

Parenting Support

Guidance for Local Authorities in England
October 2006



Every Child Matters

Change For Children

Contents

1. Foreword	1
2. Introduction and summary of key messages	2
3. Why is support for parents important?	4
4. Support for parents and the policy framework	6
5. The current position in a sample of local authorities	9
6. A strategic approach	12
7. Taking the agenda forward	18
Annex A: Key elements for designing and delivering effective parental and family support services	20
Annex B: Single commissioner of parenting support	26
Annex C: Case studies	29
Annex D: Some useful sources of information	32

1. Foreword



Parenting is first and foremost a private and personal affair. Equally, almost every parent will at some point rely on public services for help with their child's health, education or general welfare. So an enabling state must take a keen interest in how well public services meet the needs of parents, particularly those parents who are least able to help themselves.

Parents' needs, will, of course, vary and it is right that services to parents should vary as well. Nevertheless there are some important general principles, and these are set out in this guidance, and I commend it to you. By working with partners and taking a strategic approach to the development and commissioning of parenting support services we will be more effective at meeting the needs of parents, reduce levels of duplication in service delivery and ultimately improve outcomes for children.

I believe we have the opportunity to become much more skilled in empowering and supporting parents over the next few years. The Government will do all it can to enable this to happen, and I am confident that local authorities will play their full part. We want to adapt this guidance over time, to make it more useful to authorities, and we will welcome any feedback on it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beverley Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beverley Hughes
Minister for State for Children,
Young People and Families

2. Introduction and summary of key messages



2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to support local authorities and children's trusts in their development of a continuum of support for parents. It will be relevant to Local Authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, those involved in the development of Children and Young People's Plans and those responsible for the process of commissioning and/or the delivery of services for parents (including private and third sector providers). It begins with a summary of what we know about the impact of parenting on outcomes for children, and an overview of the policy context. It sets out the case for a strategic approach in designing and delivering parenting support services and explores the concept of a continuum of support. Finally it discusses the plans the Government has for taking the parenting agenda forward.

This guidance has been informed by two studies conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC): *The Market for Parental and Family Support Services* and *Designing and Delivering Effective Parental and Family Support Services*.

This guidance should be read together with the *Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning

2.2 Summary of key messages

The Government is asking local authorities to:

- develop a strategic and joined-up approach to the design and delivery of parenting support services, ideally through a parenting support strategy that informs the Children and Young People's Plans and takes account of parents' views;



- see support for parents as a continuum, from early intervention and preventative services through to the use of enforcement measures; the whole range of services should be used as appropriate; and
- identify a single commissioner of parenting support services, and commission parenting programmes that are evidence-based, drawing on relevant guidance and the Commissioner’s Toolkit (see page 14).

2.3 Terms defined

Throughout the guidance, the terms have been defined as follows:

“Parents” has been used as shorthand to include mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child, including looked after children.

“Parent support services” are defined as: “any activity or facility aimed at providing information, advice and support to parents and carers to help them in bringing up their children”.

“Third sector” encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives.



3. Why is support for parents important?



We know that parents are the major influence on a child's life. Parenting in the home has a far more significant impact on children's achievement than parents' social class or level of education.

From the very earliest years, the mother's nutritional intake, consumption of alcohol or drugs, even levels of stress during pregnancy can have a substantial impact on the health and well being of the foetus and eventual baby. Similarly we know that a child that has not had the benefit of a positive, caring relationship with their parents is likely to have low self-esteem and be vulnerable to mental health problems. This can seriously impair their ability to achieve, enjoy and learn.

For children of primary school age, parental involvement – particularly in the form of good parenting in the home – has the biggest impact on their achievement and adjustment. The effect is greater than

that of the school itself.¹ Parents continue to have a significant impact through secondary school years. That is shown in staying on rates and educational aspirations, and also in the way that aspects of parenting also appear to be a reliable predictor of childhood obesity, offending and anti-social behaviour, smoking, drug and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancy. Parental support is also an important factor for young people making a successful transition to adulthood and independent living.

Parents rightly expect, and want, to have a special influence on their children and families, and do not want it usurped by others. But approximately 75 per cent of parents say there are times in their lives when they would like more advice and support in their parenting role.² This can range from simple advice or information to much more structured and intensive interventions.

¹ The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A literature Review, Professor Charles Desforges with Alberto Abouchaar, Research Report 443

² The Report of the Policy Action Team 12: Young People, March 2000



Meeting parents' needs, as early and as effectively as possible, is therefore vital to our social well being. It is certainly not the responsibility of public services alone. Most parents will look first to friends and family members, and secondly to the voluntary/third sector. But public services do have an important role, especially where the needs are most acute.

We know the key principles of effective parenting:

- authoritative (warm and firm), not harsh parenting;
- attachment, initiated pre-birth and especially important in early months;
- parental involvement, in the form of interest in the child and parent-child discussions: how parents interact with their children is key;
- positive parental expectations, beliefs and attitude; and
- parental supervision.

These principles can be found in families regardless of income, culture and social background and they can be learned. We know also that effective parenting can protect a child against multiple disadvantages. So support for parents, adapted to their personal needs and circumstances, is one of the best supports society can offer to children.

"Parents stress the crucial importance of getting the right help at the right time. This is usually much earlier than currently delivered, and covers a range of services across adult social care, health and housing, as well as children's services."

'Supporting Parents, Safeguarding',
CSCI Special Study Report,
February 2006

4. Support for parents and the policy framework



Since the launch of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme* much has been achieved to ensure that policy and services for children, young people – and their families – are ‘fit for purpose’. The significance of parenting to improving child outcomes has become increasingly central to policy formation on family issues. This is from preconception to early adulthood and from universal and preventative support through to intervention and compulsory engagement with services. These broad objectives have been incorporated into the core policies that set the framework for the next few years.

The ***National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NSF)*** sets out a number of standards to improve outcomes for children. Standard Two focuses on parenting and taking steps to ensure parents receive the information, services and support that will help them to help their children. Other standards, for example *Standard One: promoting health and well-being, identifying needs and intervening early*, urge services to plan

in partnership with parents or carers to ensure that health and parenting needs are met.

The Maternity Standard of the NSF also has a strong focus on family focused care and recognises and emphasises the role that both parents play in the development of the unborn child and what services are available to support parents locally. The importance of parents for public health in general is echoed by **Choosing Health** (November 2004) and the Choosing Health Delivery Plan (March 2005).

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities (from 2008) to broaden the scope of information provided to ensure that parents of children and young people, up to their twentieth birthday, can obtain the full range of information they need to fulfil their parenting role. It also places a requirement on local authorities to deliver information services which are accessible to all parents, particularly those who might otherwise have difficulty in accessing the information they need.



Sure Start Children's Centres will be at the heart of delivering these services – providing a hub of information and advice for families, childcare and early learning, health and other family support including parenting. By 2010, there will be 3,500 centres – one for every community.

Alongside children's centres, **extended schools** will provide a wide range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children and their families. The core parenting support that families should be able to access through selected schools by 2010 includes: information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes run with support of other children's services, and family and learning sessions to allow children to learn with their parents.

Under the **healthy schools** programme, schools must demonstrate how they have engaged parents across all four themes of the programme (PSHE, healthy eating, physical activity and emotional health and well-being) in order to achieve healthy schools status.

Targeted youth support will offer young people with additional needs an individually tailored package of support, co-ordinated by a lead professional. Depending on assessed need, this may include interventions that foster a supportive relationship and effective communications between the young person and their parents. Targeted youth support will be rolled out nationally by 2008.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 paved the way for the delivery of parenting orders to support interventions in the Youth Justice System. The **Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003** and **Criminal Justice Act 2003** increased the flexibility of these orders, and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act also opened up the opportunity for parenting contracts to be used. These measures were devised to support those local authorities working with parents who were consistently undermining their children's life chances to ensure support was given to improve parenting skills. These measures enable compulsory support to be given in



All these policies will require public services for children and local communities to think about the views and the needs of parents and develop future provision accordingly. This guidance suggests the principles and approaches that offer the best prospect of success, based on research and other evidence.

necessary circumstances, without families being drawn into the criminal justice system.

The **Respect Action Plan** (January 2006) has highlighted the significance of parenting to addressing anti-social behaviour. It emphasises the importance of preventative and early intervention approaches and the need for intensive family support for those parents whose children are at risk of or are engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Different approaches to implementing the Respect principles are being tested in selected authorities between now and April 2008.

The **Social Exclusion Action Plan** (September 2006) has also highlighted the importance of parenting as a factor in improving outcomes for children.

5. The current position in a sample of local authorities



“The Market for Parental and Family Support Services” published by the Department for Education and Skills in August 2006 highlighted many issues that need to be addressed if parenting provision is to meet parents’ needs. During the research, undertaken by PwC, discussions were held with parents and professionals from a range of local authorities about the provision of parenting support.

The report highlighted that:

- It was not clear how many families were receiving support. This appeared to be a result of market definition issues and the limited visibility of independent voluntary and private sector provision.
- The market for parental and family support is highly fragmented, patchy and complex. A range of support is provided at the local level, but this is generally in the absence of a coherent strategy for delivery. However, most local authorities were beginning to put parenting strategies in place.

“We are developing a parenting strategy, which is in its early stages. We want to engage with parents across a range of compulsory and voluntary parenting support services. There is a lot of very interesting and imaginative stuff going on at the moment, but the activities and support on offer need to be made more coherent and less patchy. The parenting strategy will be key to delivering this.”

Director of Children’s Services

- Local authorities appear to have only limited awareness of the complete range of services being provided. Many local authorities were, however, in the early stages of trying to map the full range of provision available within their local areas.

“We are beginning to put a family support strategy in place, in partnership with the voluntary sector. The current market structure doesn’t really make sense and the different sectors are not well linked together. The market is underdeveloped and many projects are not sustainable.”

Senior Joint Planning and Commissioning Manager

- Significant variation appeared to exist between local authorities in the sophistication of commissioning processes.
- Provision was focused mainly on remedial rather than preventative interventions.
- Some users of universal services are under-represented – in particular fathers and black and minority ethnic groups.

“Men think “Well, this service isn’t for me” so basically they don’t have very high expectations of it. Wherever a service does engage fathers, they find that they are enthusiastic recipients of the service. Most men, if you engage with them about parenting, will be so surprised that anyone is talking to them that they are grateful for anything.”

National Voluntary Organisation

- There appeared to be little monitoring of the quality of many support services and few quality standards.³ In addition, there were significant challenges associated with appropriately and adequately defining what high quality outcomes should ‘look like’. The accreditation and training of providers and practitioners delivering parental and family support services also appeared variable.
- Funding for parental and family support services appeared highly fragmented. This fragmentation of funding makes coherent, co-ordinated planning and delivery of services extremely challenging. Funding was also said to be insufficient and insecure in the long and short term.

³ It should be noted, however, that since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced a role for youth offending teams in delivering parenting interventions, this delivery has been subject to effective practice guidelines set and monitored by the Youth Justice Board

“There is a cohort of young people who experience clusters of issues around education, youth offending, social and family problems etc. There is therefore a need to co-ordinate the activities of a wide range of services – Sure Start, Behaviour Support in Schools, Youth Offending Services, and preventative work driven by Social Services. There is a need to look across these areas to see what budget or resources can be freed up to extend the range and scale of preventative service provision. The dialogue between these different players historically left a lot to be desired.”

Parenting Co-ordinator,
Youth Offending Team

- The report also highlighted that some local authorities thought it would be helpful to have access to a database of information about effective parenting programmes, guidance on commissioning parenting support and some examples of good practice on how local authorities have developed co-ordinated service provision.

6. A strategic approach



Parenting support is a wide ranging and complicated issue. A strategic approach is critical if parents are to receive a seamless service – tailored to meet their needs. It is also an important issue for local authorities to consider in the context of addressing challenges such as educational attainment, teenage pregnancy, social exclusion, offending and anti-social behaviour.

6.1 Developing a strategy

The Government believes that local authorities together with stakeholders should develop a parenting strategy which reflects their local context. The strategy should consider the varying needs and circumstances of parents living in their area and plan to put in place appropriate services. The strategy should also set out the different levels of support available to parents, from preventative and early intervention services through to compulsory engagement with the use of enforcement measures, where appropriate.

The key elements to consider in this process are discussed further in Annex A. The strategy need not necessarily be a published document, but should follow a rigorous process. This process should enable stakeholders to develop a shared agenda for what they intend to achieve. As part of this process, consideration should be given to aligning the parenting strategy and behaviour strategy across children’s services – because parenting and parenting interventions can have such an impact on the conduct of children. Local authorities that have adopted a parenting strategy have also stressed the importance of achieving a common emphasis on a parenting focus for schools and other services outside of the traditional children’s services – including housing and libraries – in order that the effect of the strategy is maximised.

The parenting strategy should also be used to inform and be included in the Children and Young People’s Plans. It should reflect and inform the development of other relevant planning documents including



the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, Special Educational Needs Strategy, Youth Justice Plan, Joint Commissioning Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

Practice in this field is developing. Manchester City Council recently launched their Parenting Strategy (September 2006). It is available from:
www.manchester.gov.uk/children/parents/strategy.htm

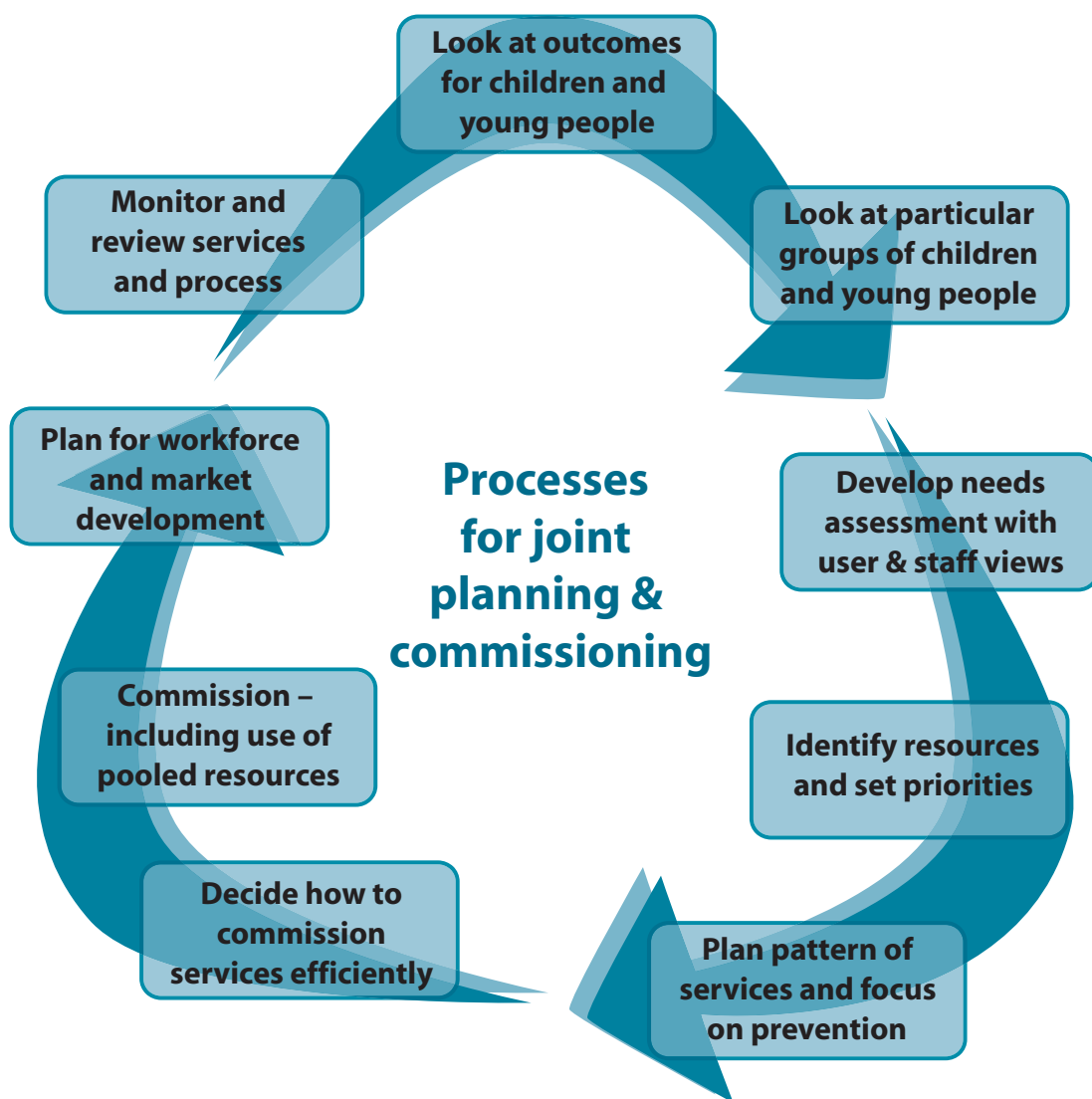
“Without the strategy there would be huge discrepancies and real lack of consistency in terms of provision ... There would be lots of different approaches being used in different places.”

Head of Early Intervention Service,
CAMHS

The *Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* published in March 2006 sets out the process that local authorities should implement over time. The

framework aims to help local planners and commissioners to design a unified system in each area which puts outcomes at the forefront of decision making and create a clear picture of what children, young people and parents need. In this context, the needs of parents, and of different groups of parents, are central to the commissioning cycle. The framework sets out nine key steps to joint commissioning and is shown in the diagram overleaf. Further details can be found on the Every Child Matters website.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategicplanningandcommissioning



6.2 Effective commissioning of parenting programmes

The messages from research regarding which parenting programmes are most effective are still emerging. However, some parenting programmes are already supported by an evidence base and appear to be more effective than others. It is important that resources are invested in parenting programmes that have the greatest effect. We know from discussions that local authorities are seeking more information about parenting programmes.

The DfES has funded Parenting UK to develop a Commissioner's Toolkit – a searchable database on parenting programmes which can be accessed from www.toolkit.parentinguk.org. This will equip commissioners with a greater knowledge of the current range of interventions and includes information on what research and evaluation suggests may be most effective, so that commissioners are better placed to make decisions to suit the needs of parents in their community.

In July 2006 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published guidance on parent programmes in the management of children with conduct disorders.⁴ The appraisal made a series of recommendations for those involved in the appraisal of parent-training/education programmes. It said they should:

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

6.3 Identifying a single commissioner of parenting support

Local authorities have already been asked to identify a single commissioner of parenting support services, in a letter sent by the Minister for Children, Young People and Families in July 2006. This post should work in the context of the children's trust joint commissioning unit (as described in Section 6 of the Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services) and could be incorporated within existing roles, where appropriate. The person would be well placed to:

- champion parenting support across the authority;
- commission parenting support services based on local need;
- consider where services need to be reconfigured and if necessary decommissioned;
- co-ordinate work on parenting support across agencies;
- consider how best to develop early intervention and prevention services, whilst retaining the ability to cope effectively with remedial work;
- consider how services can best be delivered, including through third sector and private organisations;

⁴ NICE technology appraisal guidance 102
www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=TA102

- ensure that appropriate services are put in place to meet the needs of all parents – including parents of teenagers, parents of disabled children and parents of children with special educational needs; and
- consider how parenting support services inter-relate with other services aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people.

An outline of the type of issues the single commissioner of parenting support services might cover is included at Annex B. The single commissioner of parenting support will be able to draw on the skills and experience of others working in the children’s trust joint commissioning unit.

6.4 Drawing on local expertise

It is important that, when planning, commissioning and co-ordinating parenting support services, local authorities draw on the skills and knowledge of all those involved in delivery. These include midwifery and health visiting services, Sure Start Children’s Centre staff, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), teachers, education services, youth offending teams, children’s information services, social care services, adult focused services, the third sector, faith-based organisations, private providers and volunteers.

An important aspect of developing and delivering effective parenting support services is to listen and respond to parents’ views. The most effective approach will vary according to local circumstances but

might include establishing parent forums, involving parents in undertaking reviews of services and involving parents in decision making about services.

“We take a very basic down to earth approach ... We try to build a relationship with families and help them figure out what help they need. They rarely just need one thing. That means that often several different members of the team need to work with them in different ways.”

Family Service Co-ordinator

6.5 A continuum of preventative support, using the whole range of services

The aim should be to provide support to families at the earliest opportunity and to prevent them from reaching crisis point. Many agencies realise this, but too many services are not joined-up and continue to focus on remedial rather than preventive support. Local authorities will want, over time, to develop a system-wide and integrated continuum of support for parents. The concept of a ‘care pathway’ used by health services may be of use here. It puts the user at the centre of service delivery, traces the path of the user through multiple services, and aims to inform service redesign to meet individual user needs. Strategic joint planning and commissioning will enable local authorities and their partners to create ‘user pathways’ – putting the needs of the user at the centre of service provision. It will also help

to reduce inefficiencies – where a number of agencies are commissioning similar services for the same family.

“At the moment commissioning practices vary across the local authority – for example between social services, early years and the Drug and Alcohol Team. There’s lots of linking up to be done internally. We need more consistency in the way we commission services across the authority.”

Early Years Contract Officer

Those involved in commissioning and delivering parenting support services should also establish strong and effective links with adult focused services particularly in relation to parental mental ill health, substance misuse or domestic violence issues.

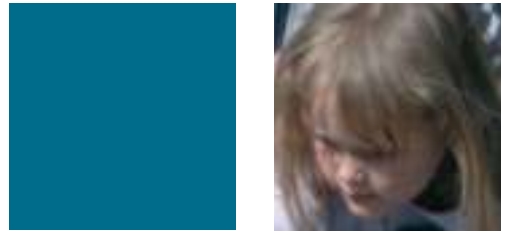
At times, effective support may mean professionals challenging parents, in particular where the actions of parents are harming the child or young person. It might be appropriate to offer parents a parenting contract, or to use enforcement measures such as parenting orders, parental compensation orders or anti-social behaviour orders. Programmes using compulsion should not be regarded as separate from ‘supportive’ measures – their aim, like voluntary interventions, is to offer support, advice and guidance to parents who need it. They should be regarded as part of the continuum of support.

“Different agencies have different priorities and perspectives. Some people are of the opinion that it’s more about offering a range of support, from universal through to targeted support – essentially taking more of an ‘entitlement approach’. Others think we should take more of a ‘punitive approach’ and focus only at the crime and disorder end of the spectrum. The secret is to recognise that it’s a continuum. We actually need to do both. It’s all about the various players working out where they sit and what part they can play on that continuum.”

Children’s Fund Manager

The concept of a continuum of support should be discussed with all stakeholders and an understanding developed of the role each partner can play in providing support for parents. This should include what services are available locally, wherever there are opportunities to better join them up and to identify the range of support that might be developed to fill gaps in provision.

7. Taking the agenda forward



7.1 Testing what works: Government pilots

There is much that we still do not know regarding what works best to support parents in what circumstances. The Government is making significant investment between now and April 2008 to address this and explore different ways of supporting parents at different stages of their children's lives.

- Early Learning Partnerships demonstration projects will support parents of 1–3 year olds who are at risk of learning delay. The projects will be delivered by voluntary and community sector groups linked to Sure Start Children's Centres.
- In schools, Transition Information Session demonstration projects will make parents more aware of how they can support their children during the transitions from pre-school to primary school, and from primary to secondary school.
- Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders in 15 local authorities are increasing support for the parents of children and young people aged 8–13 at risk of negative outcomes, and providing an

earlier, more effective, co-ordinated package of relevant support.

- Parent Support Advisers in over 600 primary and secondary schools in the most deprived areas will work with those families where it is thought that children's learning and achievement are being hampered.
- For 18 months, 10 health-led parenting support demonstration projects will test a model of intensive home visiting from pre-birth to age 2, alongside other universal support from midwives and health visitors.
- 50 Respect Family Intervention Projects will be up and running and accepting referrals by March 2007, offering a range of rehabilitation measures to families that are engaging in anti-social behaviour, including parenting programmes and support for health issues and employment services.
- The Youth Justice Board has worked with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) over the last two years to approximately double the number of parenting support interventions to 11,000 per year.

As part of our commitment to develop our knowledge of what works in parenting



support we will collate the lessons learned from this programme of activity, disseminate the information to local authorities and use the outcomes to inform future policy developments.

7.2 Next steps for local authorities – from October 2006

It will take time for a comprehensive range of parenting support services that meet parents' needs to be put in place – but it is important that early progress is made. Local authorities will wish to:

- identify a single commissioner who will be the champion of parenting support across the local authority. An outline of the possible role of the single commissioner is described at Annex B;
- establish or identify an existing multi-agency steering group to develop a strategy implementing the elements set out in Annex A;
- undertake a needs assessment by analysing appropriate data and through the involvement of parents, children and young people and those involved in

commissioning and delivering support, as appropriate;

- audit existing provision to establish whether there is an appropriate match between needs and services or whether more action is needed;
- ensure that parenting support is incorporated in the development of the Children and Young People's Plans;
- check that the full range of available support and intervention measures are being used;
- commission local services, including parenting programmes, that are needs and evidence based; and
- develop an on-going process of review and improvement, which includes parental involvement.

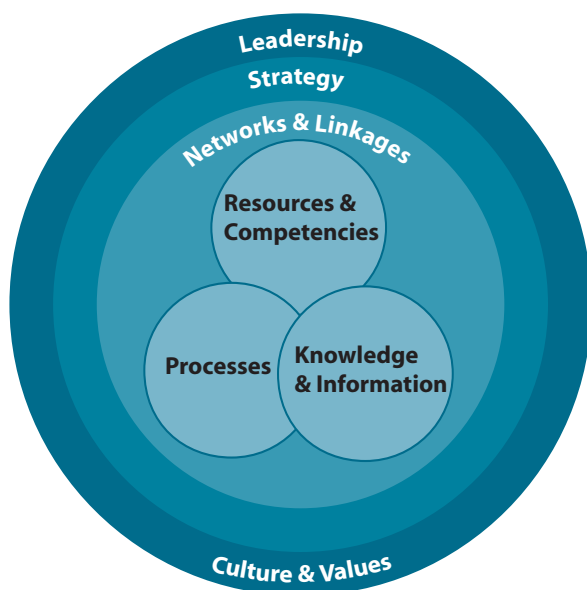
Parenting support is a priority for Government. Government Office Children's Service Advisers will, with other colleagues, work with local authorities to drive the parenting support agenda forward and review the extent of progress that is being made.

Annex A:

Key elements for designing and delivering effective parental and family support services (based on evidence from a PwC study)



This section summarises key elements that need to be in place in order to strategically deliver a full range of efficient, effective, joined up parental and family support services, (as shown in the model below).



For each key element the section below suggests behaviours and inputs that the PwC study found to be helpful in some local authorities. A summary of the case studies is available at Annex C.

Leadership

Leadership drives development and implementation and ensures key decisions are taken. Suggested action:

- Ensure that all major strategic initiatives in the area of parental and family support have the full buy-in and backing of senior level decision makers and that parenting support is strategically placed at the heart of improving outcomes for children and young people;
- Put the necessary structures and working processes in place to ensure that the change initiative is properly supported – for example, by appointing a steering group or board of senior personnel to take key decisions and allocate the resources needed for implementation; and
- Identify and empower leaders at all levels of their organisations to seize the initiative and drive forward change ‘at the coal face’.



“The commitment and support of the Director of Children’s Services has been critical. Without her, the strategy could have just been a piece of paper, nothing more. She commits to attending all the meetings, not just ‘to tick a box’, but because she has genuine enthusiasm for and commitment to what is being done. The Board more generally has a very ‘can do’ attitude – they have taken a lead from her.”

Head of Early Intervention Service,
CAMHS

Culture & Values

Developing appropriate and shared culture and values will help to provide more effective support to parents. Suggested action:

- Aim to reach a shared agreement across disciplines that, by promoting ‘good parenting’, the primary aim is to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, families and their local communities;
- Actively explore and identify any differences in perspective between disciplines regarding what constitutes ‘good parenting’ and ‘good parenting interventions’;
- Persevere in having conversations to confront these differences ‘head on’ and seek to reach agreement about what stakeholders are seeking to achieve;
- Ensure that staff have bought into the concept of joined up working and are willing to work together across disciplines to better meet the needs of local families through, for example, children’s workforce training and the common core;
- Ensure that different agencies and delivery partners are willing and comfortable to share risk and responsibility appropriately and tackle the issues of when compulsion may be necessary between them. This needs to be achieved at the strategic level and when working with individual families;
- Consider introducing common parenting training across disciplines, in order to provide professionals with a consistent

approach to delivering parenting support. Facilitate the move towards greater levels of family-centred, joined up case working;

- Promote and support a culture of learning and innovation;
- Commit to working in partnership with private and third sector providers to develop and deliver services; and
- Develop a culture of working in partnership with local children, young people and families to ensure that local support services are developed in a way that is responsive to their evolving needs.

“The attitude towards parents is empathic and involves the parents' views being heard and valued. As a result parents are empowered to deal with their children's behaviour problems. They become confident in their own abilities.”

Member of Multi-Agency Support Team

Strategy

Developing a clear evidence based strategy will enable better joined up working and help to prevent families falling through gaps in provision. Suggested action:

- Either develop a separate parenting strategy, or plan for the provision of parental and family support services within the context of the broader development of the local Children and Young People's Plan. A separate strategy should still relate to other strategies and

interventions aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people;

- Ensure commissioners of services have a thorough understanding of local needs and existing provision within their local authority area, developed via extensive consultation with children, young people, families and local communities as well as front-line workers, third sector and private providers operating within the market;
- Use this understanding to develop a clear articulation of what parenting provision they will put in place across the continuum of need;
- Put a comprehensive commissioning plan in place which is part of the wider local authority joint planning and commissioning strategy and which sets out how planned provision will be delivered, from whom it might be commissioned and over what timescale; and
- Develop a series of measures that will collectively enable successful delivery of their overall parenting provision to be measured and tracked.

“The strategy has helped in a number of ways, for example by committing to delivering a certain number of parenting groups per year, then planning for their delivery and identifying the necessary resources required to run them.”

Head of Early Intervention Service,
CAMHS

Network and Linkages

Network and linkages help to develop a broader understanding and better working relationships between stakeholders. Both informal and formal mechanisms are important. Suggested action:

- Structure opportunities and put mechanisms in place which enable professionals to meet and build their own inter-disciplinary networks, thereby facilitating and promoting the process of joined up working;
- Build an awareness of local private and third sector providers of parenting support services. Focus on building better links with these providers over time, with the aim of achieving greater levels of partnership working;
- Commit a limited amount of centralised resource to support, co-ordinate and facilitate joined up multi-disciplinary working including with private and third sector providers; and
- Establish processes and put in place regular fora/systems which enable staff from different disciplines (and also representatives from private and third sector partners) to work together more effectively.

"In the early days there were some very difficult meetings and there was lots of conflict. Everyone had a different point of view and there were a lot of hard discussions to be had. But we got through it and now things are working well – there is a common language that's been established and a common understanding of what we are trying to achieve."

Manager, Respect and Anti-Social Behaviour

Resources & Competencies

Providing the right mix of resources and skills is essential to deliver the strategy. Suggested action:

- Put the necessary central resources in place to drive the overall parenting strategy development and co-ordinate service provision across the full range of delivery agents;
- Undertake a full audit of current resources, funding flows and service provision in order to identify any key delivery gaps or areas of duplication; and

- As part of the audit look at ways in which funding and resource could be pooled within the authority and/or with other agencies feeding into wider strategic thinking with regards to pooling. Guidance on authority-partner pooling can be found at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning/poolingbudgets; and Local Area Agreement pooling at: www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161635)
- Re-allocate internal resources to ensure that they are properly aligned to deliver the local parenting strategy, including sufficient resources to support collaborative working;
- Ensure funding flows are adequately co-ordinated across the continuum of support;
- Ensure that all staff delivering parenting support have the right skills to deliver what is required and if necessary, consider available options for building skills if they do not exist – for example via staff training and learning from other partners; and
- Commission the best providers to deliver services regardless of whether they are public, private or third sector – in line with local authority wide joint planning and commissioning.

“We bring additional resources to test out new approaches to delivering parenting support. We are out there, continuing to test out different approaches, raise their profile, draw out key messages and mainstream learning.”

Children’s Fund Manager

Knowledge & Information

Identification and analysis of management information needs is critical to effective commissioning. Knowledge and information needs to be managed and shared effectively. Suggested action:

- Specify knowledge and information needs, from an overall ‘corporate’ and an ‘operational’ perspective;⁵
- Develop management information systems that properly meet the full range of information needs, thereby ensuring that this information starts to be gathered and tracked on a routine basis; and
- Develop the capacity of the joint commissioning unit to commission effective parenting support services through the use of the Commissioner’s Toolkit and relevant guidance.

⁵ In this context, ‘corporate’ information includes a local authority’s knowledge about local needs, available local resources and the nature and quality of existing local service provision. ‘Operational’ information includes ‘on the ground’ knowledge, for example about the needs of different individual families, which enables providers to deliver high quality, responsive services to local people.

“The first challenge in terms of developing a coherent commissioning strategy is to bring together the various teams within Children’s Services and undertake a mapping exercise to understand the full range of services that are currently being subcontracted. Only then can we start to work out how best to work with the voluntary sector to deliver a full range of Children’s Services.”

Head of Education Policy and
CYPP Co-ordinator

Processes

Institutional processes can support effective decision making, strategic planning and co-ordinated delivery.

Suggested action:

- Put in place processes which:
 - Separate commissioning from in-house delivery;
 - Enable those involved in commissioning to develop the capacity of providers from the private and third sectors in areas where there is currently insufficient competition within the market;
- Where gaps are identified in organisations working together, review and revise existing protocols to address this or where necessary, develop new protocols;



- Review and revise or develop, where gaps are identified, existing protocols which define how different agencies should work together. This should include protocols for sharing and communicating information about individual families; and
- Establish pragmatic, yet effective, performance monitoring processes that enable those involved to effectively manage the quality and efficiency of ‘on the ground’ service delivery.

“Many voluntary organisations receive funding from many different parts of the local authority. We do have a shared database to record the grants we give, but we don’t have visibility of where applications for funding have been made to more than one part of the authority. We need to get much cleverer at joint commissioning.”

Head, Parent Development Team

Annex B:

Single commissioner of parenting support



The role of the single commissioner needs to reflect and incorporate local systems and approaches. We are not seeking to be prescriptive but the role should address the following areas either directly or indirectly.

Leadership

To be the central focus and champion of parenting support by:

- Ensuring there is ownership and implementation by senior decision makers for the development and delivery of strategic parenting support initiatives;
- Leading on a strategic and comprehensive approach to the development of a continuum of support for parents;
- Championing support for parents and early interventions for families. Working across the age range from birth to 19 years; and

- Working with the joint commissioning unit, ensuring that the parenting support strategy is coherent with other strategies and interventions aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people.

Culture and Values

To ensure there is a common value base underpinning activities across the local area by:

- Developing shared agreement across the local authority/children's trust/ and criminal justice and housing agencies that good parenting is central to improving outcomes for children;
- Developing a shared understanding of good parenting;
- Actively exploring and identifying differences between disciplines around what constitutes good parenting and good parenting interventions;



- Understanding the cultural and faith needs of local communities;
- Seeking to address these differences and gain agreement on how best to meet the needs of parents;
- Establishing a culture of working in partnership with parents, children and local communities in the development and delivery of services; and
- Supporting and actively encouraging a culture of innovation and learning.

Strategy

To facilitate the development of a strategic approach on parenting support by:

- Ensuring there is a strategic response to parenting support which is reflected appropriately in all relevant plans including Children and Young People's Plan, Local Area Agreement and Youth Justice Plan; and
- Ensuring that the planning process is informed by a rigorous evidence based planning process.

Network and Linkages

To make the linkages to bring together and deliver joined-up services by:

- Developing structures to facilitate multi-disciplinary working – across all relevant agencies – that puts the family at the centre of services delivery and actively seeks to reduce duplication; and
- Developing, over time, a detailed organisational knowledge and links with third sector providers.

Resources and Competences

To make the best use of resources and skills and capitalise on opportunities for joint commissioning, pooled or aligned budgets and efficiencies by:

- Co-ordinating an audit of existing resources and services in order to identify key gaps in delivery or areas of duplication;
- Developing a matrix of skills and an action plan to fill gaps; and

- Identifying programmes and methodology to be applied by the local authority/children’s trust and staff which meets strategic priorities.

Process

To create processes which most effectively deliver the agenda by:

- Commissioning and co-ordinating work – through the children’s trust joint commissioning unit – on parenting support across agencies;
- Developing a formal set of protocols which define how different agencies should work together on support for parents including pooled or aligned budgets for programmes and staff training; and
- Establishing a flexible and pragmatic performance management system.



Knowledge and Information

To apply learning from research and evaluation by:

- Ensuring that there is a management information system in place that meets the needs of a rigorous evidence based planning process; and
- Monitoring and reviewing performance and effectiveness against objectives and outcomes.

Annex C:

Case studies



In undertaking the research with local authorities, PwC identified a number of authorities which were illustrative of the challenges and emerging good practice in the area of parenting support. Full details are available in the report *Designing and Delivering Effective Parental Support Services* which will be available from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW72.pdf>

Brighton & Hove: Multi-Disciplinary Clusters

Brighton & Hove's multi-disciplinary clusters are sub-local groups which bring together professionals from a particular locality to improve the wellbeing of children, families and young people in their area.

In the past, these multi-disciplinary clusters have been strategic (e.g. focused on building networks and facilitating multi-agency working), or functional (e.g. tackling specific cases) in nature, or in some cases, have performed a combination of these two roles.

The coverage and quality of different multi-disciplinary clusters across the local authority area is currently inconsistent. The most successful clusters have been effective in offering local families enhanced levels of early, preventative support, either directly or via the various initiatives that they have spawned.

In October 2006, Brighton & Hove overhauled the way that it organised itself to deliver parental and family support services. This reorganisation built on the past success of the multi-disciplinary cluster approach, whilst also ensuring that the various clusters begin to operate with greater consistency across the local authority area. The overall aim is to ensure that on the ground delivery better matches local needs and that the range of services provided is clearly aligned to the city's parenting strategy, which is currently under development.

Hampshire: FASST Initiative

FASST is the Family and School Support Team, which has been operating in the Leigh Park area of Hampshire since 2003. It is a multi-agency, early interventions team, which has grown up and operates around 14 local schools. The team receives an average of four referrals per week, or around 200 per annum and has worked with over 500 families to date.

A number of key benefits have been associated with the FASST initiative, including:

- the increased speed and reduced complexity associated with accessing support for local children and families;
- improved communication and information sharing between schools and local agencies, meaning that support for families is better targeted and co-ordinated;
- schools being better equipped to play their part in helping families and referring them on to other local sources of support; and
- improved links between schools and families and better engagement of families with local support services, particularly among 'hard to reach' groups.

Hillingdon: Triple P Project

Within Hillingdon, the local Primary Care Trust and the London Borough of Hillingdon are working together to provide

real, integrated, parenting support.

Central to this joined up working is the use of the Triple P – or Positive Parenting Programme – as a baseline model of parenting intervention. The main aims of this approach are threefold, namely to:

- develop a more unified vision for parenting support;
- better integrate service delivery to children and families; and
- balance prevention and crisis intervention.

Practitioners in Hillingdon report that a number of significant benefits have been associated with the Triple P project.

These include:

- ensuring that different disciplines take a common approach and have a shared perspective on 'good parenting' and 'good parenting interventions', irrespective of their professional background;
- building greater trust and understanding between disciplines, thereby strengthening existing and new inter-agency relations and facilitating greater levels of inter-disciplinary working; and
- increasing the professional confidence and competence of staff across all disciplines.

There have also been direct benefits of the Triple P approach for parents themselves:

- parents attending Triple P programmes in Hillingdon have reported increased

confidence, greater satisfaction in their own abilities, better family relations and significant behavioural change in their children; and

- parents on parenting orders have also found the Triple P methodology respectful and useful, often asking to continue with their programmes long after their order has expired.

Manchester: Parenting Strategy

Manchester's parenting strategy was formally launched in September 2006, after an extended period of development lasting over two years.

The strategy development process has involved extensive consultation with local staff and parents and a detailed investigation of existing service provision across the city. The finished document provides a full needs analysis for the local area and articulates a comprehensive vision for parenting provision across the full continuum of families' needs.

The creation of Manchester's parenting strategy has driven a number of key benefits, including:

- increased awareness of, and greater emphasis being placed upon, good parenting among both parents and practitioners across the city;
- key gaps in the city's existing parenting provision being identified and filled, thereby ensuring that high quality services are in place to meet demand across the entire needs continuum;

- greater consistency of parenting provision, as a result of better co-ordination and joining-up of services across the needs continuum;
- greater levels of multi-disciplinary working; and
- the development of a clear delivery plan, which appropriately allocates and aligns the city's scarce resources to deliver on its new parenting strategy.

Manchester: Vulnerable Babies Project

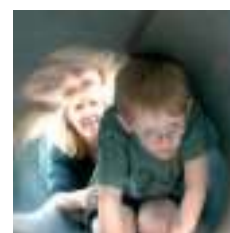
Manchester's Vulnerable Babies project is widely considered as 'cutting edge' and has attracted a significant amount of regional and national interest.

The project is a multi-agency initiative, designed to improve the life chances of at-risk babies born in the city. The programme targets parents of unborn babies and children under 12 months who demonstrate certain risk factors and is centred on meetings between professionals representing several agencies and the parents. Support plans drawn up at these meetings include actions to eliminate or reduce the risk factors the baby faces.

In the 24 months that the programme has been fully operational, it has held approximately 200 case planning meetings with expectant families.

Annex D:

Some useful sources of information



The information/links provided in the sections below are not definitive.

Policy background

Respect Action Plan

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/respect-action-plan

Social Exclusion Action Plan

www.socialexclusion.gov.uk

Extended schools: Access to opportunities and services for all, a prospectus

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools

Sure Start Children's Centre: Practice Guidance

www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/guidance/practiceguidance

Every Child Matters

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications

National Service Framework for children, young people and maternity services

www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/ChildrenServices/ChildrenServicesInformation/fs/en

Choosing Health

www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/fs/en

Choosing Health Delivery Plan

www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/fs/en

Joint planning and commissioning framework for children, young people and maternity services

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning

Teenage pregnancy next steps: Guidance for local authorities and primary care trusts on effective delivery of local strategies

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00145



Other useful publications

How to source parenting provision

www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/guidance/ParentingProvision/index.cfm

Parent-training/education programmes in the management of children with conduct disorders (NICE technology appraisal guidance 102)

<http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=TA102>

Know-How Parenting Support

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools/practicalknowhow

Home Office Guidance: Parenting Orders and Contracts for Criminal or Anti-Social Behaviour

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/parenting-orders-guidance

For the JPC framework; the *Turning the Curve Toolkit*; and Sandwell's capacity building model – please use the following link: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning

'Turning the Curve' Toolkit – Practical Application of Results Based Accountability
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/EP00201

Manchester Parenting Strategy

www.manchester.gov.uk/children/parents/strategy.htm

Research

The Market for Parent and Family Support Services

www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW72.pdf

What Works in Parenting Support? A Review of the International Evidence Patricia Moran, Deborah Ghate and Amelia van der Merwe, Policy Research Bureau, DfES Research Report 574

www.dfes.gov.uk/research

The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review

Professor Charles Desforges with Alberto Abouchaar, DfES Research Report 433
www.dfes.gov.uk/research

Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education, Rebecca Goldman, NFPI 2005, ISBN 1 903615 38 0, available to order from the NFPI website

www.nfpi.org.uk/data/publications

Positive Parenting, Deborah Ghate and Marcello Ramella, Policy Research Bureau for the Youth Justice Board, September 2002

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=21&eP=>

Engaging with fathers

www.workingwithmen.org – a national charity that supports the development and needs of boys and men through project work, research, training and consultancy

www.fathersdirect.com – Information, news and advice for fathers. Training, consultancy and resources, and information on the Fatherhood Quality Mark.

www.ymca.org.uk/parenting – gives details of engaging with fathers in extended services through the national YMCA dads&lads project

National organisations with expertise in supporting parents

www.nfpi.org – the National Family and Parenting Institute is a charity working to support parents in bringing up their children, to promote the wellbeing of families and to make society more family friendly.

www.parenting-forum.org.uk – Parenting UK is the national umbrella body for people who work with parents. It developed the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents.

www.continyou.org.uk – a charity which offers a wide range of education and support for schools, families and communities, including the 'Active Dads' and 'It's a Man Thing' programmes

www.parenting.org.uk – Positive Parenting is a charity which offers parenting training and support

www.relate.org.uk – Relate is a charity which offers relationship support, including parent-child relationships.

www.barnardos.org.uk – Barnardo's is a children's charity which offers relationship support, including parent-child relationships

www.coram.org.uk – Coram Family is a children's charity that aims to develop and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families.

www.tsa.uk.com – The Trust for the Study of Adolescence is committed to improving the lives of young people and families.

www.parentalk.co.uk – Parentalk is a national parenting charity

www.oneplusone.org.uk – One Plus One works to strengthen couple and family relationships.

www.nspcc.org.uk – NSPCC provides family support services to both parents, carers, and children. The work aims to ensure that children and young people are cared for safely by adults, and that vulnerable children and young people receive help to prevent or protect them from abuse.

www.nch.org.uk – NCH works to help children achieve their full potential. Its services support some of the UK's most vulnerable and excluded children, young people and families.

www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk – School-Home Support is a charity which provides practical and emotional help for disadvantaged children, young people and families through its field staff of School-Home Support workers.

www.cafamily.org.uk – Contact a Family provides advice, information and support to parents of disabled children and is funded by DfES.

www.fwa.org.uk – Family Welfare Association works with some of the most disadvantaged families, providing a range of family support services.

Information for parents

www.nacis.org.uk – The National Association of Children’s Information Services (NACIS) is a registered charity that supports and promotes children’s information services (CISs) in Great Britain. CISs can offer guidance to families, childcare providers and employers on childcare and a range of other issues related to raising a family.

www.parentcentre.gov.uk – the Parent Centre is a website for all parents and carers who want to help their child or children to learn, with information and advice about children’s learning and the English education system.

www.direct.gov.uk – a website giving a wide range of government information and services including education, health and home and community.

www.parentlineplus.org.uk – a website offering support to anyone parenting a child. It includes an e mail support service, and downloadable information materials for parents. The Parentline Plus helpline is available free of charge 24 hours a day, on 0808 800 2222.

www.homestart.org.uk – Home-Start UK – offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with children under 5 who are experiencing difficulties. A free helpline is available on 08000 68 63 68.

www.talktofrank.com – an interactive website giving confidential advice and support to drug users, their families and anyone concerned about another persons drug use – a free helpline is available on 0800 77 66 00.

www.ace-ed.org.uk – the Advisory Centre for Education is a charity offering information about state education in England and Wales for parents of school age children. A free general advice line is available on 0808 800 5793 (Monday to Friday 2-5pm) and a free exclusions information line is available on 020 7704 9822.

www.earlysupport.org.uk – Early Support is the central government mechanism to improve the quality, consistency and co-ordination of services for young disabled children and their families. The site includes materials which have been specially developed for families with a young disabled child and links you to other useful sources of information.

You can download this publication online at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk
<<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk>>

ISBN: 978-1-84478-830-9

PPOAK/D21/1006/82

Crown Copyright 2006

Published by the Department for Education and Skills

Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non commercial education or training purposes on the condition that the source is acknowledged.

For any other use please contact HMSOlicensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

75% recycled

This leaflet is printed
on 75% recycled paper



When you have finished with
this leaflet please recycle it