition of the differences between family learning courses and parenting skills courses but also an understanding of the very strong links between the two areas. Long established partnership working has enabled elements of parenting skills to be embedded into some family learning activities but without diluting the intergenerational learning elements of the courses, for example, through the previous Education Action Zone and Sure Start in Tendring.

However, interviewees recognised the need to increase the understanding of family learning in parenting skills courses and the need to adopt the principles of an adult learning approach in the provision of some courses.

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On exploring the terminology with interviews, some felt that the quality of provision and support was much more important than the language used and wanted an ethos that embodied concepts such as embedding, supporting, nurturing, encouraging. Others felt that a shift in terminology from family learning to parenting was being reflected in the balance of provision at local level, with the LDGs and Extended Schools focussing more on parenting skills than family learning programmes.

A key focus was on the understanding by parents of the terminology used and to ensure the language of programmes was seen as non-judgemental. Parents on courses generally highlighted the negative stereotypes associated with the concept of parenting skills courses often portrayed in the media, however it was reported that the media popularity of programmes such as “super-nanny” has enabled some families with the highest levels of need to see interventions in a more positive way. Essex is still grappling with the overall approach to terminology and the over-arching name for the programmes: suggestions included support for parents and families, although it was thought that this may be seen to have negative connotations for some parents and carers.

65. Learner voice

When asked who they would turn to for help or support learners interviewed in Essex listed Sure Start, the tutor on the course, health professionals and the school. Parents expressed the need for better local publicity so that they know where to go for support.

One group of learners used the Confident Children programme as both a learning group and a support group. All had chosen to attend the course. Some mentioned the need for childcare provision at their location.

Learners found out about the programmes in a variety of ways including brochures, other courses, school liaison officers and the head teacher. Many wanted easier access to information and publicity.

Parents discussed the national media publicity on parenting skills courses. They felt that this was often very negative and portrayed them as failing. They wanted the recognition that being a parent “is a really hard job and they are doing their best” and actually choosing to attending parenting skills courses should be seen as a positive attribute.

One parent in a school who had improved her own skills and now acted as a volunteer described the family learning programmes as throwing a “pebble into a pond” with the ripples of learning and increased confidence spreading out into the local community.

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Learner evaluation forms from the parenting skills programme highlight the learning that has supported changes in behaviour, for example, “I’ve been given the tools to really listen to my children and have increased confidence to bring them up.”

On-going work in one Sure Start area has built effective relationships based on trust enabling learners who do not normally engage in programmes to take part. In this area there is a high level of engagement with parents and effective representation on the local Parent Board

66. Good practice

There is recent renewed political support to ensure effective involvement of and provision for parents in Essex across the range of County Council services. This will build on the priority given to involving and consulting parents in the Children’s and Young People’s Plan. This has significantly supported moving the agenda forward.

Essex is one of the first authorities to develop a joint parenting and family learning strategy. There is a realistic view of the challenges that the journey to this strategic approach has posed, however, the process has enabled a more effective multi-disciplinary base on which to develop future work. The group has used the channelling of funding from the Sure Start grant for provision at a local level to identify to future needs for effective quality improvement and monitoring. The new strategy will lead to a detailed action plan for implementation.

It is anticipated that the role of the parenting commissioner will not only work with all divisions in the Children and Young People’s service but also link and take guidance from the cross-county council Family Learning and Parenting strategy group. In this way inter-professional expertise and guidance will shape the provision for parents and carers in Essex.

The Strategy group’s approach to developing a multi-disciplinary quality framework is innovative. Once finalised, it will ensure effective quality systems that cross all professional boundaries, as outlined at point 20 above. It is planned to extend this work to cover all additional frameworks used by other partners as the strategy group is extended.

Essex carefully targets its curriculum for parents and carers to identified areas of local need, for example, the Confident Children parenting skills programme has been specifically focused to attract fathers in one area. The Council also recognises that focusing resources on early support in a universal manner for vulnerable families provides a preventative strategy whilst acknowledging the

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need to focus more specialist support for other families with specific needs.

The county uses its staff expertise in an innovative way. Essex is one of the first phase demonstration projects for the Transition Information Sessions (TIS) for parents. Essex, is one of the few local authorities to use its Family Learning practitioners to provide the sessions for parents on this project.

One school visited as part of the research provides an excellent model of best practice of an integrated approach of working to support families and breaking intergenerational cycles of low levels of learning. In this school, the head teacher actively champions a range of family learning courses and staff work with parents and carers to provide positive modelling for dealing with issues of behaviour and temper tantrums. The whole ethos of the school celebrates the importance of the work with parents and carers on family learning programmes and on parenting support because of the significant effect of this work on the outcomes for the children's learning.

There are many examples of effective partnership working to ensure access to imaginative and innovative provision that attracts and supports "hard to reach families", for example, work with Sure Start in the Tendring area. Staff stress the importance of the time spent to build up these partnerships and of good communications between all partners.

67. Challenges for local provision

From the learners

Publicity: Learners expressed a desire for easier access to information on courses and childcare facilities at all locations for parenting support programmes.

Progression routes proved a challenge in some cases, for example, one learner who had completed both a wider family learning course and a literacy programme was unable to start a Learning Support Assistant's course at the local community college because of the long waiting lists for places.

From operational staff

Resources: Limited resources featured frequently in interviews with some operational staff, for example, lack of funding to rent premises for childcare in some locations, the loss of a widening participation focus impacting on the ability to attract hard to reach learners and lack of locally available Information, Advice and Guidance in one area.

Appendix two: Detailed case study – Essex County Council

Charging policies: Staff raised concerns about the negative impact on the ability to attract the target learners because of the need to charge for some parenting skills programmes when funded through LSC provision.

Funding: Equally, it was felt by some staff that lots of short-term initiatives creates cynicism in communities which takes time and skill to overcome. It was stressed that good partnership working takes time and commitment to develop effectively. Others raised the implications of being able to attract and retain good staff on short-term funded projects.

Measuring Progression: Staff raised the issues about measuring the effectiveness of the programmes and the difficulty in tracking learner progression onto further programmes when there are a large number of learners completing short courses and limited funding for administrative support to track progression.

Promotion: Some staff raised issues about communications with schools and a lack of understanding of the role of family learning programmes.

Rurality: The additional challenges of adopting an extended schools cluster approach in rural areas was highlighted, for example, problems of where to locate activities, distances between schools hampering joint working. Staff felt that awareness raising on the role of the Extended Schools co-ordinators and better links are needed across the County Council.

Multi-agency working: Staff providing the new agendas, such as extended services, highlighted the need for additional training and CPD to ensure effective multi-agency working.

Multi-agency working: Professionals working with families needing a high level of intervention stressed the differences between targeted interventions and universal programmes. Concerns were expressed to ensure that families are referred to the most appropriate programme for their needs.

From staff at a strategic level

National policy: Staff identified the challenge of delivering the new agendas across a two tier authority and felt that national policy does not always recognise the issues this involves.

Strategic working: Staff across the council recognised the strategic challenge of co-ordinating and leading parenting and family learning provision when it is spread across many areas and partner organisations, including the new focus through the Respect Agenda.

Appendix two: Detailed case study – Essex County Council

Balanced curriculum: Some staff identified the challenge of keeping a balanced curriculum between both family learning and parenting support, when LDGs preferred to focus on the parenting elements. Different funding routes, and by nature different requirements and targets, were seen at times to cause an artificial divide between the two areas.

Balanced curriculum: Concern was expressed regarding some of the manual based parenting skills programmes and the need to ensure effective measurement and evaluation of the impact on children and families of a full range of programmes from universal to high level interventions.

Quality improvement: Many interviewees expressed the need to ensure quality systems are integrated into local delivery: issues focussed about ensuring effective systems that can be understood by all and around staff time for ensuring the effective establishment of procedures and monitoring of quality systems. There was a clear recognition of the training needs for LDGs as the commissioning model develops.

Council structures: Staff felt the pressures of ensuring effective joint working within the current structure of the Council. Family Learning provision resides with Adult Community Learning which is located in the External Relationships and Partnerships Division whereas parenting and extended schools reside in the Children and Young People's division. The current restructuring of the Adult Community Learning provides an additional uncertainty. Staff highlighted the challenges of maintaining links with colleagues based in the schools sector.

Integrating the role of the lead professional budget holder: There is uncertainty how the role of the lead professional and the family's ability to choose provision will impact on this area of work.

Strategic planning: Staff highlighted the need to ensure the strategic vision for both areas of work is integrated into operational practice and ensuring that actions plans from the CYPP and LAA are further developed and implemented.

New technologies: The need to harness existing and new technologies was highlighted to ensure effect communications and contact with parents, particularly at times of transition when they are naturally in contact with the County Council.

Recommendations

1. Interviewees in Essex recommended the following policy changes to ensure better and more effective provision:

Appendix two: Detailed case study – Essex County Council

- More positive national publicity on parenting skills and family learning programmes
- A recognition by Government that family learning and parenting support each other and can sit together: “bolt the two strategies together more effectively”
- A need for clarity in the definitions and terminology used to ensure that there is no confusion between the distinctive roles of parenting and family learning,
- A recognition that both parenting and family learning programmes change lives
- Clearer guidance from government that gives practical strategies to make the new agendas happen, with the guidance informed by practitioners on the ground
- A clearer recognition of family learning’s contribution to the Every Children Matters agenda
- A central government recognition of the differences between types of authorities and the challenges faced by county councils
- A clear joining up of funding streams for this area of work, simpler outcomes and targets that can be decided at local level and passed out between services and partners
- Longer term funding
- Support to gain long term evidence of the outcomes and effectiveness of both areas of work
- Better integration of family learning and parenting policies with the extended services agenda
- A clear realisation that good partnership working takes time, energy and dedicated resources to make it happen
- Resources for multi-disciplinary support teams to be based around local schools

Interviewees in Essex

Head of Adult and Community Learning
Family Learning Manager
Management Trainee
Family Learning Advisor for Extended Services
Head of Schools Related Partnerships
Service Manager Children and Young People
Family Centre Manager
Family Learning Coordinators, Adult Community Colleges
Sure Start staff
School Head teacher
Extended Schools Co-ordinators
Learners

List of documents reviewed

Adult Community Learning Essex (2006) Development Plan 2006 – 2009
Adult Community Learning Essex (2004) SAR 2004-05 Family Learning
Adult Learning Inspectorate (2004): Inspection report, Essex LEA, ALI, Coventry
Audit Commission (2007) CPA assessment
Essex County Council (2006) Children and Young People’s Plan 2006 – 2009
Essex County Council (2006) Commissioning agreement between Essex County Council, Essex Family Learning & Parenting Strategy Group and Local Delivery Group
Essex County Council (2006) Corporate Plan 2006 – 2009

Appendix two: Detailed case study – Essex County Council

Essex County Council (2006) Draft: Cross directorate plan to align responsibilities and identify roles for forward the strategy

Essex County Council (2006) Family Learning and Parenting Quality Framework

Essex County Council (2006) Family Learning and Parenting Support; an integrated strategic approach

Essex County Council (2006) Health and Opportunity for the People of Essex – Essex's Local Area Agreement

Miscellaneous documents:

- Information on Transition Information Sessions work

- Remit of Behaviour and Attendance Strategy Group

- Various documents from local Family Centre

- Various documents from Extended Schools Coordinators

- Structure diagram for Children, Young People and Families Directorate

Some completed learner evaluation forms

Appendix three: Detailed case studies: Suffolk County Council

68. The context

Suffolk is a mainly rural county in the east of England. It is made up of densely populated towns, such as Ipswich and Lowestoft, and sparsely populated, isolated rural villages. 42% of the population live in rural communities. The population is 678100. 6.3% of the population are from minority ethnic communities. There are currently 157,660 children and young people under 19 years of age, representing 23.1% of the total population. The percentage of pupils from BME heritage backgrounds in Suffolk maintained schools has increased from 6.95% to 8.35% between 2003 and 2006.

There are areas and small pockets of significant deprivation. Some wards in Waveney and Ipswich are in the 10% most deprived areas in the country. Benefit dependency is higher than the regional and national levels. The average wage in Suffolk is well below the national average, as is the overall skill profile of the adult population. Suffolk also has fewer young people staying on in education or going on to university than the national average.

The County Council is the biggest employer in Suffolk with around 29000 full and part-time staff.

In 2005-06, 45.9% of young people in Suffolk's schools achieved 5 or more grades A*-C including English and mathematics at GCSE or equivalent, compared to the national average of 45.8 %.

69. The County Council and its strategic approach

In the Corporate Performance Assessment for 2006 Suffolk County Council is judged to be improving well with a 4 star overall performance rate. The assessment recognises that the Council's community leadership is strengthening and that partnerships are working well. It highlights the successful integration of children's services.

The Council's annual corporate plan has six key aims: to promote active community involvement and engagement, deliver better outcomes for children and young people, have safer stronger and sustainable communities, support adults and promote healthier communities, driving economic development and enterprise, providing quality services and keeping costs down.

Appendix three: Detailed case study – Suffolk County Council

The medium term corporate framework and the transformation plan sets out the agenda for change to public services in Suffolk. The Council is currently developing a new way of working across all services as a response to severe medium term financial pressures. The Council reports a funding gap of £150 million over the next six years.

Suffolk was in the first phase of local authorities to introduce a Local Area Agreement (LAA): this runs from 2005 to 2008. The LAA has four priority areas of activity: Children and Young People, Safer Stronger and Sustainable Communities, Healthier Communities and Older People. The Accountable Bodies Group is the strategic decision making body for the LAA. Membership of this group consists of Leaders of the Local Authorities, Chairmen of Primary Care Trusts, Chairman of Suffolk Police Authority, Chairman of Suffolk Development Agency, Chairman of Learning and Skills Council, Chairman of the One Voice Suffolk (Voluntary Sector).

The LAA supports the work of the Suffolk Strategic Partnership (SSP). This partnership was formed in 2002. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) feed into the work of the SSP and into the LAA. There are LSPs in Babergh East, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal, Waveney and Western Suffolk.

Suffolk was a pilot authority for developing a Single Education Plan in 2004. The plan, Suffolk's Strategy for Learning 2004-2009, provides a whole Council approach to the development of learning in Suffolk. The plan has four key themes: improving learning outcomes for all, overcoming learning inequalities, developing communities and shaping the future of learning.

The Suffolk Children's Trust Partnership is made up of all the statutory agencies that represent the interests of children and young people in the County. The Suffolk Children's Trust Board consists of representatives from these key organisations, including representatives from District and Borough Councils, Primary Care, Police Authority, Learning and Skills Council, voluntary sector and a member of the Local Probation Board. The County Council's Lead member for Children's Services chairs it.

The Children and Young People's plan (CYPP) has been produced following widespread analysis of local need. The views of children, young people, parents and carers have been taken into account. The key strategic priorities of the plan are set around the five Every Child Matters themes. These are backed by detailed business plans. The Children's Trust Partnership Board is responsible for producing annual updates of the plan: the County Council's Cabinet will agree the revised plan.

The Children's Trust Partnership will also act as the LAA Block Board for Children and Young People. The priorities in the Children and

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Young People's Plan link very closely with the Suffolk Community Strategy, LAA and the County Council's four year plan.

Figure 4: Children's Trust Governance Structure



70. The structure of family learning and parenting support in Suffolk

In Suffolk, family learning and parenting skills are linked in the same division as part Adult and Community Learning which is based within the Adult Community Services Directorate. At the time of the research there was a Parenting and Skills for Families Manager plus three full-time equivalent area coordinators. The Council is currently restructuring the Adult and Community Learning service to be much more closely merged with the other sections of the Adult Community Services workforce. It is moving to a locality based model.

Suffolk has developed a comprehensive curriculum offer for family literacy, language and numeracy, wider family learning and parenting skills. The service offers a variety of 'taster' workshops, short and intensive programmes including; Living with Babies; Sounds, Noises and Words; Exploring the World; Rhythm and Rhyme; Paper, Paint and Play; Music and Movement; Ready, Steady, Go; Help your Child Learn; Playing with Language; Playing with Numbers; Family Literacy; Family Numeracy; Working Together; Keeping Up With the Children (literacy and numeracy); Family Finance; ICT and Study Skills; Family health; Health choices; Dad and me; Living with Children; Living with Preteens; Living with Teens and Assertiveness for parents.

In 2004-05 Suffolk Family Learning worked with 4028 adults and 2941 children. Family Learning is a key contributor to meeting the county Skills for Life targets as well as offering a range of other accreditation routes including Open College Network.

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The service operates with a wide variety of partners, including the Youth offending team, Parent Partnership Social Care, Health visitors, PCTs, local schools children's centres, museums and libraries and voluntary organisations for example the deaf association, and Home Start. A specific curriculum offer and publicity material has been developed for working with Children's Centres and Extended Services.

The service has been involved in a number of national pilot projects, for example, it was a pilot Skills for Families authority and focused on extending the local infrastructures for planning and managing family literacy, languages and numeracy, developing and testing a new range of programmes, developing additional programme and publicity materials and disseminating effective practice to other local authorities. It has led on the regional Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy quality initiative and is currently involved in the pilot work with the Basic Skills Agency developing Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy Learning programmes for grandparents. The service designs and markets a range of high quality learning materials.

Family Learning was judged to be good, Grade 2, at inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004.

The Children and Young People's Services Directorate brings together the County's education, social care and vulnerable children's services, including early years services, school improvement and support, enrichment and extended schools services, special needs assessment and support, family support, safeguarding services, Connexions and youth services. The Youth Offending Service will be fully integrated into this directorate from April 2007.

Suffolk has a strong cross-department and multi-agency approach. Close working links are maintained between the Family Learning and Parenting Provision and the relevant areas of the Children and Young People's Directorate.

The Council is in the process of establishing 18 locally managed community clusters. These will bring together all partners and organisations to improve the well-being of children and young people in the areas model. Integrated multi-disciplinary staff teams will work through Children's Centres on a locality cluster basis.

In 2006 the Council carried out a review of its family support services. It recommended that Family Support Practitioners be deployed in a range of settings to meet the needs of families with longer term complex and multiple needs and for those who need direct access to less intensive advice and information as a preventative strategy. The review found that agencies were identifying families with needs but were not always referring them because of concerns that they would not fall within the current thresholds for services.

71. County Strategy for Working with Parents and parental care givers

An extensive survey of work with parents was carried out in 2005. It highlighted the wide range of activities and partnership arrangements that were being carried out in the county but that the approach was not always consistent or taking place in a planned and coherent way. The key findings included the need for organisations to develop more effective systems of working together.

A working group was formed to develop the strategy. The group included a wide range of key professionals from both Adult and Community Services, Children and Young People, representatives of voluntary services and Suffolk Parent Carer Network.

The strategy group recognised the need to build on the principles of good practice established in some of the key existing initiatives in Suffolk. The ACCORD project (Adult and Children Co-ordination) brings together the County Council and two mental health partnership NHS Trusts to develop a local protocol for services working with children and adults when a parent is disabled. The model for the involvement of parents is influenced by the Sure Start experience in Suffolk and builds on the Social Care Services policy, the draft public involvement strategy in Adult and Community Services and the overarching Suffolk County Council Corporate Consultation and Involvement Strategy. It will enable parents to contribute to planning and commissioning processes for services for children, young people, adults and communities.

The work of Extended Services, the Family Carers Strategy and the developing Children's Information Service is incorporated into the strategy. It also builds on the existing parenting forums established in three areas of the County, consisting of representatives of agencies providing parenting support, who meet regularly to promote good practice and disseminate information.

The strategy establishes a framework for those working with parents and families. There are a set of common standards for work to support parents. These include respect for individual needs and cultural diversity, enabling early access to short and long term services; learning more about parents experiences, acknowledging existing strengths, knowledge and experience, providing information and support to enable parents to access services, education, skills and training in a format/language that meets their requirements.

It proposes to link all agencies providing a range of services for parent/carers including: health screening, advice and support for all prospective parents during pregnancy and after birth on becoming a parent, one-to-one, informal and drop-in support when needed,

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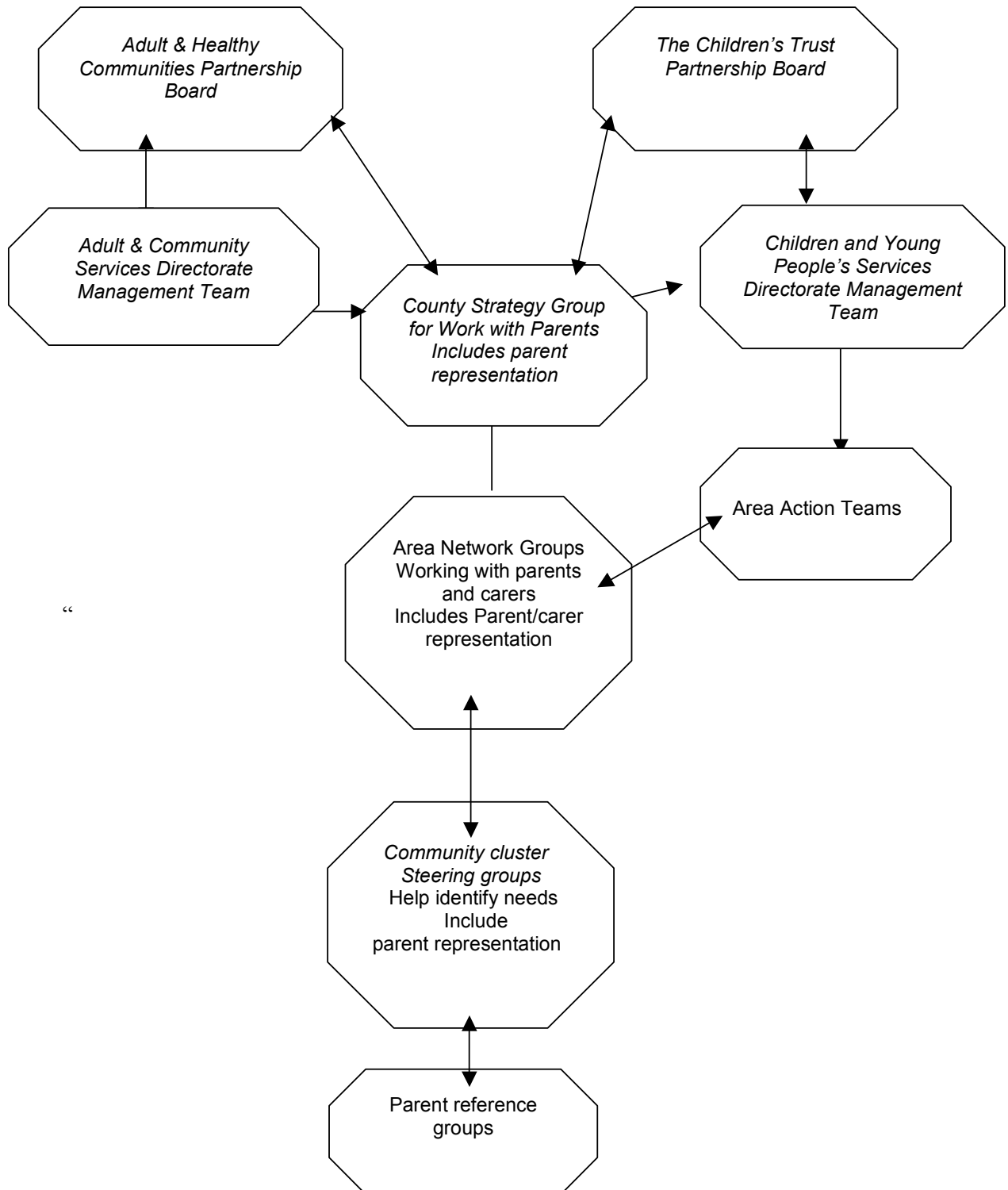
structured parenting programmes and family learning opportunities, information guidance and support and access to specialised services.

A County Strategic Group will be established with key representatives from relevant agencies in CYP and ACS directorates, Health and other partners including parent groups. This will focus on involving parents in decision making, ensuring a spread of services, supporting the commissioning process, initiating quality improvement systems, ensuring effective workforce development and ensuring a continuing base for local research.

In addition there will be three area multi-agency network groups for work with parents containing representatives of parents, voluntary and statutory organisations. The network groups will report to the county strategy group and other appropriate groups. One member of each network group will be appointed to each cluster steering group to represent the resources contained within the network and report back on parents' responses to services and issues from the cluster. The area network groups will collate information from clusters and report directly to the county strategic group and back to clusters.

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Figure 5: Proposed structure to support services for parents



72. Funding

Suffolk is working through the challenges of the need to operate in a reduced funding environment. Both the Children's and Young People's Directorate and the Adult Services Directorate have needed to make a 10% reduction in spending in each of the two previous years.

The programme of family learning and parenting programmes is funded through the following streams: LSC Personal and Community Development Funding, LSC Family, Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN), LSC Wider Family Learning, LSC Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities (NLDC), funding attached to parenting orders and a variety of project funding including European Social Fund working with Ormiston Trust to develop Family Learning in prisons. Additional funding is attracted through work with partners including Health Authorities, Youth Offending Service, Probation and JobCentre Plus.

The County Council is seeking to support the local voluntary and community sector to apply for the Family Learning strand of the Big Lottery Fund.

Currently, demand outstrips the capacity to provide courses through the above funding streams.

Funding for Family Learning and parenting have been brought together to enable a clearly focused curriculum to be developed.

73. The challenges of language: terminology used in Suffolk

In Suffolk the strategy has been entitled "Working with Parents and Parental care-givers." This is used to encompass the whole range of activities with parents and is seen as wider than parental support. The term parental care-givers includes foster carers. The strategy is broader than a "parenting strategy" and it is felt important to use terms that encompass everybody and that everyone understands. Interviewees considered that there was a need to consider the whole family including grandparents and siblings. However, currently within the strategy group terminology is used in different ways, with understanding depending on location in the Council.

Some interviewees felt that the terminology of parenting support or family support was not appropriate to use as it raises connotations of the child protection role. One interviewee felt the term "parenting support" conjured the image of a victim. Others felt family support was the appropriate term to be used.

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The importance was stressed of the need to “de-stigmatise” the use of the parenting terminology by offering a range of universal and targeted services under the remit of the strategy. It was felt that the starting point for any training coming from the strategy group needed to unpick the use of terminology, for example, parental involvement could mean coming to the playgroup on a Tuesday afternoon, helping out with reading or involving parents actively in the decision making.

74. Learner voice

Two groups of learners were interviewed for this research: one group who were attending a Family Literacy programme and a group of previous learners who had attended a confidence and assertiveness programme.

When asked where they would turn to if they needed help parents gave a range of answers: in one group the well-established local Sure Start Centre and the tutor were the first stops. One parent felt that after attending the confidence and assertiveness programme that she would now be confident to turn to the health visitor for support whereas she would not have done in the past.

The parents interviewed on courses in Suffolk had varied learning journeys, but never in a straight line. The personal learning histories of one group illustrated that they move easily between wider family learning, FLLN, vocational FE, parenting skills and other programmes. They use a variety of learning providers. Their choice of learning programmes depends on their needs, circumstances and the circumstances of their wider family members. For example, one mother was completing a family literacy programme and was about to join a parenting skills programme to accompany her sister who did not want to attend alone. Another mother was attending the family literacy programme with her youngest child who was diagnosed on the autistic spectrum. She had previously dropped out of an engineering course, had recently started a nursery nursing programme and was working to gain her level 2 National Test in literacy as part of the Family literacy programme and to support her nursery nurse course.

Parents highlighted the key role their tutor had in supporting them to move onto other learning opportunities. Tutors have ready access to information and advice about other learning opportunities in the community.

One learner expressed both short and long term benefits of attending the parenting skills programmes: *“the courses helped me understand my child and deal with difficult situations, and helped the children understand my needs, helped in other situations, for example, I’ve gone on to become a teaching assistant and I’ve also learnt to drive. It was challenging but I’d highly recommend it.”*

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An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Parenting Programmes for Parents on Statutory and Voluntary Parenting Orders in Suffolk was carried out in 2003. Due to the limited numbers of parents in the study the findings can only be indicative. Most parents reported positive changes in parenting competencies as a result of taking part in the programmes. Whilst most felt they gained in parenting competencies the actual improvement in their children's behaviour was limited. Most parents said the parenting programme would have been better earlier on in their child's development. There is some indication that the long term effectiveness of the programmes may lie in helping parents to parent their other children. It is recommended that a tracking process is built into parenting programmes to help establish whether participation in the parenting programmes produce any long-term improvements for parents and their young people. The evaluation recommends that the Adult Community Learning service should work closely with the YOT, the police and the local schools to help encourage parents of vulnerable children to attend parenting courses before their children's negative behaviour becomes too firmly established and ideally before they start to offend.

Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service commissioned research in September 2006. The study brought together young people aged 13-17 to get their views on what makes a good/bad parent and what support if any they would need to prepare them for parenthood. The research included case studies of young people who had not had a positive family experience. It provided an in-depth voice of the young people on the impact of parenting in "at-risk" families. The key recommendations from the report are for closer working relationships between services offering parent support and those involved in work with young people to assist families to access appropriate information and services, training on parenting to be included in youth worker training.

75. Good practice

Suffolk County Council has a commitment to and tradition of joint working across directorate boundaries.

Suffolk's strategy for Working with Parents and Parental Care-givers provides a structure for effective cross council and multi-agency approach to developing this area of work. There are clear links between parenting and family learning through the strategy. This is backed with a clear mapping of provision across the county.

Whilst there is an acknowledgment that there is still much work to be done, the Council has addressed the issue of joint working between Adult and Children and Young People's Services. The ACCORD Protocol, outlined above, is seen as a direction for practice: it sets out those areas where operational links are needed between Children's

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and Young People and the Adult and Community Services Directorates.

Equally, the strategy has started to address the issues of developing a quality framework for working with parents that crosses all areas of work. It is acknowledged that the Council is on the start of this journey.

The links are carried through by key management staff from Adult Community Learning being included in Children and Young People's directorate meetings, close links with Children's Centres and being included on the Extended Services management group. Family learning and parenting are effectively included in the review of family support services. This ethos is also evident at an operational level: family learning tutors attend parenting skills courses to enhance their understanding of the full range of provision.

There is a strong tradition of partnership working in Suffolk. There are plans to link with the Workforce development groups in Children and Young People and Adult and Community Services to ensure that all relevant staff have training on engaging parents and carers in the planning, development and monitoring of programmes. It is proposed to identify key staff as parent / champions to be the link workers with each team.

This area of work in Suffolk has built up a strong evidence base through its own research, for example, the work on the parenting orders and the views of young people. Through the Skills for Families pilot systems for data on tracking progression routes for learners were established. The County has also been involved in a research project to support parents to be able to talk about their children's abilities and interests.

The Parenting and Skills for Families service has a clear publicity strategy. Publicity materials have been renewed to meet the new agendas and provide a well-defined curriculum offer targeted at children's centres and extended services.

76. Challenges for local provision

From the learners

Finding information: some learners felt that local activities for parents are not promoted effectively, for example, the advertising of local parent and toddler groups. Others mentioned that they would like publicity about programmes based in the schools at an earlier stage. However, some learners stressed that the courses helped them in knowing where to go to for support.

From operational staff

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The need to build trust in multi-agency settings: staff raised the issue that working across boundaries meant that they were often working with the same groups of parents. Sometimes there was sense of services competing and that this needed to be further worked through to overcome any tensions between different groups of staff.

Gaining new skills: administration staff stressed the need to adopt a different approach when dealing with parents wanting to join a parenting skills programme as to other areas of learning. They needed to ensure that they listened carefully and made effective referrals to other areas when necessary.

Planning: some staff highlighted the difficulty of planning in advance for family learning programmes when working with some schools.

Resources: staff raised concerns about the limited capacity to meet all the current demands for parenting skills programmes. This impacts on the ability of learners to move between family learning and parenting skills programme.

Resources: equally staff raised the need to ensure that there are additional resources and back-up support available for parenting skills programme, particularly when dealing with parents who have been sent on programmes through a parenting order and may not want to be present on the course.

Use of language: staff raised the challenge of the need to de-stigmatise the concept of parenting skills programmes.

From staff at a strategic level

Quality improvement: there is a new quality framework included in the strategy but Suffolk has yet to work through the issue of funding its implementation and checking of quality of programmes and linking to the commissioning arrangements. There is a different understanding of quality in the Children's Services to that in Adult and Community Services.

Implementation of the change agenda: one senior manager raised the need for more explicit guidance on implementing the new agenda, for example, DfES Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework explains what commissioning is but not how to put it into practice.

Cross-directorate working: managers interviewed highlighted the challenges of implementing working across directorates and organisations. One interviewee identified the lack of mutual professional knowledge as the single biggest barrier to effective inter-agency working. For another it was about the challenge of cultural and

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philosophical differences of approach, for example, some teams have a behaviourist approach.

Curriculum focus: some managers expressed concerns about ensuring that expertise and specialisms were protected in the move from a curriculum focus to a locality. Other senior managers stressed the need to bring together a menu of programmes and activities for the many non-statutory activities in Suffolk.

Funding: managers raised the issue of the impact of short term project funding and the sustainability of projects. Concerns were expressed that from the customer perspective expectations have been raised that cannot continue to be met. Others felt this is particularly acute within Suffolk's current climate of need to reduce the budgets.

Local Area Agreements: to date the Local Area Agreement is not driving provision in this area. None of the targets have yet been devolved to a local level. The Children and Young People's Plan has been more effective in enabling multi-agency working. However, the LAA has identified a lead for Children's Services in each of the district and borough councils in Suffolk.

Evaluation of programmes: interviewees raised issues around an over-reliance on some nationally rolled out programmes, for example, Webster Stratton. However, staff highlighted that there a number of other effective programmes developed locally. Staff stressed the challenge of the need to work with parents on measuring and evaluating their own progress at home, and supporting them to develop the words and skills to enable this to happen.

77. Recommendations

Interviewees in Suffolk recommended the following policy changes to ensure better and more effective provision:

- the development of an overview set of definitions and use of terminology in policy documents
- further research and evaluation on parenting programmes to widen the curriculum offer
- a joining up of the pilot projects, for example, the Parent Support Advisers, "Super-nannies", Education Improvement Partnerships.
- more guidance about commissioning: the "how-to" guide.

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- increased coherence in policy documents and improved cross government communications
- joining up of funding streams
- a recognition of the need to provide staff resources for quality improvement in non Learning and Skills Council funded programmes
- a funded capacity building programme for staff in voluntary organisations and extended services providing parenting and family learning programmes
- *“a recognition of the huge job we’ve got to make sense of and implement policy agenda. It takes time.”*
- funding for all parents to attend parenting skills and family learning programmes
- more positive national publicity to reduce the stigma on parenting skills programmes

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Interviewees in Suffolk

The Head of Services of Vulnerable Children

Parenting Commissioner

Head of Extended Schools/Children's Centres/ Early Years/ Youth and Connexions

Senior Adult and Community Learning Manager

Parenting and Skills for Families Manager

Parenting and Skills for Families Coordinators

Parenting UK Regional Development Officer for the East of England

Family Learning tutors

Senior administrator

Parents/ Learners

List of documents reviewed

Adult Learning Inspectorate (2004): Inspection report, Suffolk LEA, ALI, Coventry

Audit Commission (2007) CPA assessment

Audit Commission (2004) Suffolk County Council Corporate Assessment Report

Smeeth M (2003) An evaluation of the effectiveness of parenting programmes for parents on statutory and voluntary parenting orders in Suffolk

Pearson S. (2006) Young People and Parents: a research project commissioned by Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service

Suffolk County Council (2006) A better Way for Suffolk. Our Strategic Framework 2005 – 2009

Suffolk County Council (2004) Adult and Community Education Service, Three Year Development Plan

Suffolk County Council (2006) Adult and Community Learning and Probation – Service Level Agreement for Parenting Programmes

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Suffolk County Council (2006) Adult and Community Learning: Learning Opportunities for Extended Schools

Suffolk County Council (2006) Adult and Community Learning: Training Offer for Children's Centres

Suffolk County Council (2005) Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 09

Suffolk County Council, (2006) Children and Young People's Services, Review of Family Support Services – Summary Report

Suffolk County Council (2006) Corporate Plan 2006-2008

Suffolk County Council (2004) Community Education and Suffolk Youth Offending Service – Service Level Agreement for Parenting Programmes

Suffolk County Council (2005) County Group work with Parents and Carers, meeting minutes

Suffolk County Council (2006) Developing Childcare for Extended Schools in Suffolk – Guidance for Schools

Suffolk County Council (2006) Partnership Agreement for the Provision of Parenting Skills Programmes in the Community Between Suffolk PCT and Adult Community Learning

Suffolk County Council (2006) Referrals from other agencies to parenting courses and confidentiality, policy document

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Appendix four: interview questions

Family Learning and Working with Parents – a NIACE project for the
DfES
Interview schedule for case studies

Date interview undertaken:

Background

Name of interviewee:

Job title:

Service:

Directorate:

Authority:

Strategic level

1. **How do family learning and parenting programmes link in this authority? (Where is family learning located within your authority? (Department, directorate) Where is working with parents located? (Departments, directorates)**
2. **Where do you see family learning/work with parents sitting conceptually? (Show diagram - within family support, parental education, parenting support, adult learning, children's learning and/or support for parents or other? OR within family support, family learning, adult learning, children's learning, support for parents or other. Please explain why)**
3. **What would your term be for the overarching framework?**
4. **How does this impact upon your relationship with colleagues involved in working with parents/family learning? (Better able to work together, difficult to develop relationships)**
5. **Does your authority have a family learning strategy? (If yes, ask about when it was drawn up, who was involved, how is it working, does parenting feature? OR if no, ask why not, do they have any comments they wish to make about this?)**
6. **Does your authority have a parenting strategy? (If yes, ask about when it was drawn up, who was involved, how is it working, does family learning feature? OR if no, ask why not, do they have any comments they wish to make about this?)**
7. **Do you have a Children's Trust? (If yes, do you know who is in it?)**
8. **Do you have a Single Commissioner for Parenting Support in post yet? What is their background?**

Appendix four: interview questions

9. Does the family learning and parenting skills activity fit within the Local Area Agreement? If, yes, how? If, no, what other strategic frameworks does this sit with?
10. How could national policy support positive change in this area? (*Should it?*)
11. Any other comments you would like to make about family learning and work with parents?

Operational level Provision and funding

12. What family learning/working with parents provision do you currently provide? (*FLLN, WFL and other OR parenting programmes, one to one support, parenting groups*)
13. What sources of funding do you use for family learning/working with parents? (*LSC, DfES, BSA, Children's Centres, Extended Schools, other funding OR social services, family learning, Children's Fund, Early Intervention Pathfinder, Adult Education*)

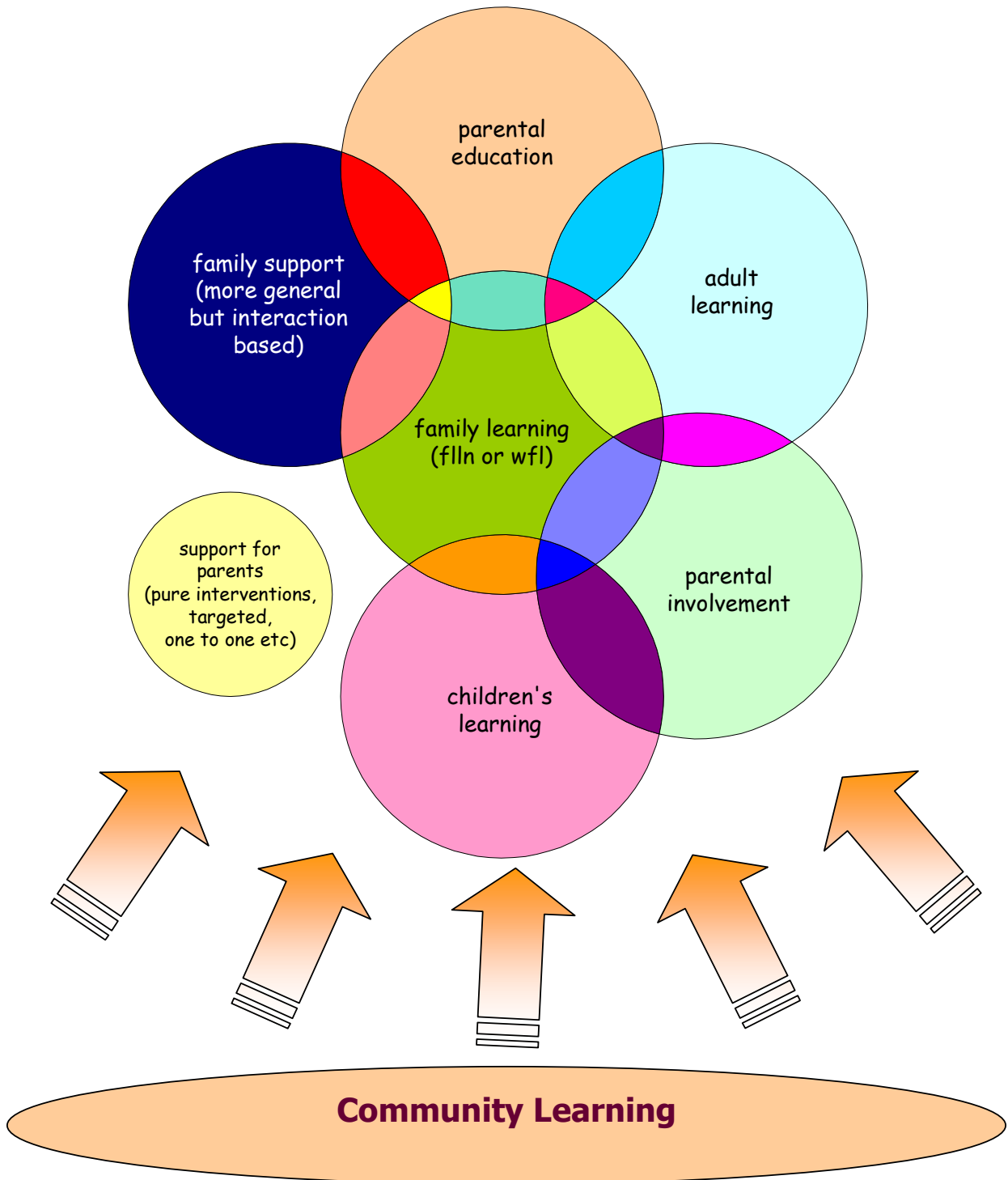
Working together

14. What do you feel you have in common with work with parents /family learning colleagues? (*Skills, client groups, approach, philosophy*)
15. What do you feel differentiates you from work with parents /family learning colleagues?
16. What terminology do you use to describe the different strands of your work?
17. Which work with parents /family learning colleagues do you work with, if any, and where are they based? (*Job title, service, and directorate. How and why?*)
18. Do you work with colleagues located outside the authority e.g. in the voluntary and community sector to provide provision for parents / family learning?
19. Which learning programmes/activities, if any, do you provide for families in conjunction with work with parents / family learning colleagues? (*Please list if applicable*).
20. Are there any sources of funding, if any, you both draw on? (*Please explain*).
21. Do you refer families to work with parents / family learning colleagues? (*If yes, please state the job title and service of those colleagues. What is your rationale for referrals?*).
22. What are the advantages of working with work with parents / family learning colleagues? (*Access to families, funding etc. Please explain*).

Appendix four: interview questions

23. What are the barriers to working with work with parents / family learning colleagues? (*Location, strategy, planning, quality etc. Please explain*).
24. How well do you feel family learning and work with parents provision is aligned within your authority? (*Please explain*).
25. What could be done to better align family learning and work with parents in your authority? (*Please explain*).
26. Are there any areas where you feel it isn't appropriate for family learning and work with parents to be brought together?
27. How could national policy support positive change in this area? (*Should it?*)
28. Any other comments you would like to make about family learning and work with parents?

Appendix five: concept model of how working with parents and family learning services could fit together



Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Family Learning and Working with Parents – a NIACE project for the DfES

Consultative seminar questionnaire for family learning

Over the last eighteen months there has been considerable government and media interest in parenting skills and their impact on society. Much of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* and the *Respect* agendas focus on the need to identify and support those parents and families whose children fail to engage positively in society. There clearly are strong links between some family learning provision and work with parents, which warrant further exploration. NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education), for the DfES (Department for Education and Skills), aims to explore these links in order to enable practitioners to better align this provision locally and to make best use of public funding.

We hope you feel able to share your views on this subject by completing this questionnaire prior to attending the seminar. Your completed forms will not be shared beyond the project team. If you would prefer to remain anonymous please indicate at the end of this form otherwise we will assume you are happy for us to share this information in the internal project report to the DfES and a scoping paper, which will be made public.

With kind thanks for your contribution

Penny Lamb, Development Officer (Family Learning), NIACE
Rachel Spacey, Research Assistant (Family Learning), NIACE

Please complete the following:

Contact details

Name:
Job title:
Service:
Directorate:
Authority:
Email address:
Phone number:



Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Does your local authority have a family learning strategy? Yes No

Does your local authority have a parenting strategy? Yes No

Does your local authority have a Children's Trust? Yes No

Please comment:

Family learning provision and funding

What family learning provision do you currently provide? Please let us know a little more about your provision.

- Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy programmes
- Wider Family Learning
- Family Learning Week events
- Other

What sources of funding do you draw on? Please explain.

- Family Programmes, LSC
- Other LSC funded activity
- DfES funded activity
- Other externally funded activity e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Big Lottery Fund.
- Through Extended Schools
- Through Children's Centres
- Basic Skills Agency funded

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Family Learning and Working with Parents

What do you feel you have in common with colleagues who work with parents?

What do you feel differentiates you from colleagues who work with parents?

Which colleagues who work with parents do you work with, if any, and where are they based? e.g. job title, service, directorate.

Which learning programmes/activities, if any, do you provide for families in conjunction with colleagues who work with parents? Please list if applicable.

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Are there any sources of funding, if any, you both draw on? Please explain.

Do you refer families to colleagues who work with parents? If yes, please state the job title and service of those colleagues. We would be interested in knowing your rationale for referrals.

What are the advantages of working with colleagues who work with parents? Please explain.

What are the barriers to working with colleagues who work with parents? Please explain.

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

How could national policy support positive change in this area?

Please use this space to make any further comments about Family Learning and work with parents:

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please bring it with you when you attend the consultative seminar on **November 23rd 2006**. We will contact you via email to keep you informed of the outcomes of the project.

Please tick this box if you would prefer to remain anonymous

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Family Learning and Working with Parents Provision – a NIACE project for the DfES

Consultative seminar questionnaire: for working with parents

Over the last eighteen months there has been considerable government and media interest in parenting skills and their impact on society. Much of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* and the *Respect* agendas focus on the need to identify and support those parents and families whose children fail to engage positively in society. There clearly are strong links between some family learning provision and work with parents, which warrant further exploration. NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education), for the DfES (Department for Education and Skills), aims to explore these links in order to enable practitioners to better align this provision locally and to make best use of public funding.

We hope you feel able to share your views on this subject by completing this questionnaire prior to attending the seminar. Your completed forms will not be shared beyond the project team. If you would prefer to remain anonymous please indicate at the end of this form otherwise we will assume you are happy for us to share this information in the internal project report to the DfES and a scoping paper, which will be made public.

With kind thanks for your contribution

Penny Lamb, Development Officer (Family Learning), NIACE
Rachel Spacey, Research Assistant (Family Learning), NIACE

Please complete the following:

Contact details

Name:
Job title:
Service:
Directorate:
Authority:
Email address:
Phone number:



Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Definitions

Which term(s) does your authority use for the services you provide/manage?
Please tick all those that are applicable.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting support* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent education | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Family support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family education | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for parents** |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Wider family learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family literacy, language and numeracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills for Families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with parents |

*More general than support for parents but intervention based

** Pure interventions, targeted, one-to-one

Please explain:

Do you consider working with parents to be part of?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parental Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for parents |

Please explain your choice:

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Does your local authority have a parenting strategy? Yes No

Does your local authority have a family learning strategy? Yes No

Does your local authority have a Children's Trust? Yes No

Please comment:

Working with parents provision and funding

What working with parents provision do you currently provide? Please let us know a little more about your provision.

- Parenting programmes/workshops
- One to one parenting support
- Parenting groups
- Other

What sources of funding do you draw on? Please explain.

- Youth offending team
- Family Learning
- Adult education
- Early intervention pathfinder
- Social services
- Children's Fund
- Other

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Working with parents and family learning

What do you feel you have in common with Family Learning colleagues?

What do you feel differentiates you from Family Learning colleagues?

Which Family Learning colleagues do you work with, if any, and where are they based?

e.g. job title, service, directorate.

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Which learning programmes/activities, if any, do you provide for families in conjunction with Family Learning colleagues? Please list if applicable.

Are there any sources of funding, if any, you both draw on? Please explain.

Do you refer parents to Family Learning colleagues? If yes, please state the job title and service location of those colleagues. We would be interested in knowing more about your rationale for referrals.

What are the advantages of working with Family Learning colleagues? Please explain.

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

What are the barriers to working with Family Learning colleagues? Please explain.

How well do you feel working with parents and Family Learning provision is aligned within your authority on a sliding scale of 1 to 5? Please mark where you think you are with a cross **X** on the line:

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly	A little bit	About halfway there	Almost	Completely

Please explain why you have made this choice:

What could be done to better align working with parents and Family Learning in your authority? Please explain.

Appendix six: the questionnaires for seminar participants

Are there any areas where you feel it isn't appropriate for working with parents and Family Learning to be brought together?

How could national policy support positive change in this area?

Please use this space to make any further comments about working with parents and Family Learning:

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please bring it with you when you attend the consultative seminar on **November 23rd 2006**. We will contact you via email to keep you informed of the outcomes of the project.

Please tick this box if you would prefer to remain anonymous

Appendix seven: analysis of the seminar questionnaires

The seminar involved 17 staff from 9 local authorities. Six local authorities were represented by both a family learning practitioner and a parenting practitioner.

Prior to the seminar participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. There were two questionnaires, one for family learning practitioners and one for parenting practitioners. Both questionnaires covered the same themes. These included: language and terminology, strategy, provision and funding, joint working and policy recommendations. The questionnaires consisted of open and closed questions, and space was provided after each question for further comments.

The key findings from the questionnaires are outlined below. The figures in brackets relate to the number of individuals providing the response.

Key findings

Language and Terminology

- Local authorities employ a wide-range of terms to describe the services they provide. All 13 terms listed as options on the questionnaire were used by at least one authority.
- Some terms were more commonly used than others: family learning (11), family literacy, language and numeracy (10), parenting (8), parenting support (8), wider family learning (8), parent education (7), family programmes (7), family support (6), support for parents (4), skills for families (3), working with parents (3), family education (1) and parent training (1).
- The terms most commonly used by family learning practitioners and parenting practitioners varied, but there was some overlap.
- The most common terms used by family learning practitioners were: family learning, family literacy, language and numeracy, family programmes, wider family learning and parenting.
- It appears that the terminology used by family learning practitioners is directed by the Learning and Skills Council which funds FLLN and WFL.
- The most common terms used by parenting practitioners were: parenting support, parenting, family learning, parent education, family literacy, language and numeracy, and family support.
- Asked 'what do you consider family learning to be part of?', family learning practitioners replied as follows: adult learning (6), children's learning (6), support for parents (3), parental education (2) and parenting support (2). One person added regeneration and capacity building.
- Parenting practitioners when asked 'what do you consider working with parents to be part of?' replied: family support (7) family learning (7) support

Appendix seven: analysis of the questionnaires

for parents (6) adult learning (5) and parental education (4). One person added regeneration.

- Both family learning and working with parents practitioners consider their work to be part of adult learning and children's learning.

Strategies

- All participants were asked if their local authority had a family learning strategy and a parenting strategy. 12 said their local authority had a family learning strategy. 13 said their local authority had a parenting strategy.
- In Essex, the family learning and parenting strategy are combined. In Gloucestershire both strategies are being revised in consultation with each other.

Children's Trusts

- Six participants said their local authority had a Children's Trust.

Provision

- Family learning provision provided by the local authorities represented at the seminar was as follows: family literacy, language and numeracy (5), wider family learning (5), family learning week events (4), other (4). Other included parenting programmes (e.g. Webster Stratton, Share plus and SEAL. Comments revealed that some parenting provision was also being provided under wider family learning funds.
- Parenting provision provided by the local authorities attending the seminar was as follows: parenting programmes (7), parenting support (7), one to one support (6) and other (4). Comments from participants revealed that parenting provision included Webster-Stratton, work with parents from different groups, Strengthening Families, FEET, outreach work with parents, some higher level parenting assessment work and parent peer supporters.

Funding

- Funding sources for family learning provision: LSC (family programmes) (6), Children's Centres (3), Extended Schools (2), Basic Skills Agency (2), DfES (1) and LSC (other) (1). One respondent selected the 'other' option.
- Funding sources for parenting provision: Family learning (7), Children's Fund (6), Youth offending Team (4), adult education (3), social services (2) and Early Intervention Pathfinder (1). Five respondents ticked the 'other' category. Additional funding sources mentioned were: CAMHS, Sue Start, Connexions and the Local Education Authority.
- Some issues were raised in relation to the dispersal of extended schools funding at a local level.

Links between working with parents and family learning

- Family learning practitioners and parenting practitioners identified several areas of commonality. These included similar aims, values, approaches, goals, target groups, agendas, skills and funding constraints.
- Several differences between family learning and parenting practitioners were also identified, including training, quality assurance processes, background and experiences of staff, and target groups.
- Family learning practitioners listed a range of partners involved in work with parents. Examples were given of cross-service working at both strategic and operational levels.
- Parenting practitioners indicated fewer partners in family learning. This probably reflects the large number of locations in which colleagues working with parents are located in local authorities whereas family learning has a more identifiable location and profile.
- Examples were given of programmes and activities being delivered jointly. Examples included: Webster Stratton, parenting skills, healthy living and eating, family language, literacy and numeracy, anger management/assertiveness, supporting children's learning, in-house programmes, intergenerational activities.
- There appear few funding sources that both family learning and parenting practitioners can draw on. Those mentioned were: LSC, Sure Start/Children's Centres, Schools and CAMHS. One authority has been able to access a budget managed by the Children's Trust, and another authority is hoping to secure some Big Lottery funding.
- There appears to be no systematic referral system in place between the two services. Where referrals do take place they tend to be ad hoc and dependant on the relationships that exist between staff. Family learning staff mentioned raising awareness of parenting programmes to parents. Parenting staff also mentioned providing information about family learning courses and also staff working in both areas.
- The main advantages of working together related to support, resources and providing a better service for families.
- Barriers to joint work included limited knowledge of other services, being located separately, different quality assurance mechanisms, issues relating to competition (e.g. working with the same communities) and funding restrictions (i.e. family learning funding focusing on adults).
- The majority of respondents felt that family learning and work with parents were not well aligned in their local authority and much work was still needed. However all appreciated that progress was being made and some good practice was evident.
- Suggestions for improving the alignment of services included strategic plans, groups to co-ordinate provision, shared training, awareness raising and joint funding.

Policy recommendations

- Long-term funding is vital to enable agencies to develop long-term plans.

Appendix seven: analysis of the questionnaires

- The profile of family learning should be raised. Current good work is invisible because of the focus on parenting. Government needs to consider family learning and parenting.
- Family learning and parenting should be considered as part of a holistic package of support for all families, not just targeted families.
- Recognition of wide-range of family learning and parenting support available to meet varying needs.
- Importance of locally based and developed parenting programmes.
- Increase crèche provision.
- Additional support to work with black and minority ethnic families.
- Joint training.
- One set of National Occupational Standards for family learning and parenting practitioners.

Appendix eight: funding sources

Hallam et al's research into parenting programmes, undertaken for the DfES in 2004, found that funding came from a variety of sources including: the Local Education Authority, Youth Offending Teams, the Children's Fund, Social Services, the Behaviour Improvement Programme, the National Health Service, Sure Start, the Parent Partnership Fund, and charitable trusts.

A study by NIACE for the DfES in 2005 discovered at least 30 funding sources used to support family learning or other forms of support for families in addition to the LSC. The DfES was the main source of funding for education for families, through schools funding, Sure Start, the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, or Lifelong Learning. In 2006 Parenting UK also noted the variety of funding sources for parenting education and support projects.

Generally speaking, family learning and parenting draw on separate funding streams. The current emphasis on joined up working presents opportunities for co-operation; however, this may be complicated by stipulations that come with sources of funding such as targets.

A brief summary of recent, current and forthcoming government funding streams is provided below.

The Children's Fund⁶ (2000)

- This programme aimed to identify at an early stage children and young people at risk of social exclusion, and make sure they received the help and support they need to achieve their potential.
- The Children's Fund operates in every local authority in England; there are 149 partnerships at local level actively involved in delivering the Children's Fund.
- The actual services are delivered in a variety of locations ranging from schools to community centres, sports centres and other local venues. For 2005-08, the DfES allocated £411.5m to the Children's Fund. This is available to partnerships flexibly over the period.
- By the end of the spending review period, Children's Fund partnerships will have received over £780m in the years 2003-08. This equates to an average of £156m each year.

The Children, Young People and Families Grant Programme⁷

- Brings together five previous funding streams: Children and Young People's Consultation Fund, National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant Scheme, Safeguarding Children and Supporting Families grants, Strengthening families Grant and Sure Start VCS grants. Funds voluntary sector activity.

⁶ <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/childrensfund/>

⁷ <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/voluntaryandcommunity/cypfgrant/>

Parenting Fund

- The first round of the Parenting Fund (2004) provided £16.4m to voluntary sector organisations to support parents. An additional £8.6m was provided to infrastructure work and strengthening help line services to parents. The second round of the fund was launched in 2005, with funds of just over £14m. Recipients were charities and other 'not for profit' organisations working with parents and families facing significant challenges.

Funding emerging from the Respect Action Plan (2006)

- Family Intervention Projects – 50 projects which will reach 1000 families by the end of 2007. The projects will offer a range of rehabilitation measures to families that are causing anti-social behaviour, including parenting programmes and health and employment services.
- Family Support Grant.
- Early Learning Partnerships - £10 million is being invested in these partnerships to support parents of 1-3 year olds who are at risk of learning delay. The projects will be delivered by VCS groups linked to Sure Start Children's Centres.
- Transition Information Session demonstration projects - £10 million will be invested from autumn 2006 to make parents more aware of how they can support their children during the transitions from preschool to primary school, and from primary school to secondary school.
- Early Intervention Pathfinders - £10 million is being invested in 15 local authorities to increase support for the parents of children and young people aged 8-13 at risk of poor behaviour, and to ensure that they receive an earlier, more effective, coordinated package of relevant support.
- Parent Support Advisor pilots – £40 million is being invested in over 1200 primary and secondary schools in the most deprived areas. These advisors will work with those families where it is thought that children's learning and achievement are being hampered.

Parenting Measures – parenting support demonstration projects (Cabinet Office, 2006).

The Youth Justice Board Development Fund

- This fund has provided nearly £4m in grants over 3 years for 42 parenting projects.

Latest funding announcements

- £7.5 million from the DfES to local authorities to ensure parenting strategies are in place by March 2008
- £9 million to 41 local authorities with the highest deprivation indices as part of the Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) to support parents who do not normally engage with services to get involved in their children's learning at home (0-5 year olds)
- New family learning programme announced in Every Parent Matters for parents and carers of pre-school children with literacy and numeracy

Appendix eight: funding sources

- support needs to help them support their children with the Early Years and Foundation stage.
- Expansion of the Parent Support Advisor programme during 2007, with a proposal to mainstream through extended services from 2008.

Appendix nine: the legislative and policy framework

This section provides a brief annotated list of key government legislation, policy and initiatives relating to supporting families over the last decade. Policy and practice to support families spans government departments and policy areas (e.g. education, social justice, crime and disorder, social care and community cohesion). In policy terminology family learning appears to be part of parenting support although this is not always explicit.

The Learning Age (DfEE 1998)

- Early Excellence Centres will promote parenting, family learning, and adult education and training, supported by childcare.

Supporting Families (Home Office, 1998)

- A consultation document
- Formed part of work designed to develop a coherent strategy to increase the support and help available to families
- Detailed plans for National Family and Parenting Institute, Parentline Plus, On Track and Sure Start programme
- Considered family literacy in some detail
- Follow up report summarising responses to the consultation acknowledged the contribution of family learning to parenting support.

Crime and Disorder Act (1998)

- Introduced the concept of Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales
- Introduced Child Safety Orders and Parenting Orders
- Parenting Orders – parents of young offenders and persistent truants could be forced to receive parenting education and support provided by local Youth Offending Teams

Skills for Life. The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy (DfES 2001)

- Parents with poor basic skills identified as a priority group. Free training provided through family learning programmes.

Extended Schools: providing opportunities and services for all (DfES 2002)

- Noted that schools offering extended services (e.g. family learning) provide benefits to families for example greater parental involvement in their child's learning

Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003)

- Voluntary parenting contracts

Every Child Matters (DfES 2003)

Appendix nine: the legislative and policy framework

- Set out government programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people, including a national framework for all local authority-led change programmes.
- Bringing health, welfare and education and other services for children together in local authorities
- Schools to develop a range of extended services and to build stronger relationships with parents and the wider community
- Creation of Children's Trusts –partnerships between different organisations who provide and commission services for children. Anticipated that all Children's Trusts would be set up by 2008
- Implementation of a Common Core of skills for the children's workforce
- Expansion of the Sure Start programme – Sure Start Children's Centres.
- Focused on parenting. Family learning was considered in relation to support for parents.
- Every Child Matters: the Next Steps incorporated responses to the green paper and considered parenting support in context of Sure Start Children's Centres, Parenting Orders and the Parenting Fund.

Children Act (2004)

- With Every Child Matters green paper, the act details the Change for Children agenda. Part of this agenda is extended services.
- Joint Area Reviews (JARs) of children's services stipulated

Department for Education and Skills: Five-year strategy for children and learners. Putting people at the heart of public services (DfES 2004)

- Parenting support for every parent who wants it
- Parenting support opportunities provided on school premises, including family learning.

Choice for parents, the best start for children; a ten year strategy for childcare (HM Treasury 2004)

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DoH and DfES 2004)

- Ten year programme to encourage health, social and educational services to deliver child-centred services.

Extended Schools: access to opportunities and services for all (DfES 2005)

- Detailed the core offer for extended schools including parenting support services such as information sessions for parents, parenting groups and family learning.

Higher standards, better schools for all: more choice for parents and pupils (DfES 2005)

- Extend the use of Parenting Contracts – formal agreements between schools and parents in which both sides set out the steps they will take to improve a child's behaviour.

Appendix nine: the legislative and policy framework

Support for parents: the best start for children (HM Treasury and DfES, 2005)

- Reiterates government support for families and the value of parenting support in improving children's life chances.

Youth Matters (2005)

- Details support for parents including parenting programmes and family learning.

Extended Schools Guidance 2006

- Suggests a school's parenting support offer is embedded within its School Improvement Plan
- Extended Schools working with Sure Start Children's Centres should provide a universal point of access to information, advice and support for parents
- Parent Support Advisors in place in 600 schools from end 2006.

Education and Inspections Bill (2006)

- Measures to enable schools and local authorities to make earlier use of parenting contracts. Empowers schools to apply for parenting orders.

Respect Agenda (Home Office 2006)

- National Academy for Parenting Professionals (NAPP)
- Expansion of parenting provision
- Focus was anti-social behaviour and reclaiming communities for law-abiding majority
- Cross government Respect Task Force to be responsible for co-ordination and delivery
- Plan has six strands: supporting families, new approach to most challenging families, improving behaviour and attendance in schools, activities for children and young people, strengthening communities, effective enforcement and community justice.
- New requirements to improve planning, commissioning and funding of parenting services.
- Plan resulted in national network of family intervention projects using long-term multi-agency strategies for problem families

Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Inclusion (Cabinet Office 2006)

- Reiterates previous measures – Sure Start Children's centres, NAPP
- Details plans to establish 10 health-led parenting support demonstration projects from pre-birth to age 2
- Highlights YISPs as example of joint working. Currently 220 YISPs across England and Wales. YISPs are multi-agency identification and planning groups that aim to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour by offering voluntary support to high risk 8-13 year olds and their families. Support includes access to mentors and to parenting programmes.

Care Matters: transforming the lives of children and young people in care (DfES 2006).

Appendix nine: the legislative and policy framework

- Government consultation – proposals include improving the links between children and adult services so that families are seen as a whole.

Parenting Support. Guidance for Local Authorities in England October 2006 (DfES 2006).

- Guidance to support local authorities and children's trusts in developing a continuum of support for parents;
- Encourages local authorities to develop a parenting strategy, which can be used to inform Children and Young People's Plans.

2006 Beverly Hughes, Minister for Children, Young People and Families asked all Children's Trust to provide contact details of a local single commissioner of parenting support

Every Parent Matters (DfES March 2007)

- Pulls together all the initiatives on services for parents
- Reviews a number of initiatives and makes announcement on both new initiatives and mainstreaming.

Reaching Out: Think Family (Cabinet Office, 2007)

- First report from the Families at Risk review from Social Exclusion Task Group
- Provides analysis and themes from the Families at Risk Review
- Highlights the need to build capacity of the system to Think Family
- Recommends extending the logic of the integration of Every Child Matters and other reforms to all services working with families at risk.

DfES/Parenting UK

- Developing a toolkit for commissioners to enable them to choose suitable parenting programmes to run in their locality.

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