Evaluation of the National Parenting Development Project

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CONTENTS

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Policy Context

1.1   The work of the National Parenting Development Project (NPDP) can be placed within the context of legislative and social policy developments over the last fifteen years in both Scotland and the UK. A large number of initiatives, involving all key agencies, have been put in place to address disadvantage, increase educational opportunity and support young people into further education and employment. The crucial influence of parents on young people's quality of life and behaviour has been increasingly recognised, and initiatives been introduced to support and influence parents as well as young people. The vision the government outlined for children in Scotland with *Getting it Right for Every Child* (Scottish Executive, 2005) included the aim that "children and young people should live within a supportive family setting, with additional assistance if required". This policy highlighted the need for improvements in the delivery of children's services with a focus on strengthening the capacity of parents through integrated agency supports. Other legislation and policy developments which have been introduced have also focused on the rights and responsibilities of parents, for example parental involvement in schools (*Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, 2006*), support for parents within the Child Protection Reform Programme (Scottish Executive, 2004) and the promotion of parenting education within the public health service context (Department of Health, 2004).

1.2   Parallel to these social inclusion initiatives, there has also been increasing public and governmental concern about youth crime. It is widely argued that there has been a shift towards holding young people and their parents responsible for their behaviour, rather than viewing it as resulting from disadvantage (Goldson, 2002). The introduction of Antisocial Behaviour and Parenting Orders is consistent with this trend.

1.3   Legislation and policies have increasingly identified the role of local authorities in supporting and developing parental capacity. Local authorities are expected to support parents in a wide range of circumstances and to respond to very different levels of need. Current policy statements, such as *For Scotland's Children* (Scottish Executive, 2001) have emphasised the importance of collaborative planning and service provision across local authority agencies, health departments and voluntary and independent service provision. The services they provide, including education, social work and health might be offered on a universal basis or be targeted at families where children are viewed as in need or at risk. On an individual

family level, *Getting it Right for Every Child* outlined a number of proposals to strengthen co-operation between agencies in offering families support including the use of a integrated assessment framework, with all agencies contributing to a common assessment report, thus aiding the process of joint service planning and provision.

1.4   Strategic planning of services was required to progress these policy objectives where work with parents was a key feature. However, joint planning in relation to parents is complicated by the fact that each service: education, health and social work, has well–established ways of working with parents which accord with their own role, remit and professional values. Each also works within separate lines of accountability and funding streams. Co-ordinating such a wide range of services presents a major challenge and the process of combining them to provide a coherent, unified service requires skilled management. However, it has been suggested that parenting support is an area of social care in which the need for multi-agency working is particularly important (Moran et al, 2004)

The Remit of the National Parenting Development Project

1.5   The National Parenting Development Project was set up in 2002 by the Aberlour Child Care Trust, with funds made available by the Scottish Executive, as part of the Executive's aim to progress the ten point action plan set out in the policy document *Scotland's Action Programme to Reduce Youth Crime* (Scottish Executive, 2002). This included the development of services to aid the implementation of Parenting Orders, aimed at providing parenting education and support for parents who may not have engaged on a voluntary basis. It was anticipated that NPDP could support this development.

1.6   The broad aims of NPDP were to develop the range and quality of parenting support services across Scotland. The key role was to work towards the objectives of the Youth Crime Prevention Fund which focussed on early intervention with families to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour; and with the parents of young people who had already come to the attention of youth justice services. Thus, the project set out to contribute to the development of service provision aimed at prevention and early intervention, and to support parents' 'management' of young people who were at risk of, or involved in, offending behaviour.

1.7   While the project's work was always set within the context of early intervention and preventative work with families, there was an expectation that it could potentially make an impact in reducing youth crime. However, it became clear

during the first four years of the project's work that part of its role at least could be refocused to support local authorities across Scotland to develop parenting services on a local basis in order to support this legislation. Local authorities were required to show that parenting support and interventions were on offer to families who were experiencing difficulties prior to the imposition of a Parenting Order. The project's work with local authorities revealed that structures were rarely in place to progress this service development and that services themselves were patchy, not easily identifiable, with confusion over who was doing what in relation to parenting. The project was able to identify patterns in the way that parenting services had developed across local authorities in Scotland. NPDP local audits highlighted a lack of clear strategic planning, limited information about existing services and in some areas duplication of services or common gaps in provision, for example in services for parents of teenagers. Strategic planning was clearly required in order to meet the objectives of the many policy statements which included parenting work as a key element.

1.8   Phase One of NPDP's development took place between 2002-2006 and has been captured in an earlier report (Burgess and Walker, 2006). During the second phase of the project's work (2006-2008) there continued to be a focus on direct programme delivery to groups of parents who required support with particular difficulties (for example the parenting programme work with mothers in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale and with parents whose young people had been referred to Youth Justice teams).   An additional focus on strategic parenting service development work with local authorities and the multi-agency co-ordination this entailed, meant that it was necessary to consider parenting services in a broader context. NPDP aimed to assist local authorities develop shared goals in supporting parents and to integrate key objectives from various policies which addressed parenting issues. Where the project was involved in the formation of local parenting services Steering and Strategy Groups, membership included workers from agencies whose interests lay with the preventative or universal end of provision as well as those who were concerned with targeted interventions with families with more complex difficulties. NPDP attempted to support different agencies develop a unified (or at least collaborative) approach to parenting within local areas. In those areas which went on to employ NPDP-supervised Parenting Development Workers (PDWs) to help progress their parenting strategy, it was necessary for these workers to manage the tensions between the original youth crime focus and the requirement to develop services which addressed local need and were organised within existing local structures.

1.9   Within the local areas where they operate, PDWs have aimed to balance youth crime-related direct programme delivery and consultancy work with wider local strategic objectives which encompass a spectrum of approaches to parenting. The clear message that has come out of this dual approach is that parenting work

and parenting services as a whole must be developed in a broad way that includes interventions that are early, preventative and aim to reduce risks; as well as targeted services for families whose difficulties are more advanced. The development of the project's work, with its focus across the micro and macro aspects of parenting services, reflects the need for these services to be placed within an ecological framework which acknowledges the web of interacting factors which influence how parenting takes place.

Evaluation

1.10   The importance of identifying longer-term results and developments has been identified as crucial to the ongoing effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the NPDP. Throughout the initial evaluation period, emerging findings were fed back to project staff in order to inform the development of the service and it was recognised that data on outcomes required longer-term follow-up.

1.11   The evaluation of Phase One of NPDP focused on three main elements of the project's work:

- Supporting local authorities' strategic planning and
- development of parenting services
- Training
- Supporting direct work with parents.

1.12   The initial evaluation focused to a considerable extent on describing the processes through which these three aspects of the service had been set up and developed. The second phase of the evaluation assessed the impact of the project's work, both in the short and longer-term.

1.13   The key objectives of the second phase of the evaluation were to:
- monitor the extent to which local authority inter-agency structures and plans had been implemented and sustained over the longer term;
- assess how effective these structures were in fostering joint working and facilitating a comprehensive range of parenting services;
- follow-up some of the parents who took part in the initial evaluation, while also assessing the short-term impact on an additional number of parents
- identify the key elements of practice which helped engage parents in ways which were most likely to help them enhance parenting capacity;
- develop understanding of the most effective approaches with groups of parents with specific issues, particularly drug-using parents, parents in prison;
- explore the relevance and efficiency of measurement tools that could be used by practitioners to measure outcomes in parenting work.

1.14   There are clear limitations in the measurement of social work interventions for effectiveness, not least as the impact of particular interventions may be very specific to the individual. A structured programme may impact in different ways depending on individual circumstances or indeed, may not work at all for some clients (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Similar difficulties arose in evaluating the impact of NPDP both strategically and in terms of direct work.   There are widely acknowledged difficulties in reliably assessing the impact of this kind of service in isolation from other external influences. The relationship between intervention and outcome is complex and doubts have been raised about the extent to which it is possible to measure outcomes or attribute them to a specific service (Trinder, 2000). However, it is possible to offer indications of the likely impact of particular services where the wider context is acknowledged and it is recognised that other factors may have influenced measures of effectiveness.

1.15   Evaluating the impact of an intervention such as a parenting programme has significant limitations, widely acknowledged in research in this area. While attempts can be made to judge the effectiveness of an intervention by assessing the extent to which undesirable outcomes have been reduced and positive ones enhanced, there are a number of challenges in doing so. Firstly, parenting programme work takes place over a short time period, with positive outcomes likely to develop slowly and incrementally. Secondly, a number of influences and mediating factors may have a bearing on how parents undertake their role, making it extremely difficult to assess the intervention's effectiveness in isolation. It has been suggested that the effectiveness of a programme is best achieved by combining an analysis of process issues in addition to measures of outcome (Moran et al, 2004).

1.16   In a similar way, there are difficulties associated with measuring the extent to which NPDP has been effective in assisting local authorities in developing their parenting services strategy. It may only be over an extended time period that the full effect of building the foundations of strategic work can be measured.   NPDP's contribution may be difficult to assess, given the impossibility of evidencing how different local provision would have been in areas where the project has had input.

1.17   This evaluation provides an overview of the work of NPDP and adopts a case study approach to examine how the evaluation objectives were addressed in practice. The three case studies highlight a combination of approaches aimed at developing and supporting effective parenting work:

- Case study one highlights NPDP's strategic work with one local authority in developing parenting services in the area;
- Case study two evaluates NPDP's direct parenting programme delivery work in collaboration with a range of statutory and voluntary sector staff from within a second local authority area;
- Case study three provides evidence from NPDP's direct parenting programme delivery work within HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.

1.18   Case studies one and two provide opportunities to follow up work established in Phase One, while case study three provides an example of extending learning from Phase One (service provision for parents with substance abuse problems) and applying this in a distinct environment (the prison).

Diagram 1

DIAGRAM OF SERVICE STRUCTURE

National Parenting Development Project

*All staff based either at Edinburgh Office
or in appropriate local authority area*

Project Director
*Main roles: General project development, supervision of staff, overseeing training
section and consultancy with local authorities on strategic development*

Project Manager

*Main roles: General project development, supervision of staff and
consultancy with local authorities on strategic development*
1.75 Administrators (General & Training)

Trainers (1.5)
 plus sessional staff

Project Worker (1)

Parenting Development
Workers (4)

Development & delivery of training modules relating to parenting work to a range of agencies and individuals

Programme delivery in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale jointly with Programmes Unit prison staff

Located in four local authority areas: involved in strategic development and, in two areas, direct programme delivery

Project Remit

1.19   Diagram 1 illustrates the operational structure of NPDP. The remit of the service is to provide the following:

1. **Parenting programmes**
    Delivery of parenting programmes, usually in collaboration with staff from other agencies; advising staff on the delivery of parenting programme work to groups and individual families.

2. **Strategic consultation**
    Providing consultation to local authorities on the strategic development and planning of parenting services

3. **Training and dissemination of information**
    - delivery and co-ordination of training to agencies and individuals in parenting related work;
    - provision of a resource library of parenting materials, tools and information

4. **Research**
    The evaluation of the project by researchers from the University of Stirling aimed to assess the effectiveness of direct practice and the process of partnership working. This also linked in to ongoing service monitoring by individual PDW's and NPDP managers.

Progress of Work

1.20   During the second phase of the project's work, from 2006-2008, NPDP has developed across Scotland by providing services in these four areas.

Parenting programmes

1.21   Direct delivery of parenting programmes has taken place, in most cases co-led with staff from partnership agencies, on both a group work basis and with individual families.

1.22   On a group basis:
- Four groups, using the ESCAPE programme, in two local authority areas plus one parallel group for young people running alongside a group for parents/carers.
- Three groups, using a NPDP/Scottish Prison Service designed programme, in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale; this programme was written following a pilot group in October 2006 and has been accepted by the SPS programme approval panel.

1.23   On an individual basis:
- Ten families took part in parenting programmes using the ESCAPE model.

1.24   In addition, the PDW role has had a wider remit within the delivery of parenting services, for example by providing consultancy on the delivery of structured parenting work or more general parenting related issues.

Strategic consultation

1.25   Since May 2006 the project has had a significant role in assisting with strategic planning and development of parenting services with 12 local authority areas and a more limited degree of involvement with a further six. The project's experience in assisting local authorities with this work has enabled it to build a bank of knowledge on the processes and considerations involved in developing a parenting strategy.

1.26   The project has developed tools to help authorities plan the development of services in a way that encourages integrated working between agencies. These tools include a staged intervention framework for use in the audit of existing services to map the strengths and gaps in provision and a Framework for the Strategic Development of Parenting Services. This sets the delivery of services in a broad context which reflects national policy objectives and offers a structure within which to develop services in order to meet these objectives. These frameworks can be found at Appendix One.

1.27   In addition, the Scottish Executive document *A Framework for Parenting Orders in Scotland* (2007) to which the project manager made a major contribution, sets out a co-ordinated approach to parenting support which local authorities can adopt in order to underpin the implementation of Parenting Orders.

- Four local authorities have adopted the Framework for the Strategic Development of Parenting Services and PDW posts have been established as part of this; PDWs are involved with a range of aspects of parenting work delivery and development, and a central role in progressing the parenting strategy.

- The project had a lead role in the mapping and auditing of parenting services in three local authority areas and was commissioned to undertake supplementary work or provide consultation in two others. In two of these areas the project assisted with writing the parenting strategy and identifying staff training needs and in one additionally offered consultation on the development of strategic planning for parenting services. To aid this process NPDP delivered a day seminar on parenting for managers in one of these areas.

- In three further areas the project provided either consultation in writing the parenting strategy, consultation and a seminar on how to progress a strategy or on-going consultation on the development of direct delivery work.

Training and dissemination of information

1.28   Since 2006, there has been a move away from the delivery of training for individual workers, towards the commissioning of training by local authorities and other organisations to provide part of their workforce development plans or as part of their parenting services strategy.

- The training section has delivered commissioned training to 17 local authorities, in addition to a range of voluntary agencies and other organisations, including a Health Board and members of the Children's Hearing panels. In some cases this training has been an element of the parenting strategies which local authorities have developed and which project PDWs, where they are in place, have been tasked to progress.

- In addition to the Core Skills modules, the training section have developed a number of new modules related to parenting work including 'Working Positively with Problematic Parental Substance Use' and 'Working in the Early Years', drawing on the experience the project has gained from its work with specific groups of parents. There are plans underway for further courses such as 'Work with Young Parents' and 'Working with Parents Affected by Domestic Violence'.

- The project co-ordinates training in Scotland for other agencies who offer parenting assessment or programme work including training in the use of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence ESCAPE parenting

programme and the Child and Family Training Services assessment tool, 'In my Shoes'.

- The project has a particular interest in promoting training related to attachment issues and co-facilitates training by Dan Hughes' in 'Dyadic Development Psychotherapy' and by Tony Morrison in attachment and 'emotional intelligence'.

1.29   Statistics compiled by the project reveal that approximately 1,250 people have attended training events in every six month period. The demand for training input from NPDP continues to grow and staff resources for this section have increased threefold. While generating income, the training section is dependant on the wider project infrastructure to enable its services to continue. Additionally, the benefits it derives from its direct links with the programme delivery and strategic development arms of the project were highlighted in the first phase evaluation report and continue to be significant.

- The project resource library of materials, research and information about parenting work continues to be used by a number of agencies and individuals.
- The project has run two seminars on the subject of 'Developing a Parenting Strategy' and 'Parenting work with women in prison' together with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Prison Service respectively. It has also contributed presentations to a number of conferences and has been involved with the launches of local parenting strategies in the areas where PDWs are operational.
- The project co-ordinates a practitioners group for the 12 PDWs/ Co-ordinators who are in post across Scotland; this group includes those employed by a range of agencies, some with no direct links with the NPDP. The group provides a forum to discuss the progress of parenting work across authorities in relation to strategic development and best practice.

Research

1.30   The evaluation reports produced by the researchers at the University of Stirling are disseminated widely to professional staff and agencies with whom the project has contact.

2.   CASE STUDY ONE: STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF PARENTING WORK WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Introduction

2.1   This case study focuses on the work of NPDP within one local authority area and specifically on the ways in which the project contributed to the development of the parenting service strategy across key agencies in that area. It demonstrates how NPDP assisted the process of multi-agency planning to develop parenting services in an integrated and collaborative way, in line with policy objectives.   The case study highlights how, by adopting the project's Framework for strategic planning of parenting services, the foundations could be laid to address other key policy objectives; these included the provision of services that were locally based and accessible to families and offered supports which strengthened parents' capacity to nurture their children.

2.2   NPDP were commissioned to conduct an audit of parenting work in this local authority area and completed this in 2004 (see Appendix One). Subsequently, a Parenting Steering Group was established to ensure parenting issues were highlighted among agencies, and also to provide an opportunity for agencies to work together to develop a strategic approach to parenting.   A Parenting Development Worker (PDW) was employed by NPDP and funded by the local Council.

2.3   The aims of the evaluation of NPDP in this local area were to:
 ▪ Monitor the extent to which inter-agency structures and plans had been implemented and sustained and to measure progress in facilitating a comprehensive range of parenting services;
 ▪ Assess the contribution of the project and the PDW in the development of parenting work in the Council area.

2.4   This has been undertaken in the following ways:
 ▪ Two in-depth and one six month follow-up interviews were conducted with the PDW
 ▪ Minutes of all Steering Group minutes (from January-November 2007) were scrutinised
 ▪ Interviews with seven representatives from the multi-agency Steering Group (one respondent was interviewed on two occasions)
 ▪ Interviews with three Local Community Network (LCN) Officers

Findings

The progress of the strategic work

2.5   Following the audit of parenting services undertaken by NPDP in 2004, an outline Parenting Strategy was agreed by the Council and a Parenting Steering Group was established to develop the details of the Strategy. The work undertaken during 2006 by the Parenting Steering Group, of which the PDW is a member, was partially focussed on drawing together the content of the Strategy document to reflect the concerns and interests of all the agencies involved.

'It looks to set parenting work in an integrated and interagency context that can encompass Parenting Order provision and seeks to: (i) encourage parents to access parenting support on a voluntary basis whenever possible; (ii) provide support that will meet the diverse needs and circumstances of parents and their children' (Parenting Steering Group, 2006: 1). The strategy document was finalised and presented to the Council Lead Officers Committee in December 2006, where agreement was given for it to be implemented.

2.6   The strategic objectives of the Parenting Strategy are listed as:

▪ To obtain a clear mandate from the Children and Young People's Partnership for the implementation of a Parenting Strategy.
▪ For each LCN to produce annually a Local Parenting Action Plan reflecting both local assessed need and prioritised areas of parenting work identified through the Parenting Steering Group.
▪ For parenting support to be delivered in the context of family learning and as far as possible normalise the support of parents.
▪ To develop services in such a way that the service delivery commitments associated with Parenting Orders can be met by participating agencies.
▪ To increase the capacity of all involved in parenting work to undertake parenting work through the establishment and implementation of an interagency Parenting Training Plan agreed by the Steering Group.
▪ For each participating agency to involve parents and children in the planning and evaluating of services. The monitoring and evaluation of services will reflect desired outcomes for both children and their parents.

2.7   By December 2007, respondents indicated that they felt the Steering Group was 'on track' with strategic progress. A launch event for the Strategy was viewed as successful although it was acknowledged that getting parents to participate would be an ongoing challenge. It was also indicated that ensuring

the representation of all relevant agencies was difficult. While the initial work of the Steering Group had largely focused on the development and promotion of the strategy, there was now a sense of moving into the next phase of implementation.

Operation of the Steering Group

2.8   Interviews and minutes from the Steering Group illustrate that it provided a forum for agency representatives to be informed of local and national parenting work. The group identified and organised events including the launch of the Parenting Strategy and other forums aimed at helping professionals consider their potential contribution to the implementation of the Strategy. Attention was also given to the availability and content of training of relevance to parenting work (sharing new skills and monitoring effectiveness of existing training).

2.9   While this forum for bringing agencies together was viewed positively, progress and communication around parenting was described as 'slow'. While some respondents commented on the lengthy discussions on the Steering Group it was acknowledged that this was often due to different perspectives. One respondent commented that:

> 'with parenting, all organisations involved have different angles, so it is more complex and it is bound to be slower'.

2.10   It was agreed however that progress was being made and the group was generally 'on target' to meet its aims and objectives. There was general agreement that the Steering Group had done a significant amount of work in setting up the strategy and was considered to be on track to meet its strategic SMART objectives.

2.11   Agency representatives who did attend the Steering Group were positive about the issues addressed, however it was noted that not all agencies were represented. The absence of a representative from Health Services was considered to be an important omission but attempts were underway to address this. Some agencies would get involved around particular key issues or specific events but did not regularly attend Steering Group meetings. One respondent indicated that they would link in with the Steering Group as necessary but their agency had very specific legislation to follow in relation to parenting and they were more focused accordingly. Changes in personnel also had some impact on attendance, as did the fact that for many agencies involved, parenting/parental involvement formed a small part of their overall remit and accordingly time and resources had to be spread out. This reinforced the significance of the PDW who

was in a position to retain the focus on parenting issues and bring agencies together in addition to supporting the integration of services.

2.12 While the Steering Group did not appear to encounter any difficulties in agreeing and setting priorities, the major barriers reported were those of workload and communication (between agencies and with parents). It was noted that this was perhaps due to time constraints in establishing effective collaborative work, but members were required to take ownership of the work of the group. In contrast, one respondent commented that involvement in the Steering Group enabled them to establish networks that they may not have done otherwise and *"to get our agenda on to the table"*.

Training

2.13 The audit of parenting provision in this local authority highlighted the need for an inter-agency training plan for parenting work (in line with the Occupational Standards for Work with Parents, 2005). The Parenting Strategy acknowledged the need for this plan indicating that it would: *"foster shared understanding, encourage interagency working and aid development of quality of work in meeting the standards"* (p5). It noted that the inter-agency plan would include the following:

- Core training on basic skills including:

  - work with fathers

  - assessment of parenting and tools

  - monitoring and evaluation

- Identification and training on specialist programmes

  - Working with parents of teenagers

- Developing trained facilitators to 'teach' and support others in parenting work.

- Development of a practitioner forum to share skills; tools; follow up training and peer supervision.

2.14   Ongoing training in this local authority has been provided by both NPDP and Parenting Network Scotland, which is now joined with the Scottish Enterprise Academy.   There had   been some confusion around an event aimed at establishing the feasibility of providing Training for Trainers in relation to parenting, with agencies sending different people to the event based on different expectations of what the event was about i.e. to train others or to improve individuals skills.   It would appear that the dissemination of information within agencies has not always been clear and respondents referred to more general difficulties in passing information 'horizontally' within organisations.

2.15   The Steering Group has retained a focus on training provision, and indeed a sub-group was established to enable members to meet separately to discuss training specifically.   While it was generally acknowledged to be an important issue, there was a view that arrangements around training had taken up a lot of time as opposed to 'work on the ground'.   For one respondent, this indicated that the Steering Group was not particularly efficient:

> 'It could be that people don't have a clear understanding of what it is about and there is too much emphasis on training'.

2.16   However it was seen as generally important by respondents that high quality training was available for practitioners with ongoing consistent support. This underpinned the development of parenting practitioners groups within local areas aimed at supporting practitioners and influencing direct work with parents. However the up-take of these groups was low, due to time constraints on practitioners and differing views on the importance of 'parenting' as an issue in its own right.   Nevertheless, it was noted that the groups had made a difference, with some people being initially sceptical but leaving the group feeling *"really motivated and interested and connected with other people"*.

Role of the PDW

2.17   The post of the PDW was established following the identified need to provide improved ways of co-ordinating information, development and delivery of local parenting services.   The key functions of this post are:

- To assist in the development of the Parenting Strategy and particularly in the implementation of SMART Action Plans associated with its objectives.
- Work with LCNs in rolling-out the strategy locally through the development and implementation of annual Parenting Action Plans.

- Provide training, research and staff development support associated with the Strategy.
- To build the capacity of agencies to deliver services prioritised by the Parenting Steering Group through direct participation in the delivery of those services for time-limited periods.
- Assist in the preparation for the implementation of Parenting Orders in the area and support the management and implementation of individual orders.
- Provide professional advice and support to the Steering Group.

2.18   This post is funded by the local Council through the Steering Group and managed by NPDP. One of the tasks of the Steering Group is to 'oversee and guide' the activities of the PDW.

2.19   Interviewees were asked to determine how significant the role of the PDW had been in progressing the overall parenting strategy and the work of the Parenting Steering Group in particular. In general, the role of the PDW is greatly valued and is seen as central in planning, implementation and keeping the focus on parenting work.

2.20   The role of the PDW within the Steering Group had clearly been an important one, and had involved: setting the agenda for meetings; updating the Group on developments in the parenting work; and progressing suggestions made by the group for the next stages of the work. The PDW did not have the responsibility of chairing the Group. However, she felt that she did have a role in inspiring others in terms of the parenting work and this was acknowledged by other respondents. There did appear to be some lack of clarity on the part of group members as to what extent the PDW should be steered by the group or whether the group itself required motivating to forward the implementation of the strategy and the work on the ground. One respondent commented that it may have been more effective to use the PDW to work between agencies at 'ground level' with a focus on how best to target the work.

2.21   There was also some ambiguity about the PDW role from respondents who did not attend the Steering Group. While the PDW was valued for her role in the community and for reporting on developments with the parenting strategy and Parenting Practitioners forum, it was noted that it was not clear what her role was. However this is perhaps due to changes in personnel in these other agencies rather than due to lack of communication from the PDW, who had made considerable effort to engage with a wide range of services. It is likely this uncertainty could be clarified by restating the PDW role and remit.

2.22   Respondents were of the opinion that it was beneficial for the PDW to be employed by a non-statutory agency so that her role was not too closely identified with any particular statutory service, and that she was independent of any one agency's agenda. Overall however, the independence from statutory services was considered important in ensuring the role did not get entrenched in local pressures and politics which, it was suggested, may be evident in local authorities. In terms of future developments, there was seen to be a continued need for a co-ordinating or lead officer to promote integrated working.

2.23   The contribution of the wider NPDP was also acknowledged; it was valued for the project manager's knowledge of legal issues and practice experience in relation to parenting work. The PDW was a member of the Parenting Order Policy Group and had contributed to the drafting of the protocol for their implementation.

Links with the community

2.24   The Steering Group's remit included the development of parenting work within the Local Community Network (LCN) structure as a way of embedding parenting services within the wider community. The Parenting Strategy was rolled-out through the four LCN areas with each area expected to establish a dedicated parenting sub-group or one which included parenting, to take parenting work forward as part of the local Action Plan.

2.25   Respondents indicated that slow but steady progress was being made in developing multi-agency cohesion which would lead to long-term collaborative services. The process of working together across agencies had clearly not been wholly straightforward and it had taken time for some agencies to recognise the importance of their contribution to the development process, for example, by attending meetings and seeing how their agency's work fitted within the broader picture of parenting services.   Differences between LCNs in implementing initiatives were noted and it was suggested that participation differed between local areas.

2.26   Several respondents also highlighted the issue of definitions:

> 'we are trying to map what is going on with parenting in the area but it's very, very difficult to do …and of course you've got the lack of consistency and understanding of what is parenting and what's not". Another respondent noted: It should be in the family learning context…some parents are put off by the term parenting'.

2.27   This lack of clarity, it was suggested, could lead to problems in terms of both service delivery and prioritisation.

2.28   Other community-based objectives included the establishment of a Parents Week which focused on encouraging parents' participation and Parenting Month where events were arranged to involve both professionals and parents. There were mixed views as to the success of these events with respondents suggesting that not all agencies were represented. Events which linked agencies together under a separate Parental Involvement Strategy Group were viewed as very positive (coming under the auspices of Education) and although not originating from the Steering Group, the PDW was involved. Generally, these events were seen as positive opportunities to find out about the roles of other agencies (and workers within them) and promotion of inter-agency work.

2.29   Some respondents questioned the emphasis given to 'parenting' indicating that a wider approach was required for families who didn't engage with services, in order to involve people in different activities to establish contact; with parenting following that engagement. As one respondent noted:

> 'If a family is in chaos, there needs to be initial work before they can look at parenting'.

2.30   However this point did appear to be central to Steering Group members' views – perhaps indicating a difficulty in communication rather than shared priorities.

2.31   The distinction between universal and targeted services was also acknowledged. The Strategy (p3) notes:

> 'The targeted use of scarce parenting resources will be significantly influenced by the impact of universal services in their day to day contact with parents (both actual and prospective'. As one Steering Group member noted: We want to get rid of the stigma and make the work relevant to all parents'.

2.32   The Council had provided funding (2006-2008) to support the implementation of the Parenting Strategy and increased capacity required to deliver parenting services (including the post of PDW and associated costs). However, the time-limits on this funding clearly have broader implications which have led to future uncertainty. Lack of clarity about funding sources more generally and for the LCNs in particular had caused problems.

2.33   It was noted that the removal of ring-fenced funding could be problematic for agencies – in terms of potential conflict and competition for limited resources. The post of PDW has secured an additional year's funding to support the development of the action plan and parenting sub-groups in place in each LCN. This was considered important in ensuring that parenting issues did not go on to the 'back burner' again.

Development of direct parenting work

2.34   The reports provided by the PDW for Steering Group meetings and the minutes of these meetings indicated that progress had been made towards provision of services on the ground.

- The LCN based parenting subgroups had formulated Action Plans which were reviewed every three months using SMART objectives; funds were made available to progress the work which LCNs were using in different ways, for example four areas had commissioned Parenting Network Scotland to run group-based courses for parents entitled 'Parenting Matters' and Getting on with Your Teenager, two other areas were running half day coaching courses 'Helping our Children', two areas were running practical courses as a way of engaging parents around the themes of cooking and outdoor skills (in partnership with the Forestry commission) and in one area the Community Learning and Development team was undertaking pre-parenting courses.
- A pilot parenting programme, using the ESCAPE model, had been undertaken with a group of parents whose young people were known to the Youth Justice team; this was led jointly by the PDW and a member of staff from the Youth Justice team;
- Links had been made with Transition events and Parents' Nights at schools, and Parent Information Points had been established in three areas; Parent Information events, not linked to schools, had also been held in three areas; there was considered some potential to help staff involved in Home School Link work and Solution Orientated work in order to develop the parenting work element of their role;
- Family fun and learning days had taken place in two areas; these included information stands and activities aimed at parents and children
- Meetings had been held with representatives from voluntary agencies such as HomeStart and Youth Action to identify specific provision needs.

Impact and success

2.35   Steering Group members acknowledged that much of the progress made in relation to parenting would be unlikely to show benefits in the short-term and developments often needed to become embedded before any impact could be identified. However, the Framework for parenting work provided an important context for ensuring that developments took place within a broader context. Measuring any impact of the strategic developments on professionals, parents and young people would require a longer-term overview. Other external changes and developments were also likely to have an impact making it difficult to identify where the kernel of change had originated.

2.36   NPDP had indicated to the Steering Group that they would identify a measurement/tool which could be used to evaluate the strategy. This tool provides a framework for a rapid assessment exercise, developed by the Family and Parenting Institute specifically for the monitoring of progress of local parenting support strategies. This exercise, involving Steering Group members, is due to take place on May 1st 2008 and aims to monitor progress in areas which include partnerships and resources, policy and strategy.   One respondent acknowledged that progress should be viewed as a 'journey' with a need to keep working towards objectives. Achieving a better outlook for young people and families, it was suggested, could be reached by a focus on high-level aims, rather than allowing agencies to remain in their own 'silo's'. This was where the PDW role was seen as beneficial – in encouraging agencies to work together and supporting developments.

2.37   For one respondent, success could be viewed by the following achievements:

> 'We've seen the strategy launched and there are parenting sub-groups in all the LCN areas. There's a practitioners group and the training plans have been well received. We are bringing the strands together and cohesiveness is coming.   There is a baseline for practice but the next 12 months will be key'.

Key Points

- The Parenting Strategy was considered to be on track; the initial work of the Steering Group had largely focused on the development and promotion of the strategy and there was now a sense of moving into the next phase of delivery.

- The Parenting Steering Group was able to set priorities for the work but there were barriers in relation to representation from some agencies and in some aspects of communication; in addition, progress was at times considered to be hampered by lengthy discussions reflecting different perspectives of the work;

- Indications were that slow but steady progress was being made in developing multi-agency cohesion which would lead to long-term collaborative services;

- There were indications that parenting work with families was developing in all local areas, according to the needs identified by agencies involved;

- Training provision was one focus for the Steering Group and it was seen as important that high quality training was available for practitioners with ongoing consistent support; this underpinned the development of parenting practitioners groups within local areas aimed at supporting practitioners and influencing direct work with parents;

- In general, the role of the PDW was greatly valued and was seen as central in planning, implementation and keeping the focus on parenting work; however, there was some lack of clarity about the PDW's role, both within the Steering Group and in relation to its community-wide aspects, which could be addressed by restating or redefining the role and remit;

- In terms of future developments, there was seen to be a continued need for a co-ordinating or lead officer to promote integrated working and support developments.

- The project's role in helping to establish and then facilitating the work of the steering group enabled the policy requirement for integrated and collaborative multi-agency working to be progressed.

3.   CASE STUDY TWO: DIRECT PARENTING WORK

Introduction

3.1   This case study focuses on the direct parenting delivery work of NPDP within one local authority area. It highlights the project's role in progressing national policy requirements for improvements in the delivery of children's services and furthering the government's vision for children in Scotland. This role included the facilitation of cross agency collaboration in a range of aspects of parenting work, the provision of structured programme work to support and build the capacity of parents of teenagers, for whom there had been a dearth of services, and the development of information resources giving parents enhanced access to advice and avenues for assistance.

3.2   A Parenting Development Worker (PDW), employed by the NPDP and funded by monies from the local authority, had been based within the social work department in this area since May 2005. The post was created following initial work in the area by NPDP which involved mapping existing parenting services, assisting the authority and partner agencies with strategic planning of parenting services, co-ordination of training and the direct delivery of parenting programmes together with local authority staff[1].

3.3   The work undertaken by the current PDW can be described broadly within the following areas:

- Delivery of parenting programmes with staff from a range of agencies;
- Consultancy and coordination of staff development in aspects of working with parents;
- Development of information and resources about parenting;
- Contributing to the strategic development and planning of parenting services.

3.4   This case study is primarily concerned with evaluating the direct delivery of parenting work; however this will be taken in a wider context and will include

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[1] A full description of the initial stages of the work can be found in the Final Evaluation Report of the first phase of the project (2006).

the other aspects of the PDW role, such as direct work with professional staff in the promotion and development of parenting-related work and the provision of information and resources to both staff and parents themselves. The PDW's role within the strategic planning of parenting services will be briefly outlined as relevant but not central to this part of the evaluation.

Evolution

First stage (October – December 2005):

3.5   Prior to the current PDW taking up her post in October 2005, the first postholder collated the audits of existing parenting services being undertaken by other agencies to identify gaps in provision. The first three months of the PDWs post was primarily concerned with: preparing for the delivery of programmes to individuals and groups of parents and networking with partner agencies to ascertain how parenting work could be usefully developed within the broad aims and objectives of the Parenting Strategy being devised by the multi-agency Parenting Steering Group.

Second stage (January – June 2006):

3.6   The main focus of this stage was the delivery of the first parenting group with a colleague from the Youth Justice team and parenting programme work with individual families, in some cases co-working with staff from other agencies. Consultation took place with a number of practitioners about parenting work with specific families, staff development workshops were arranged and a parenting resource library established.

Third stage (July 2006 – December 2007):

3.7   During this period there has been consolidation and rolling out of the delivery work of parenting programmes with more individual families and three additional groups of parents. One of these groups was led by staff from partner agencies and did not include the PDW directly and one involved parallel work with young people whose parents were attending a group programme. In addition, a number of developments were progressed as a result of contact with staff from a range of agencies through the direct delivery work and through involvement with the Parenting Steering Group. These are described in the next section. The strategic planning work progressed with a draft strategy and action plan being put in place by the Steering Group; this occurred at a slower pace than had been first hoped.

The Evolution of the Work

Stage 1: Preparation and networking in order to progress:
                    /   /   \   \

| Direct delivery | Training & | Information | Strategic |
| (group work & individual) | Consultancy | & resources | planning |

                    /   /   \   \
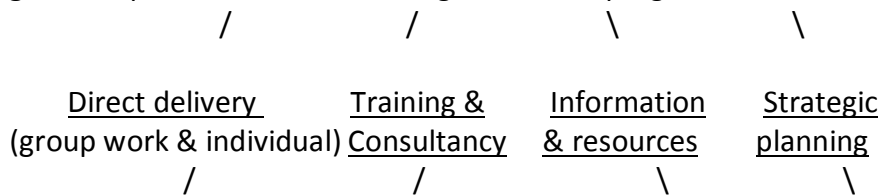
Stage 2:   initial group and   training workshop   resource   maintain
             individual work   on engagement   library   momentum
                    /   /   \   \

Stage 3: joint working   Work with schools   Parent Info   Draft Strategy
          & roll out   Early Years and   Points in schools   & Action Plan
                       Community   Kinship care
                       Learning &   Information packs
                       Development

Factors influencing the evolution of the parenting work

3.8   The parenting work in this area evolved as a result of a combination of factors:

- The work was developed in a way which fitted within the broad definition of the aims and objectives of the parenting strategy;
- specific local need was addressed, through discussion with practitioners and Steering Group members;
- the PDW progressed the work using her experience and ideas about how work within specific areas might be developed;
- work was 'rolled out' in a sustainable way, that involved passing on the skills required for direct programme delivery to be undertaken by staff across a range of agencies.

THE RANGE OF THE WORK

Delivery of parenting programmes

3.9   The key feature of the delivery of programmes work with parents was that it should follow a sustainability model, where expertise in facilitating programmes would cascade from the PDW to staff across agencies through collaborative work. Three parenting programmes (ESCAPE) offering structured support for parents of teenagers were delivered plus a parallel group which worked with young people whose parents were attending a parenting programme. Three of these groups were co-led by the PDW; the other was led by a member of the Youth Justice Team, who had previously led a group with the PDW, and ran it on the second occasion with an Integration Team staff member, thus furthering the aim of 'rolling-out' the work. Parenting programme work also took place with ten families on an individual basis.

3.10   The parenting programme delivery work entailed:

- Promotion of the programme with referrals being accepted from a range of agencies including the Youth Justice team, Integration team, Family Placement Team, and Children and Families social work team.
- A minimum of two assessment sessions with each family, plus, in most cases, the use of pre and post programme measurement tools and individual goals for the work set and reviewed.
- Planning and delivery of eight to ten programme sessions, with the production of reports from each session.
- A follow-up visit, in most cases, to complete measurement tool results.
- Obtaining feedback from participants and collation of material such as measurement tool results to inform programme evaluation.

3.11   The PDW has written guidelines outlining the processes involved in programme delivery for the use of facilitators.

3.12   Key features of the direct programme delivery work:

- Both group work and individual programme delivery were undertaken jointly with staff from partner agencies including Youth Justice, Integration Team staff and Community Learning and Development.
- The work was person-centred and was conducted individually with families where group work was not appropriate.

- The work focussed on families with young people who were considered to be particularly vulnerable in terms of offending, substance misuse or where family breakdown was a significant possibility.
- The programme aimed to help parents understand their young people's behaviour, improve communication with them, enhance their confidence in parenting and set realistic targets for change, for example in relation to boundary-setting and giving consistent messages.
- The programme content was interactive and inclusive; it featured group discussion and exercises and focused on encouraging participants' strengths and mutual support.

Consultancy and coordination of training

3.13   The PDW provided consultancy on approximately 327 occasions to staff members across 25 agencies, both local and national; this included staff from a total of 40 teams or areas of work within these agencies which ranged from social work and health to community development. In some cases this involved general information sharing, in others it involved case consultancy with staff who were working with individual families using structured parenting work and in others it included some degree of joint working, for example in undertaking assessment or offering advice and support as the work progressed.

3.14   Areas covered included the following:

- Involvement with the Early Years service involved the PDW running a Sleep Workshop with staff and parents; she has been asked to run another session in another area as the first was well received.
- The PDW was consulted by staff at a primary school where a group of P4 pupils were being disruptive with a view to providing advice as to how to engage and provide group work support for the children and their parents.
- Community Learning and Development approached the PDW on a consultation basis for help with engaging families with teenagers about parenting issues.
- Training workshops undertaken included one run jointly with Health Promotion staff as part of their continuing professional development programme on Working and Engaging with Parents.

Information and resource development

3.15   The PDW initiated the inclusion of Parent Information Points, involving the setting up of a multi-agency parenting marketplace offering information and support to parents at a Transition Evening at a local High School. There was a positive response from parents and from the school, with 47 parental questionnaires received as a result. This will continue to be a feature of future Transition Evenings and a proposal has been submitted to the Head Teachers' Group for it to be rolled out to schools across all clusters.

3.16   The PDW is a member of the Kinship Care Working Group and has been involved in developments to support kinship carers. This included taking a lead role in arranging a Kinship Care Information event and subsequently contributing to a newsletter for this group. The PDW continues to develop her links with the Family Placement Team and the staff member who has a role in supporting kinship carers.

3.17   As a result of regular requests by Children and Families social work staff to provide advice about parenting teenagers, the PDW produced an information pack which she is continuing to develop with the local authority Publicity Officer. The PDW has also helped to develop, and contributed to, the Parenting section of the local authority website which includes advice for parents of teenagers and useful links for parents to access information from a range of parenting support organisations. In addition, a library of resources relating to parenting work has been established by the PDW; this is available to staff across all agencies with which she has contact.

Strategic development and planning

3.18   The PDW has a key role on the multi-agency Parenting Steering Group. Her remit includes the promotion of parenting work and contributions to the progress of the parenting strategy. The PDW is also a member of the Supporting Vulnerable Parents Project Strategy Group and the Family Group Conferencing Development Group.

FINDINGS

The delivery of parenting programmes

Family characteristics

3.19   Twenty seven families participated in structured parenting programme work from early 2006 until February 2008 as shown in Chart 1. Seventeen families took part in group based work and 10 undertook individual work in which the PDW was directly involved. A total of 36 parents/carers took part, the gender division between parents/carer was approximately 2:1 with 25 being female and 11 male.

Chart 1: Characteristics of participants
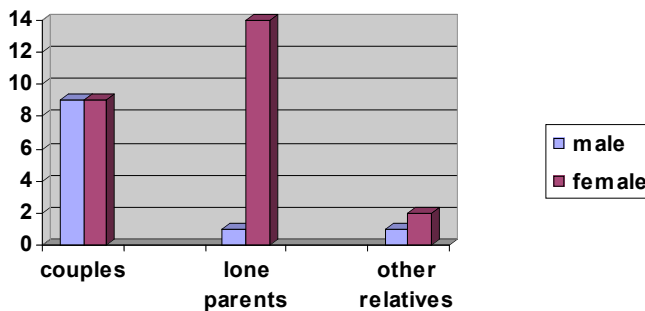
3.20   The total number of children from these families was 58, with 32 of these being teenagers who had been specifically referred. Fourteen of these young people took part in parallel work on an individual or group basis, with eight completing the sessions. With the exception of four young people, all of the 32 referred were living at home, this includes two young people who were living with kinship carers; of those who were not living at home, three were at residential school and one had left home and was living independently. All the young people living at home who were of school-age were in mainstream schools while two were post-school age, one of whom was attending college.

3.21   A detailed form including referral information, attendance records and, where available, information about outcomes obtained from referring workers, programme facilitators and parents themselves was completed for each family.

Referral information

3.22   Referrals were made primarily by local authority staff members with 11 referrals coming from the Youth Justice Team and nine from the Integration Team who are part of Education services. Two further referrals came from Children and Families social work teams, one from the Community Adolescent Mental Health Team and two from voluntary agencies; there was no information about referral source for two families who attended the group with which the PDW was not directly involved.

3.23   The service requested for these families for the most part included assessment; eight referrals did not include this but it was offered and undertaken. In 17 cases group work was requested and provided and in 10 cases individual work was undertaken. In the case of two families, it became clear that group work was not the best option for the family and work continued on an individual basis.

3.24   Reasons for referral for this work were defined in relation to parents needs and the risks identified for young people. The presenting issues, taken from a list of options, most frequently cited by programme leaders who completed the form for each family were:

- family relationship issues (20 families);
- low self confidence in ability to parent (23 families);
- health issues (7 families);
- problematic substance use by parent (4 families);

3.25   As Table 1 illustrates, 13 young people were identified as having three or more risk and difficulty factors (from a list of 14); a further 17 young people were seen as having one or two areas of difficulty and no risk factors were noted for three of the young people.

Table 1: Risks identified for young people

	Young person risk factor 1	Young person risk factor 2	Young person risk factor 3	Young people: total risks
alcohol misuse	19	1		**20**
drug misuse	5	5		**10**
self harm	1			**1**
learning difficulties	1			**1**
physical disability	1			**1**
Offending	7	12	3	**22**
loss/bereavement	5	5		**10**
emotional abuse	2	3		**5**
Neglect	2			**2**
Current or past Child Protection registration	4			**4**

Table 2: School difficulties

	Young people school difficulties
None	4
Exclusions	4
Truancy	3
Truancy & exclusions	17
n/a (over school age)	2

3.26   In addition, it was identified that:

- 28 of the 32 young people for whom information was available were described as displaying angry and/or aggressive behaviour, nine of these 28 young people had also displayed violent behaviour.

3.27   Young people's strengths or protective factors, taken from a resilience framework, were also identified and indicated that:

- Most of the young people were able to count on the support of an adult and peer family member, plus a professional worker and had at least one friend;
- Half the young people had a secure living base and were popular with their peers.

3.28   However, few young people were reported as having good communication and problem-solving skills and very few showed evidence of self-esteem or involvement in hobbies.

Parenting programme attendance

3.29   Parental attendance and participation at both one to one assessment sessions and at the programme sessions, whether undertaken individually or as part of a group, were recorded and collated. Rates of attendance were generally fairly high and were as follows:

- Assessment sessions: 19 parents/carers (or couples) attended all sessions as planned, three attended almost all the sessions, three attended less than planned and one did not participate at all;
- Programme sessions: four parents/carers (or couples) attended all the sessions, 15 attended nearly all sessions missing only two or three sessions of the eight or in some cases the nine scheduled, five attended less than half the sessions and two failed to attend any sessions.

3.30   There was no information reported about attendance in relation to one family.

3.31   The reasons cited for non-attendance included illness, unexpected work commitments, and transport difficulties, one family ceased attending because of family breakdown and four others ceased to attend for reasons that were not ascertained. In one case, work was continued with the family on an individual basis. Non-attendance and reasons for this were always followed up by group leaders as far as possible.

Impact of the work on individual families

3.32   The impact of the parenting work was measured using the following methods:

- goals to be achieved by undertaking the work were set and reviewed;
- accredited tools namely The Family Grid, and in two cases, Strength & Difficulties Questionnaires were used to measure impact;
- referring or key workers provided summary progress reports;
- telephone interviews with referring workers as to the impact of the work were conducted by researchers.

3.33   The six families for whom there was no information available all participated in the group which was not led by the PDW. This highlights the difficulties of evaluating work which is not directly under the control of the PDW.

3.34   Some degree of improvement or progress towards stated goals was recorded for 15 of the 21 families for whom information was available. In the case of six families, it was considered that identified goals had been fully met while for nine families, the goals were recorded as having been partially met; in the case of the latter, some improvement was considered to have taken place across all the goals.

3.35   The goals which the families and their key workers identified as important and towards which many made significant or some progress were typically in the following areas:

- improved communication between parents and young people
- enhanced ability to set behaviour boundaries
- a calmer approach to dealing with family conflict
- more respect shown to family members
- improved confidence in parenting
- shared family rules

3.36   In some cases, the stated goals directly identified ways in which young people's behaviour or particular difficulties might be addressed as a result of the influence of the work on parental approaches. Those which featured included:

- improved school attendance / reduction in exclusion from school
- young person taking more responsibility for their actions
- young person and their parent undertaking shared activities.

Interviews with referring workers
3.37   The interviews with referring workers and reports from key workers (relating to 15 of the 21 families), offered more detailed information as to the impact of the work. It was considered that offending and referrals to the Children's Hearing had ceased or been reduced in at least five cases, that school

exclusions has ceased to be an issue in two cases, that there had been significant improvements in parent/young person communication in six cases. Parents were considered to be more confident in setting boundaries in at least four cases. One referring worker expressed the view that the work had affected *'a move in the right direction, which was significant given the family's entrenched difficulties'*.

3.38   Two referring workers stated that improvements in the ways that the families were managing were solely attributable to the parenting programme work and that it had engaged the parents in ways that had not been achieved before.

> 'I was addressing offending behaviour with two of the girls from this family but without the intensive family work by the PDW there would not have been such a successful outcome as both the girls are now off supervision and the family are now able to manage their own situation without intervention' (Referring worker).

3.39   Four respondents believed that the programme work had played an important part, but that it was difficult to separate the effects of the work from that of the other supports and interventions in place. Three of the reports described the ways in which parents had been encouraged to participate in the work but had failed to engage in this, usually by not making themselves available. In one of these cases, the young person had started to attend school again and it was thought that might be the reason for the parent not continuing with the work.

3.40   The Family Grid measurement tool, which measures changes pre and post intervention in parents' self-esteem and positive or negative attitude towards their partner and young people, was completed for 11 families; the results for seven of these families reflected increased self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards their young people. Three families obtained mixed results, in two of these cases reflecting an increase in self-esteem but a less positive attitude towards the young people and in one case a decrease in self-esteem but a more positive attitude towards their young person. The facilitators felt that there was some confusion amongst parents about how to complete the measurement form accurately and that the results might not truly reflect the progress made.

3.41   Pre and post intervention results of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire were available for five families, with positive results indicated for two families and mixed results for three families - that is that there were improvements in some areas and not others.

3.42   The programme facilitators observed that the impact on most participants had been to:

- increase parents' confidence in their abilities and in persisting with new strategies to cope with difficulties;
- help them prioritise the important issues and not get caught up in minor disagreements with their young people;
- make them feel less negative about their young people and communicate with them in a more positive way.

3.43   However, it was felt that for some families, the parenting work would be more effective if it took place before difficulties became entrenched. In addition, it was considered important that parents recognised that there was a problem; one parent was described as unable to work on her difficulties because she had not acknowledged them.

Feedback from parents and young people
3.44   A total of eight parents/ carers who had participated in parenting programme work were interviewed; one had undertaken the work on an individual basis and the others were a selection from across the three groups. In addition, evaluation sheets completed by participants at the end of the programme were made available to the researchers.

3.45   Most of the parents/carers who were interviewed were positive about undertaking a parenting programme and most expressed a willingness to try anything that would help resolve difficulties with their young people; only two expressed some apprehension and one stated that she felt shocked at being referred for a parenting programme, but subsequently revised her opinion. Most of the interviewees could identify specific issues that they hoped the work would address, for example, setting reasonable boundaries, understanding teenager's viewpoints and behaviour, finding ways of improving communication with and becoming closer to their young people.

3.46   The parents/carers were all able to recall at least some of the sessions on the course, even though they had undertaken it several months before. Sessions that interviewees mentioned included discussions about their own upbringing, peer group pressure, young people's perspectives, handling conflict and being more positive with young people. Most of the parents were able to give examples of ways in which they put some of the ideas and strategies from the course into practice, for example, praising young people, talking issues over calmly and expecting young people to take responsibility for themselves.

'I was putting things into practice – being consistent, sticking to discipline and carrying things out as I said. It was good to get support each week that I was doing the right thing, that my rules and grounding my son were acceptable' (Programme participant).

3.47   In terms of the impact of the course, parents/carers generally felt that there had been a lasting impact in relation to:

- Improved communication with young people;
- Consistency in sticking to rules and sanctions
- Increased confidence in parenting;
- Approaching problems with a calmer attitude and manner;
- Improvements in young people's attitudes and behaviour.

'It definitely had a very positive effect; we don't argue so much, we are more relaxed with each other and we talk a lot more and in better ways. It was one of the best things I did' (Programme participant).

3.48   Two of the interviewees stated that some of the strategies had gone by the board once the work had finished and some difficulties were still being experienced in relation to young people, however they noted that they had retained some of the learning from the work and this had made a difference to family life.

3.49   All the participants expressed the view that the supportive and non-judgmental approach of the programme facilitators had made them feel positive about attending and those who undertook the work as part of a group all found the mutual support of group members very beneficial.

'It took away the feeling of despair. I had felt terrible at times. We could encourage each other and say to each other that things will get better. It was a chance to talk about the difficulties and mull over the good and bad things that had happened' (Programme participant).

3.50   In addition to this, other factors which helped parents engage were opportunities to meet group leaders and get to know them over two to three sessions before the group started; and the informal and relaxed atmosphere in which the group was delivered. One parent stated that all group members were made to feel important and the small numbers were important for discussing matters of a personal nature. Two participants commented that it would have been useful to have the input when the young people were younger as it was

harder to change when inconsistency has been a feature of parenting for a number of years.

3.51   The feedback forms completed by participants reflected their positive views of the course content and approach and gave examples of the ways in which their children's behaviour and their relationship with them had improved.

3.52   Feedback from programme leaders and young people who attended the Parallel Lines group which ran alongside one of the groups for parents was made available to the researchers. Attendance at the group was irregular but it was felt that overall five of the 10 young people who were accepted onto the group engaged well and the Programme Satisfaction Questionnaires completed by three young people were positive. The learning from the experience of leading this group was outlined in a report written by the PDW, available through the NPDP.

> 'I found the group very helpful and it has made a difference to things at home – things have improved' (Young person attending Parallel Lines programme).

Partnership agencies feedback on the wider aspects of the parenting work

Joint work, consultancy and provision of information/resources

3.53   The observations of six staff members, including two managers, from across three statutory agencies, on the contribution of the PDW to the broad aspect of the work were collated and the following benefits identified:

- advice, knowledge and support in parenting work was immediately accessible and greatly enhanced the expertise of staff;
- the PDW offered support to develop a more consistent but flexible approach to delivering individual parenting input;
- the PDW was able to advise in the assessment of individual parenting skills and deficits;
- the PDW's lead role in facilitating or offering advice in planning and delivering programme work was invaluable;
- resources and information for staff in ways to support parents were readily available;
- access to and reinforcement of training in parenting work was an important element of the PDW role;
- the PDW had responded to the gaps identified in the audit of services and responded to local needs.

'The support of the PDW is a very valuable asset to the team and is greatly needed due to the range of needs presented by the families we work with. Having a dedicated parenting worker has given us the knowledge and support in providing a comprehensive service to families, which is designed to meet their individual needs. Without this support we would be less able to provide such a high standard of targeted family work' (Staff member who undertook joint work with PDW).

3.54   The role of the PDW in combining advice, knowledge and support with the availability to undertake joint direct delivery work was considered particularly beneficial. It was seen as crucial to have access to a staff member whose sole focus was on parenting work. It was considered that the PDW had worked in a way which balanced development work with service provision, thereby helping to meet the aims of the local parenting strategy.

'Rolling out' the programme delivery

3.55   A central aim of the parenting work in this area was to 'roll out' the learning and experience of undertaking programme work to enable it to be sustained in future and not limit the expertise within the remit of one individual staff member, that is the PDW. One of the staff members who facilitated the 'rolled out' programme was interviewed and the following points emerged:

- the time required for running the group, including home visits to parents before and after the group and for completion of paperwork, was underestimated and is more apparent when the PDW, who has more dedicated time, is not directly involved in running the group;
- the accessible and on-going support and advice of the PDW was very useful;
- the ESCAPE programme assessment form was used, rather than the more detailed one devised by NPDP; the Family Grid measurement tool was not considered to be user-friendly and in some cases was not completed by families, who were asked to do so without support from workers, who reported that this was due mainly to time constraints;
- it was recognised that referring workers could be more involved with the process and ways found to facilitate feedback between group leaders and referring workers as to the impact on parents during and after the group.

Strategic development of parenting work

3.56   The PDW's contribution to the development of the parenting strategy and her role as a member of the multi-agency Parenting Steering Group was described by two steering group members. The range and the main elements of the PDW's role appeared to be clearly understood. The feedback which was offered was that:

- the PDW had fully met the expectations of all aspects of her role and remit;
- the PDW had and would continue to have a central role in progressing all aspects of the parenting strategy;
- the PDW's dedicated focus had contributed expertise to the group and, in the opinion of one member, it would be hard to see how the group would have managed without this;
- the Steering Group had not operated as effectively as had been hoped, although it had recently become more cohesive, but the PDW had had a major role in trying to develop the work of the group.

'The PDW has had a driving role with parenting issues and assisted with their strategic development. The Steering Group has senior people in it but the PDW has her own ideas and useful information to offer us and works within the Steering Group, bringing ideas for debate and agreement' (Steering Group member and Service Team Leader).

3.57   A draft parenting strategy and action plan is now in place. However, the work the PDW had undertaken, across the spectrum of universal and preventative services to more vulnerable families, meant that work within the broad elements of the strategy were already well underway.

Key Issues from the Parenting Work

Inter-agency work

3.58   All aspects of the parenting work in this area involved close collaboration with staff from other agencies, ranging from those with statutory responsibility for young people to those working in the areas of community development and health education. The PDW was required to liaise, and in some cases undertake joint work, with staff from these agencies and good, co-operative working relationships had developed.

Key points

- Having an office base within the Youth Justice team and in close proximity to social work teams gave the PDW a high profile and assisted the development of the work, eased the referral process and the on-going liaison about individual case work;
- The PDW was able to meet the needs of practitioners through involvement in the parenting aspects of work with individual families, either directly or as a consultant, as well as developing the work in a broader way as envisaged by the parenting strategy;
- The PDW presented her work in a way that aimed to compliment the work being undertaken by the existing case worker, acknowledging their perspective and approach, while suggesting ways in which the work might be developed;
- In developing the work, it was important to take account of the constraints on many collaborating staff members in terms of competing work priorities; while parenting work was considered important, staff were often not allocated sufficient time to undertake it nor was always viewed uniformly in relation to strategic development and planning.
- The collaborative nature of the work demonstrated a 'good practice' example of integrated working on the ground and thereby furthered the aim of national policy objectives for multi-agency work with families.

Sustaining and 'rolling-out' the work

3.59   A key aim of the parenting work undertaken by the PDW was to enhance the skills and expertise of staff across agencies in order to enable the work to be sustained and progressed. This was successfully achieved, with staff from several agencies undertaking group and individual parenting programme work with families and many more participating in training.

Key points

- The accessibility of the PDW to offer support and advice to workers undertaking programmes with families, especially in the initial stages, was seen as important;
- Individual and group work in which the PDW was not directly involved was often undertaken differently, due in part to time constraints but also to a lack of recognition of the need to evaluate and measure impact; for example, the time given to assessment was sometimes shorter, in some cases there was less follow-up and there was less information available as to impact on participants due to goals not being recorded and reviewed and measurement tools not being completed;
- The guidelines for running group programmes being written by the PDW aims to partly address the above issues; however, as the work is 'rolled-out' the PDW's ability to influence how it is undertaken is lessened;

- The lack of information about the impact of the work on some participants had implications for the current evaluation and would also apply to any future or on-going evaluation of the work; there is a need for all managers and staff who lead programmes to recognise the importance of building in evaluation and impact measurement;
- The 'rolling out' model of working was effective in building capacity in staff skills and experience.

Good practice and engagement

3.60   The experience of undertaking the direct work with parents/carers has highlighted a number of issues in relation to practice; in some instances these confirm the findings from the first phase of the NPDP evaluation, although the circumstances of parents in some cases were quite different.

Key points

- It was considered important that parents were at a stage where they could acknowledge family difficulties, reflect on the impact of their parenting style on young people and be open to making changes themselves, rather than placing all the responsibility for change on the young people;
- Parenting work can highlight very difficult issues for parents, for example in relation to their own early lives and relationships and workers need to be able to adopt a sensitive and flexible approach to the progress and structure of the programme work;
- Positive engagement with parents during the early stages of the work is crucial; meeting parents individually and on more than one occasion, being clear about the programme content and approach and starting to build a relationship with them means that they are more likely to attend and, in the case of group work, once integrated have more chance of completing all or most of the programme;
- A respectful and supportive approach by programme facilitators towards participants, leading to open and trusting relationships being formed, is a crucial factor in the positive impact of the course on parents/carers; the importance of the quality of the relationship between the two cannot be overstated.

3.61   In addition, indications from the evaluation suggest that parenting programme work should be available both as an element of early years intervention, as part of universal provision but also at stages of a young person's life when s/he are at their most vulnerable.. Additional resources might be targeted for those for whom the indications are that difficulties are likely to develop.

Use of measurement tools

3.62   The use of standardised measurement tools to assess the impact of the intervention was in evidence for just less than half the families who undertook the parenting work. There were clearly some issues about their use for both facilitators and parents, both in relation to how they were used and their usefulness.

Key points

- In some cases, parents were expected to complete Family Grid forms without assistance and many struggled with this task, finding them confusing; this was due to staff time constraints and lack of recognition of the role of the forms in programme evaluation; furthermore, it would appear that in some instances, forms were not filled in correctly, and this may have skewed the overall results;
- Only a small number of Strength & Difficulties Questionnaires were completed pre and post intervention, although they were used in some additional cases as a diagnostic or assessment tool; these measurement tools may have a place in assessing impact if used comprehensively;
- Given the above, it is particularly important that impact is 'measured' in additional ways, for example by the use of goal setting and reviewing, by canvassing the views of referring workers and parents themselves.

Strategic development

3.63   In some respects, the strategic development of parenting work in this area had not proceeded as initially envisaged and the work of the Parenting Steering Group, for a number of reasons, had taken longer than planned to work effectively. It is not the purpose of this case study, with its focus primarily on direct delivery work, to explore the reasons for this. Steering Group members were clear that the PDW had played a significant role in trying to keep the work of the group on track. In addition, by progressing a wide range of parenting focussed work at practitioner level, the PDW had effectively helped to build the foundations for the strategic work while also having a role in the provision of services to families and in enhancing the skills of staff across a range of agencies.

Key points

- The role of a dedicated parenting development worker is valuable in increasing the profile of the work and trying to keep a focus on strategic planning, particularly when the steering group work is going 'off track';
- Strategic development can be usefully informed by the direct practice work that is taking place on the ground, thus demonstrating the important link between strategy and practice.

- While strategic planning is a crucial element in the development of integrated services, collaborative work at practitioner level may be an important component in building trusting relationships across agencies.

Performance Indicators

3.64   The work of the PDW in this area has contributed to the following Performance Indicators set for the project:

Project
- Increased number of parenting programmes delivered;
- Assisted in the development of inter-agency work;
- Disseminated information about parenting work across a number of agencies;
- Delivered training and enhanced skills amongst staff across agencies;
- Contributed to the development of strategic planning work in parenting;
- Included parents and young people's views about practice and services.

Parents
Positive outcomes for parents include:
- Increased awareness, skills and confidence in parenting;
- Improved parent/child communication & relationships;
- Enhanced skills in setting boundaries, handling conflict and positive parenting styles.

Young people
Positive outcomes for young people include:
- Improved family communication and relationships;
- Reduction of anti-social behaviour and offending;
- Improved school attendance and reduction in exclusions;
- Reduction in number of referrals to the Reporter to the Children's Hearing.

Concluding Points

3.65   The case study in this area reflects the wide range of work undertaken by the PDW under the umbrella of direct delivery work, while also including her central strategic role. Her remit to undertake direct work with families, support and advise other staff members in parenting work, encourage the programme work to become sustainable and provide and develop training and information

materials in parenting work has clearly progressed effectively. The work is seen as a valuable component and driver of parenting development in the area. It has:

- Built capacity and sustainability, in relation to staff skills and experience in parenting work, across a range of agencies, through consultation, staff development and 'rolling out' programme work;
- Added the progress of integrated working across agencies;
- Demonstrated the ways in which the practice of parenting work can build the foundations for strategic development of services and the importance of the link between the two.
- Contributed to local agencies requirement to progress national policy objectives in the development of integrated services for families which offered accessible support and opportunities to build capacity in parenting skills.

Longer Term Impact of the Parenting Programme Work

3.66   The evaluation of the project over a period of five years meant that, in theory, there could be potential to make contact with families who undertook parenting programme work during the early stages and at subsequent periods across the life of the project, in order to assess whether the work had had a longer-term impact on parenting styles and family relationships. Parents who were interviewed were asked whether they would be willing to be contacted again by researchers at a later date and all were in agreement. However, it is generally acknowledged that in practice this longer term perspective is difficult to achieve for a range of reasons; people often change address, lose contact with agencies with whom they have worked or, if contact is successfully made, decide that they no longer wish or do not feel it is a priority for them to continue to be part of the research project.

3.67   Steps were taken to trace and contact three parents who had undertaken the parenting programme work in Spring 2004 as part of the first cohort which took place with women affected by substance use residing in an Aberlour project in Edinburgh. These parents had all been interviewed for the Final Report of the first phase of the work. Most recent addresses were obtained through project outreach staff; although they no longer had formal contact with the women they were all known to be managing well in relation to their substance use and care of their children, which was positive in itself. Letters with pre-paid return envelopes were sent and face-to-face or telephone interviews offered with flexible times and dates, but no replies were received and one letter was returned, marked unknown at that address. In addition, attempts were made to contact parents

who had undertaken a parenting group in Aberdeen in October 2005 and who had been interviewed by the researchers, but the staff who worked with them had left and the parents could not be traced.

3.68   Although it proved impractical to interview these parents who had undertaken the work four or three years ago, it was however possible to interview parents who had undertaken the work one and two years previously; this offered some opportunity to see if the intervention had had a sustainable effect. Three parents were interviewed who had participated in a programme a year ago and one who had done so nearly two years ago. One of the parents who had undertaken the work a year ago had done so on an individual basis together with her partner; the others had all undertaken the work as part of a group.

3.69   The parent who had undertaken the programme two years ago could clearly remember, unprompted, the content of some sessions and was able to give examples of these. She was also able to talk about the ways in which she was still sustaining some aspects of the work, for example in finding ways of keeping the lines of communication open within the family and taking a calmer approach to potentially contentious situations by sitting down with her sons and talking issues through in order to try to understand their viewpoint. This parent felt that the parenting work had led to tangible differences and improvements for her family.

> 'I have seen differences; mainly as a result of the effect it had on me and that was down to the group in that it caused me to react differently to them (the boys). Also the support I got from other parents and the leaders, their supportive approach, has had a lasting effect' (Parent participant).

3.70   The parents who participated in the work a year before were asked similar questions. All three could remember two or three sessions from the work in some detail without prompting; clearly the detail of these had stayed with them because the content was particularly pertinent to their situation.

> 'We looked at a scale of what they (the young people) were doing that we didn't like, such as keeping their bedrooms so untidy and the message was you have to chose your arguments and only go for the major or life-threatening issues' (Parent participant).

3.71   In relation to what parents had continued to put into practice as a result of the work, all could report that they were still sustaining some of what they had learnt although two admitted that some things had gone by the board.

'We did a family agreement at the end and said how we wanted things to be. Rules, such as more fun, more hugs, more listening and less shouting. We still have a copy of it on the board and though some things have gone out of the window, we are still doing some things' (Parent).

3.72   All the parents stated that there had been some lasting improvements for their family although two of the parents reported some ups and downs, partly influenced by external circumstances such as a young person moving to a separated partner's home and a period of difficulty between a young person leaving school and finding work. One of these parents, however, felt that the skills she had learnt at the group were useful for her in coping with two younger teenagers in the family.

4.   CASE STUDY THREE: PILOT PARENTING PROGRAMME WITHIN H.M.P AND Y.O.I. CORNTON VALE

Background

4.1   The National Parenting Development Project (NPDP) in partnership with the prison Programmes Unit began to develop a pilot Parenting Programme in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale, Scotland's only dedicated prison for women, in April 2006.   The introduction of this programme was preceded by a considerable amount of preparatory work in terms of discussions and liaison with prison staff.

4.2   This project is unique in Scotland as it was developed to work specifically with women prisoners. It is also unique in applying for Prison Service Approval as a joint approach between the prison and a voluntary agency (the Aberlour Child Care Trust). The model on which the project is based is also distinctive i.e. as in other NPDP parenting forums, emphasis is given to working alongside other agencies (in this case prison staff) to aid their development, knowledge, experience, and skills in parenting work, and draws upon NPDP experience of working with vulnerable individuals.

4.3   In undertaking this work the two agencies aimed to directly address national policy objectives as outlined in the document *Hidden Harm: Next Steps* (Scottish Executive, 2006), indeed the programme was specifically mentioned as part of the report action plan. The work also helped to meet policy commitments to ensure the inclusion of all children in service developments aimed at promoting their safety, health and nurture, as outlined in the *Getting it Right for Every Child* vision for children statement. The agenda to develop integrated work across agencies was also furthered by the collaborative nature of the programme design.

4.4   Initially, it was hoped that the evaluation would identify improved parenting practices and the potential impact on outcomes for children and young people. Identifying outcomes/potential outcomes is an important element of any evaluation, however given the (initially) short-term nature of the intervention available through the prison programme, it would be difficult to clearly illustrate outcomes for individual children and young people, whose experience in the community may be influenced by a range of factors, not least available

community supports. Many other factors are likely to impact on the outcomes of children including the overall experience of having a parent in prison and ongoing circumstances in their lives. However, it is possible to identify the main aims and objectives of the programme, the extent to which they are achieved and their relationship to previously identified outcomes for women and, where appropriate, children and young people.

4.5   Moreover, this work is significant in the opportunity that it presents to intervene with hard to reach parents who typically have difficulty in accessing and engaging with services. Women who are involved with substance misuse and/or the criminal justice system fit this description. Lessons learned from pilot work in other Aberlour Dependency Projects, and in other national research studies, will be built upon to identify potential outcomes of this form of intervention. Importantly, the work provides an opportunity to develop knowledge about the most effective ways of working with mothers in prison and can contribute to enhancing the evidence base accordingly.

Methods

4.6   Data collection in relation to the two parenting programme groups which have taken place is as follows:

- A proposal outlining the research aims and methods was submitted to the SPS Ethics Committee; this process was completed in December 2006 and permission to undertake the study was obtained;
- Interviews took place with the NPDP manager overseeing the project and the two programme leaders of each group (four in all), two of whom were Programmes Unit Prison Officers and the other two Aberlour staff members one of whom was seconded from a project which works with families affected by substance use. These interviews provided partnership agency perspectives on the issues involved in setting up and delivering the programme including the challenges of undertaking parenting work in this setting and referral and engagement issues; the impact on participants of taking part in the programme and the course content were also discussed;
- Interviews were conducted with two members of prison staff not connected to the programme;
- Individual interviews with three out of the six programme participants of each group (six in all) enabled the research team to record their experiences of undertaking the programme and their perspectives on the impact of the programme on them and on their families;

- Information was collated on all participants' circumstances, reasons for their referral to the programme, comments from programme leaders and, in most cases, evaluation forms completed by the participants;
- Ongoing discussions have taken place between project managers and the research team on the use of measurement tools to record the impact of the work. In an attempt to inform this, research has taken place to ascertain the ways in which other projects in this setting have assessed the impact of participation. Family Grid esteem measurements were taken pre and post intervention; additionally, a questionnaire-based measurement tool was designed and used with participants of the second group programme to measure effectiveness.

4.7   Data collection and findings from the third parenting group currently being undertaken will be added to the above and presented in a separate report in April 2008.

Establishing the Programme Work

4.8   The implementation and development of the project took much longer than had been anticipated. It was intended that three pilot programmes would have been completed by summer 2007. Due to staffing issues, delays in setting up the programme and establishing referral procedures within the prison only two programmes were completed by September 2007.

4.9   Circumstances which included staff turnover and shortages at NPDP, along with increased administrative requirements, meant that the initial pressures on getting the course established were significant. One worker commented:

> 'There were also time-pressures while delivering the programme – we had to run the group, evaluate it and plan the next one all on the same day'.

4.10   Workers also recognised the need for sensitivity when providing a programme which would undoubtedly raise difficult and challenging issues for the women. It was noted by one worker:

> 'The main (challenge) was making the content fit for purpose, given the vulnerability of the client group and their need to be emotionally defended. It's hard enough for men in prison but even harder for women, given the way they are viewed – as being out of control and if mothers, even worse, seeing themselves negatively and with substance misuse issues even more so. So they have reasons to be

emotionally defended and we unpick all this at our – or rather their – peril' (programme provider).

Circumstances of Participants

4.11   The women who participated in the two group based programmes which ran in November 2006 and August 2007 ranged from 21 years to 48 years of age. Their home areas, prior to imprisonment, were mainly from within the central belt of Scotland, although two originated from the north east. The women were serving sentences which ranged from 10 months to Life; within both groups half the women were serving three years or more and half were serving two year sentences or less. In relation to the stage of the women's sentence at which the programme work took place, both groups were similar in that they contained a mixture of women who were due for release very soon after the programme ended and two or three whose release date was at least two, or in one case five, years ahead. Reasons for imprisonment of the women in the first group included Breach of Probation, Assault and Robbery and also Murder; in the second group all reasons were related to Misuse of Drugs Act offences except one who had committed a Theft offence.

4.12   The women in the first group had either one or two children, whereas three of those in the second group had three children. The ages of the children of participants in the first group ranged from four years to 18 years; in the second group the range was wider and was from eight months to those of adult age, in one case 24 years. Most of the children were being cared for by grandparents or other family members, although three children were in residential school or with foster carers. All the women had some form of contact with their children, by way of visits or phone calls, although it was noted that two of the women in the second group rarely had contact with their children. The future care plans for children of women in the first group were mostly uncertain, although in one instance there were clear plans for the mother to resume the care of her child and, in another, the grandparents were seeking legal custody of the children; this information was not available in relation to those who took part in the second group.

4.13   Information collated from the participants' files revealed that all the women had substance use issues. There was less detailed information available about participants in the second group but at least three of the women from the first group had been on a methadone programme prior to their incarceration. Homelessness was an issue for at least two of the women and two women had

only intermittent contact with their children prior to their period of custody, due to their unsettled living circumstances.

4.14   Programme leaders interviewed indicated that the diversity of women's ages, sentence length and extent of contact with their children did not prove problematic in relation to their experience of the group. Differences were openly acknowledged and it was suggested that the participants were comfortable with this and able to be supportive of one another.

Reasons for Referral to the Programme

4.15   A 'Working in Partnership' contract was completed with each participant which listed eight possible areas of work which referral to the programme aimed to address. Identified areas of work included[2]:

- parent/child interaction and communication
- consistency
- management of emotions
- appropriate discipline
- self-confidence
- boundaries
- conflict resolution
- community support

Referral Process

4.16   Prior to parenting groups taking place promotional materials, leaflets, referral forms and posters were displayed, the original ones being updated for the second group. The programme leaders of the second group also indicated that some promotion took place by women who had attended the first group or who had attended groups run by the Programmes Unit on other topics. Encouraging women to take part could be challenging, as there might be understandable apprehension about what a parenting course could entail. The programme leaders interviewed after the first group expressed the view that the referral process was not straightforward and that the two agencies (NPDP and SPS) may have had different expectations about how the process would work and how the programme was presented and promoted.

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[2] Multiple categories could be identified for individual women.

4.17   Just before the assessment and programme work of the first group was due to start, referrals had been reduced to four and it was necessary for two more participants to be found. These interviewees indicated that the women were interested in taking part but circumstances such as changed liberation dates or involvement in other programmes also had to be taken into account. It was also necessary for programme staff to check with social work staff in the community about child care plans and that information received about this in some cases precluded women from taking part.

4.18   The difficulty in obtaining initial referrals may have impacted on the appropriateness of the first cohort. One woman, for example, who participated in the course, was not eligible for release until some years hence. However, once the management of separation was identified as a key focus for the programme, the release date of participants seemed less important, and workers hoped that where appropriate, women who had gone through the programme with a significant amount of time left to serve, could assist in future programme delivery.

4.19   There was no detailed information available about who had referred individual women for the second group, although the three participants interviewed said they had been approached about taking part by the Programmes Unit parenting group leader. Some aspects of the referral process had changed by the time the second group was scheduled, for example rather than making direct referrals, Family Contact Development Officers sent a list of all women with children under 16 years of age to the Programmes Unit for the parenting group leader to decide who might fit the criteria.

4.20   Other prison-based workers had differing views on the appropriateness of the referral criteria. One commented:

> 'The criteria are too restrictive. In my view, some of the women may not have   contact with their children now but in a few years may have more children so then they would have had the benefit of the course. Then you might have women on it who really need it. Some of the women who have done it haven't had such severe problems with their children'.

4.21   Length of sentence and expected date of release can provide challenges for programme recruitment in women's prisons where the majority of prisoners are sentenced to short sentences which can often exclude them from programme involvement. The numbers of women eligible for the programme were clearly restricted by factors such as the numbers on remand, short sentences due to the use of Home Detention Curfews and the extent of their contact with and future

care plans for children. A further selection or opt-out stage occurred after the initial orientation session.

> 'In relation to selection, sometimes women select themselves out once they know who else is in the group. And the leaders always have an eye to group dynamics when forming a group. I met them for an informal chat and then we drew up a short list. We looked at how they responded to the orientation and all went on to attend, including one woman who other staff thought would not manage' (Programme leader).

Assessment

4.22   Women who are accepted on to the programme undertake a one to one assessment with one of the group leaders. The process is considered important in increasing women's engagement and in enabling workers to find out more about the women's circumstances – which could allow relevant issues to be addressed during the programme. The assessment framework used with the first cohort was considered to be overly complex, and it was subsequently agreed that it would be 'streamlined'. For the second group a parenting work book was devised and used as an assessment tool and which simplified aspects of the previous forms used. However, the facilitators of the second group suggested that they still needed to find the right 'tool' for effective assessment and, most specifically, ways of engaging women with particular communication needs or had suffered traumatic life experiences.

> 'It would be useful to have more communication tools for use in the assessment as we are asking very personal and direct questions at an early stage of forming a relationship. Having only two sessions for assessment, it's a lot to ask to expect women to be open and disclose what may be an abusive or chaotic past. Sometimes the barriers go up and one woman didn't even make eye contact with me during the first session. I see the assessment process as being about relationship building and assessing the woman's suitability for the course and it may be that deep disclosures might come later – an on-going individual assessment more (Programme leader).

4.23   It was also noted that a potential gap in assessment process was the absence of views of the children concerned, or anyone outside the prison who was involved with the children on a regular basis. On-going programme review

enables clarity about the purpose of the assessment and materials to be used in the process to be refined and reviewed.

Attendance

4.24   In relation to both the groups, individual assessment and group programme sessions were generally well attended. One participant missed the last four sessions as she was released early from prison on the Home Detention Curfew (HDC) early release scheme. Three participants of the second group attended all sessions with a further three women missing only one session, due to attendance at a Children's Hearing in one case and early release on Home Detention Curfew in two others. A seventh group member attended the first seven sessions but completed the programme on an individual basis as she had difficulties coping with the group setting. In addition, a further group member took part in the initial assessment sessions but was unable to participate in group sessions as she was admitted to the hospital wing with a serious illness.

Programme Content

4.25   The content of the nine programme sessions brought together material from a range of sources including NPDP's work with parents affected by substance use, and from work undertaken by other Aberlour project staff with children whose lives are affected by parental substance use, some of whom have been imprisoned. As the programme was focused on parenting within the context of a parent's imprisonment, it was recognised that an important element was in providing women with support in the management of separation from their children.

4.26   Emphasis was placed on creating a safe and supportive group environment which would help participants to understand more about their children's needs and increase their confidence in their parenting ability, particularly in relation to communication and contact with their children. The first session included introduction exercises and discussions about expectations and ground rules for the group. Each session started with a 'mood check' and the chance for participants to talk about one good thing and one not so good thing that had happened since the last session in relation to being a parent.

4.27   Ten group sessions took place, in the main twice weekly. The content of the sessions of the first group was refined and approved by the SPS for use in the second and subsequent groups. Topics covered by way of interactive exercises included:

- exploring the general pressures and rewards of the parenting role;
- enhancing participants' knowledge and understanding of child development;
- looking at participants' knowledge of their children and the implications of other influences on children;
- reflecting on participants' own experiences of being parented and generational changes in the parenting role;
- communication with children and exploring children's feelings about their parent's substance use;
- exploring, through participation in play activities, the role of play in communicating and interacting with children;
- dealing with services and agencies; exploring with participants support services available in the community and encouraging them to make use of them.

4.28   Craft work was an integral part of the programme and was intended to introduce a 'lighter side' to the work while also being a recognised therapeutic approach; in addition, it gave participants the opportunity to make things for their children and themselves. Initially, the craft work was scheduled for the latter part of most sessions with one session focused entirely on this, however as most sessions ran out of time the format was changed for the second group and separate weekly craft sessions were instituted. At the end of each session participants were given the opportunity to talk about how they felt and whether their 'mood' had improved on a scale of 0-10. They were offered individual time with a group leader if any difficult issues had arisen for them. There was also a follow-up session at the end of the group at which feedback was sought and post intervention measurement forms completed.

4.29   At the outset, there were some reported differences in workers expectations of the programme:

> 'My idea was that it was about child development, child care and techniques. During the assessment the women seemed to know all that stuff so I wondered what the point was…It took a while for me to catch on to the therapeutic side and at first I wasn't too sure about it. If they were reflecting too much on how they had been parented for example and there had been abuse or other traumas, then we might harm them. But it turned out to be quite the opposite – it was valuable for them and seemed to meet their needs' (Programme leader).

4.30   By the second group the objectives of the programme were clearer and were considered by group leaders to: improve women's self-confidence and self-esteem; increase their motivation to parent; and enable women to see things from a child's point of view. It aimed to enhance the women's ability to communicate with their children and to feel more able to ask for help from agencies without feeling that they have to cope unsupported until a crisis was reached.

4.31   The women who had participated in the two groups were asked for their views on the content of the course and what they particularly remembered.

> 'I can understand better now why children act in certain ways, like trashing their rooms when their mum gets sentenced. We learnt tips about talking to our children, even on the phone, like asking them open questions, getting the conversation going' (Programme participant)

4.32   The participants also identified the importance of peer support:

> 'At first we were nervous about whether we could trust each other and if the others would go out and tell personal things but by the second or third week we earned each others' trust so we could get emotional' (Programme participant).

> 'It was a good atmosphere. If one person was down, the others tried to cheer her up. If they put a sad face up, you were more cautious about what you said, it made you think of others' (Programme participant).

4.33   Other aspects of the programme were challenging.

> 'The videos brought home how it felt for the children – like mine, always on the move from house to house and losing all our things. It opened my eyes, how it was for them and never giving them time to say what it was like from their point of view. Some of us were upset at the video but it was good to face it'(Programme participant).

4.34   The programme leaders commented that there were ways in which some of the sessions could be adapted or improved.

> 'There's a need to clarify the rationale, aims and objectives behind each session so that the facilitators know where they are going with each session. And developing tools for different learning styles, such as role play and practical exercises so that we can be flexible if required' (Programme leader).

4.35   In relation to programme content it was felt that additional material could be added to one or two sessions to improve group participation.

Impact of the Programme

4.36   Information about the impact of the programme on participants was obtained through interviews conducted with women who took part in the programme, programme leaders and other prison-based workers; in addition, the results of the pre and post intervention Family Grid and self-completion questionnaire used with the second group were analysed to measure changes in a range of areas including self-esteem, understanding of children's problems and ability to cope with separation. The feedback forms completed by participants were also made available to researchers.

4.37   Programme leaders felt that the majority of participants engaged well with the programme and appeared to benefit from the opportunities it gave to discuss separation issues, for mutual support and to enhance women's ability to communicate with their children given their separation. The feedback forms and the interviews with women confirmed this. Women spoke about their increased awareness of the needs of their children, how to communicate with them more effectively and about learning new parenting approaches.

> 'I learnt not to shout at them but speak to them as you want to be spoken to. You feel like a child when the prison officers shout at you, so you know how a child must feel when you do it'.
>
> '[I learnt] how to talk to my daughter and listen to her and find out what matters to her; I realised I didn't know her very well at all'.
>
> 'Making changes like being consistent, having ground rules and knowing what's   important in a child's life. When I come out I'll make up for lost time, but not by compensating with giving material things as my son now saying that its me he wants'.'

4.38   Programme leaders stated that, although it was possible to obtain some informal feedback about how women had benefited from the programme, for example by writing more letters to children or using craft materials to engage them during visits, the long term impact of the programme could only be fully assessed once women had returned to the community and were caring for their children in the context of other pressures such as substance use. It would be necessary to involve social workers where appropriate and ask them to provide

feedback about how families fared and to try to ascertain the children's perspective about any differences.

4.39   Other prison workers were not able to give any specific examples of the impact of the programme, as contact visits with children were not closely supervised by them but by social workers if this was assessed as necessary.

> 'I have contact with some of the women who have been on the programme, but they haven't really talked about it, not to me anyway. So I don't really have any feedback to report. I've not noticed any differences but that's not to say there aren't any. One woman did bring craft stuff from the Aberlour course with her to do with her child on a visit but didn't talk about the actual course. But I may be seeing changes without realising it'.

4.40   They also made the point about the need to look at how outcomes are sustained in order to measure effectiveness in the longer term.

> 'You wouldn't know about any impact on them until they get outside and try to sustain it, and I wonder if most can. I'm quite sceptical about them sustaining it. In here it's different – they can talk a good game, but one woman I know was on the programme has had a negative drugs test since so lapses do happen. And another has had loads of chances but cannot remain drug-free, even though she's got a great relationship with her child'.

4.41   The Family Grid results which were available for four of the women from the second group indicated that three of the four showed an increase in self-esteem and all four showed that they had a more positive attitude towards their children. The programme leaders and one of the women interviewed found the use of the Family Grid tool to be valuable.

> 'The results were as I thought – my feelings about the oldest and youngest of my children were very similar as before but there was a big improvement in my relationship with the middle one. It was emotional for me to see it but helpful too as I could really see the difference. I could see it in the visits too – she always used to keep to one side so I made big effort to include her and her gran also noticed the change. It was encouraging to get this sort of feedback'(Programme participant).

4.42   Results of the pre and post intervention self-completion questionnaire were available for five participants of the second group. A total of 21 questions

were asked which broadly addressed the following areas: confidence in parenting, understanding of own children's lives and problems, communication with own children, consistency and ability to set boundaries, coping with separation and ease of talking about feelings/ usefulness of support. The results within these six areas indicated that:

- *confidence in parenting*
  two of the women recorded improvements, two recorded no change and one recorded less confidence after the programme;
- *understanding of children's perspective*
  two of the women recorded improvements overall, one recorded no change and two recorded that they had less understanding of what mattered to their children after the programme;
- *ease of communication with their children*
  two of the women recorded overall improvements, one recorded no change, one recorded a mixture of results and one recorded that communication had overall become more difficult post intervention;
- *consistency and boundary setting*
  two of the women felt more equipped in this area, two recorded no change overall and one felt more able to set boundaries but less able to be consistent as a result of programme attendance;
- *coping with separation*
  two of the women recorded that they felt more able to cope with separation as a result of the intervention and three recorded no change;
- *ease of expressing feelings and usefulness of support*
  three of the women recorded that they felt more able, one felt less able and one felt the same as before, in relation to discussing their feelings about being in prison and finding support more useful as a result of participation in the programme.

4.43   The results indicate that some of the women derived benefit from some aspects of the programme and others gained more from quite different aspects. However, examination of the overall results for each individual participant, indicate mixed results. The small numbers and equal distribution of results make it difficult to conclude that any particular aspect of the programme is more effective than another.

4.44   The questionnaire results reflected differences in some cases from the views expressed by women in their programme evaluation forms and by the women interviewed. There is no clear reason for this discrepancy; however it could be an indication of the fact that women in the prison environment are likely to experience frequent changes in their attitude towards their difficulties. This

serves to highlight the difficulties inherent in attempting to measure the impact of an intervention such as this in a prison environment.

4.45   Evaluations completed by participants indicated that they:

- Valued the group highly;
- Reported increased confidence;
- Reported increased willingness to face and explore the impact of their imprisonment and their problematic substance use on their children;
- Reported improved communication with and knowledge of their children;
- Reported improved ability to seek support.

General Views

4.46   Prison staff (not involved with the programme) who were interviewed had some comments to make about the timing, process and nature of parenting work in prison in relation to the programme, their own role and the work in general.

> 'I would say- get it done quicker; with this programme you have to make a referral, then wait for the group to start whereas (we) have input on an ad hoc basis when it is needed. We don't have lots of training; just draw on being parents ourselves and our own experience. It's done on an informal, drop-in basis – we are very accessible. Even social work here you have to book in advance to see them. Quite often a phone call to a child is all they need – you can't leave women hanging for three days'.

4.47   Timing was an also considered significant in relation to dealing with separation issues:

> 'I wonder about the timing – separation issues need to be dealt with at the start of the sentence ideally as it's about learning how to cope – it's not going to go away. But certainly it should be done at the start of the programme and I'm not sure at what point it comes in'.

4.48   Prison respondents made reference to other ways of approaching parenting and separation work:

> 'The Health Visitor used to do an informal drop-in session for women with young children – they did crafts etc and talked about feelings, ways of handling things – the women were learning but didn't know they were. It was supportive – like a toddler group without toddlers. It worked well and

the environment was nice, informal and not a classroom. She still does individual work and could do groups again, but hasn't the time. I haven't seen the Aberlour groups – they could be okay'.

4.49   The contribution of an on-going and informal role was clearly viewed as important.

4.50   An Open Day that had been held at the prison in November 2007 had included a presentation about the programme and contributions from women who had taken part. This was attended by 37 social workers from 17 different areas and feedback about the work had been positive.

Partnership working

4.51   Differences were evident initially between individual staff approaches, based on different organisational and professional cultures. But the impact of partnership working was considered favourable overall, by both programme leaders and group participants. The combination of a prison-based worker and one from outside the prison worked well, as did the combination of areas of experience and expertise brought by the workers. Workers could employ skills in counselling vulnerable people, experience of group work, and both also had specialist skills such as working with children, adult learning, and knowledge of the prison system.

4.52   Workers themselves considered that the joint work was important:

> 'We started off poles apart but were thrown together and it gelled'.

> 'We worked well together and got over pre-conceived ideas we both had. It was very much co-facilitation'.

> 'The co-working worked well; having the two agencies made it two for the price of one with two different slants – the child and SW perspective and the through-care perspective as well as the prison one. This is where partnership comes into its own. I don't think it would work if run by only outside agencies as they wouldn't understand the prison environment so well'.

4.53   Workers felt that there was a shared ethos and approach to the work and that bringing their own, different experiences made running the group interesting, positive and a learning experience for both of them, in addition to the benefits it brought for group participants.

Engagement

4.54   The workers expressed the view that a number of factors contributed to most women engaging well with the programme. These included:

- The relationship building during the assessment stage which showed that the workers were interested in participants as individuals;
- The atmosphere of trust and support which was established through workers being open and honest about their own parenting and being non-judgmental;
- An approach which aimed to enhance self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Workers willingness to take part in all aspects of the programme themselves;
- Inclusion of interactive and fun elements, such as the play session.

'They engaged because they really enjoyed, and needed, to talk about their children, even though it was painful at times. There was a trusting atmosphere, helped by us talking about our own children. One of the reasons that they maybe don't talk about their children in other forums is that they feel they have to protect them from some other prisoners, by not showing photos, for example. They took really short tea breaks and only rarely talked about anything other than parenting so that was an indication!' (Programme leader).

4.55   This was reiterated by the participants themselves, who noted the importance of workers sharing a bit of their own experience which encouraged the women to 'open up' and talk about themselves and their children.   The women commented:

'Their approach was brilliant – it was non-judgemental. They took our feelings into account and our circumstances, and didn't label us as bad parents. There are difficult things for everyone about being a parent'.

'They had a good manner –you could discuss things with them and they offered a 1- 1   if anyone had anything they wanted to discuss after – quite a few women did. You need someone to sound off to and not bottle things up'.

Concluding Points

4.56   While this evaluation is based on limited data and a small number of respondents, there are a number of issues which can be identified from the initial programmes:

- The programme tackles an area of significant importance for women in prison and, consequently, for their children, as evidenced by national and international research findings;
- Interventions which enhance and encourage effective communication for women and their children are likely to have longer term consequences, in terms of reduced rates of reoffending, reduced likelihood of juvenile criminal involvement, and improvements in the lives of these children and young people;
- It was recognised by programme leaders and women participants that the programme provided an opportunity to address 'separation issues' and to assist women to address these issues, and find better ways of maintaining contact with their children during their imprisonment. This objective meets an important need identified by other studies which have looked at the experiences of women prisoners, and should be emphasised accordingly, for example in the programme title;
- Linking support from prison to the community is important in delivering an Integrated Care package; where geographically available, women are encouraged to access appropriate support services, including those provided by Aberlour, on release from prison.
- Overall, women reported:
  - Increased contact with their child(ren);
  - Improved quality of contact;
  - Learning new and improved ways of communicating;
  - The development of relationships within the prison;
  - Discussions were seen as useful;
  - Support provided by other women in groups;
  - Shared experiences of workers and prisoners was important;
  - It was very helpful to have someone from 'outside' to talk to;
  - Increased confidence in seeking support for themselves and their children;
  - Enjoyment.
- The collaborative nature of the work and the programme content contributed to national policy objectives within this area of service development.

5.   CONCLUDING POINTS

5.1   Key to the development of the project's work in all three case study areas was the relationship with partnership agencies; the ability to deliver services or progress strategic planning was dependant on these agencies having a clear understanding of and commitment to parenting work, communication between agencies working effectively and local conditions and resources enabling the work to proceed effectively.

5.2   The case studies indicated that:

- Strategic planning of parenting services through the operation of a steering group progressed at a slow but steady pace; this reflected the many challenges of involvement in multi-agency work;
- The work of NPDP took a number of different forms, as reflected in the case studies. With the exception of the prison-based case study, the way in which parenting work developed was governed by the parenting strategy developed locally and the structures within which this strategy had been designed. Thus, in one area, there was an emphasis on embedding parenting work within existing community-based, multi-agency structures which underpinned its support work by taking a family learning perspective.
- The work of NPDP was based within an overall strategic approach which was developed according to local need. The relationship between strategic oversight and direct work has been key throughout all three case studies;
- In terms of the evolution of parenting services, there was seen to be a continued need for a co-ordinating or lead officer to promote integrated working and support developments.

The Relationship between Strategic and Direct Work

5.3   The two case studies which focused on the role of the PDW and the project in developing both strategic and direct work illustrated different approaches; strategic planning and direct delivery work took place in parallel to some extent, but did so in different ways.

5.4   The factors which influenced the different approaches resulted from local conditions, for example in the organisation of services; this serves to illustrate the

fact that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate in the development and delivery of parenting services and each area will operate under different conditions and constraints which make it difficult to draw generalised conclusions.

5.5   In relation to case study one the focus was on strategic work through the PDW's role on the Steering Group, with LCNs and links with other agencies, training co-ordination and less on direct delivery. The aim was to lay strong foundations for sustainable parenting services. By contrast, in case study two a draft parenting strategy and action plan had taken longer than envisaged to put in place; however, the work the PDW had undertaken, across the spectrum of universal and preventative services with more vulnerable families, meant that work within the broad elements of the strategy had to some extent been progressed. By focusing on direct delivery work, workers across a number of agencies were able to see just how strategic planning translated to parenting services on the ground.

- While strategic planning is a crucial element in the development of integrated services, collaborative work at practitioner level may be an important component in building trusting relationships across agencies.
- Strategic development can be usefully informed by the direct practice work that is taking place on the ground, thus demonstrating the important link between strategy and practice.

Inter-agency work

5.6   The project worked in a collaborative way with a range of agencies and the case study examples reflect different aspects of integrated working, both in service development and in joint working with families at practitioner level. In general, the collaborative nature of the work demonstrated a 'good practice' example of integrated working on the ground and thereby furthered the aim of national policy objectives for multi-agency work with families. The experience of the project's involvement in strategic development work demonstrated that:

- Building strong foundations for sustainable work through strategic planning by a multi-agency steering group was crucial but challenging due to different perspectives of what parenting work is and how it should be undertaken, and the conflicting work-load priorities of group members;
- there was clearly a need for a co-ordinating or lead officer to promote integrated working and whose key role was to support developments which kept a focus on parenting services.

- the direct parenting work which the PDW and staff from a range of agencies undertook jointly enabled practitioners to see the tangible benefits of parenting work with families and how integrated work could operate effectively.

- Once a shared understanding had been developed, the joint work between partnership agencies was considered beneficial for workers and programme participants alike, in terms of the different perspectives and skills and the potential for staff development this offered.

- Where the PDW had a consultancy role, this was presented in a way that aimed to compliment the work being undertaken by the existing case worker, acknowledging their perspective and approach, while suggesting ways in which the work might be developed;

- In developing the work, it was important to take account of the constraints on many collaborating workers in terms of competing work priorities; while parenting work was considered important, workers did not always have sufficient time to undertake it nor was the importance of measuring impact always recognised.

Engagement and Approach

5.7   The experience of undertaking the direct work with parents/carers has highlighted a number of issues in relation to practice; in some instances these confirm the findings from the first phase of the NPDP evaluation, although the circumstances of parents were often quite different. Many of the practice issues identified echo those reported in similar studies and relate to the importance of the skills and attributes of programme leaders (Andrews et al, 2001). It is not enough to expect a programme to deliver a 'magic bullet' without a number of other factors being in place (Lipsey and Wilson, 1998).

5.8   Factors which helped parents engage were:

- opportunities to meet group leaders and get to know them over two to three sessions before the group started;
- the informal and relaxed atmosphere in which the group was delivered.
- that all members were made to feel important and the small numbers were important for discussing matters of a personal nature such as parenting.
- A respectful and supportive approach by programme facilitators towards participants, leading to open and trusting relationships being formed; this was a crucial factor in the positive impact of the course on parents/carers and the importance of the quality of the relationship between the two cannot be overstated.

- Parenting work can highlight very difficult issues for parents, for example in relation to their own early lives and relationships and workers need to be able to adopt a sensitive and flexible approach to the progress and structure of the programme work;
- Participants who undertook the work as part of a group found the mutual support of group members very beneficial.

5.9   Additional features of the direct programme delivery work which aided engagement include:

- The programme content was interactive and inclusive; it featured group discussion and exercises and focused on encouraging participants' strengths and mutual support.
- The work was person-centred and was conducted individually with families where group work was not appropriate.

5.10   Timing of the work:

- It was felt that for some families, the parenting work would be more effective if it took place at an earlier stage before difficulties became entrenched; indications from the evaluation suggest that parenting programme work should be available both as an element of early years intervention, as part of universal provision but also at stages of a young person's life when s/he are at their most vulnerable.. Additional resources might be targeted for those for whom the indications are that difficulties are likely to develop.
- In addition, it was considered important that parents recognised that there was a problem and were at a stage where they could acknowledge family difficulties, reflect on the impact of their parenting style on young people and be open to making changes themselves, rather than placing all the responsibility for change on the young people;

5.11   The work within Cornton Vale indicated the importance of:

- The relationship building during the assessment stage which showed that the workers were interested in participants as individuals; positive engagement with parents during the early stages of the work is crucial; meeting parents individually and on more than one occasion, being clear about the programme content and approach and starting to build a relationship with them means that they are more likely to attend and, in the case of group work, once integrated have more chance of completing all or most of the programme;

- The atmosphere of trust and support which was established through workers being open and honest about their own parenting and being non-judgmental;
- An approach which aimed to enhance self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Workers willingness to take part in all aspects of the programme themselves;
- Inclusion of interactive and fun elements, such as the play session.

Impact of the Project's Work

5.12   The impact of the work of NPDP was assessed using methods which were appropriate for the context of the work. In some cases, these were developed by the project itself, sometimes in conjunction with partnership agencies. The data relating to this was made available to the research team, who augmented this by obtaining the views of key staff in order to provide an independent perspective.

5.13   In case study one which focused on the project's contribution to strategic service planning, the parenting strategy had six key objectives and the extent to which these were being progressed was measured by reviewing objectives according to identified SMART measurements. This reflected a general view that the work was mostly on track. The intention was to monitor and review the progress of the implementation of the Parenting Strategy using an assessment tool developed by the Family and Parenting Institute for this purpose.

5.14   In relation to the direct delivery of parenting work, which was the main focus of case study two, the impact on individual families was measured using standardised measurement tools, by reviewing goals and by canvassing the views of professional staff and parents as to the outcomes of participation in the programme.

- There was a positive impact indicated in relation to inter-agency work, delivery of parenting programmes, enhancement of staff development in parenting work and dissemination of information about parenting work ;
- Positive outcomes for parents included increased awareness, skills and confidence in parenting; improved parent/child communication & relationships and enhanced skills in setting boundaries, handling conflict and positive parenting styles.
- Positive outcomes indicated for young people included improved family communication and relationships; reduction of anti-social behaviour and offending; improved school attendance and reduction in exclusions and in the number of referrals to the Reporter to the Children's Hearing.

- There were challenges in persuading agencies to see the need for evaluation and include it as part of the process of undertaking programme work.
- Assessing the impact of wider direct work, such as consultancy and information provision, was problematic to achieve, however the views of partnership agency staff clearly indicated how much it was valued and considered to enhance the work undertaken with families.

5.15   In relation to case study three, impact was more problematic to measure in terms of the outcomes for individual participants. However, there was evidence of 'effectiveness' in relation to:

- the contribution made to the national parenting agenda and policies regarding collaborative multi-agency family support work in the prison setting in addition to the development of a service for women in prison affected by substance use;
- The programme provided an opportunity to address 'separation issues' and to assist women in coping with these issues, and find better ways of maintaining contact with their children during their imprisonment.
- The women valued the support provided by other participants and group leaders groups and experienced increased confidence in seeking support for themselves and their children.

Sustainability

5.16   The project aimed to develop parenting work in ways which would enable it to be embedded in both future service planning and practice across a range of agencies. A key aim of the work was to enhance the skills and expertise of staff across agencies in order to enable the work to be sustained and progressed. This was successfully achieved, with staff from several agencies undertaking group and individual parenting programme work with families and many more participating in training.

- The 'rolling out' model of working was effective in building capacity in staff skills and experience; however, there were some issues involved in 'rolling out' the work relating to issues such as time constraints due to staff workload and a lack of recognition of the need to evaluate and measure impact;
- The accessibility of the PDW to offer support and advice to workers undertaking programmes with families, especially in the initial stages, was seen as important; the guidelines for running group programmes being written by the PDW aims to partly address some of the issues in

rolling out the work; however, as this occurs the PDW's ability to influence how it is undertaken is lessened;

▪ In terms of the future development of parenting services, there was seen to be a continued need for a co-ordinating or lead officer to promote integrated working and support developments.
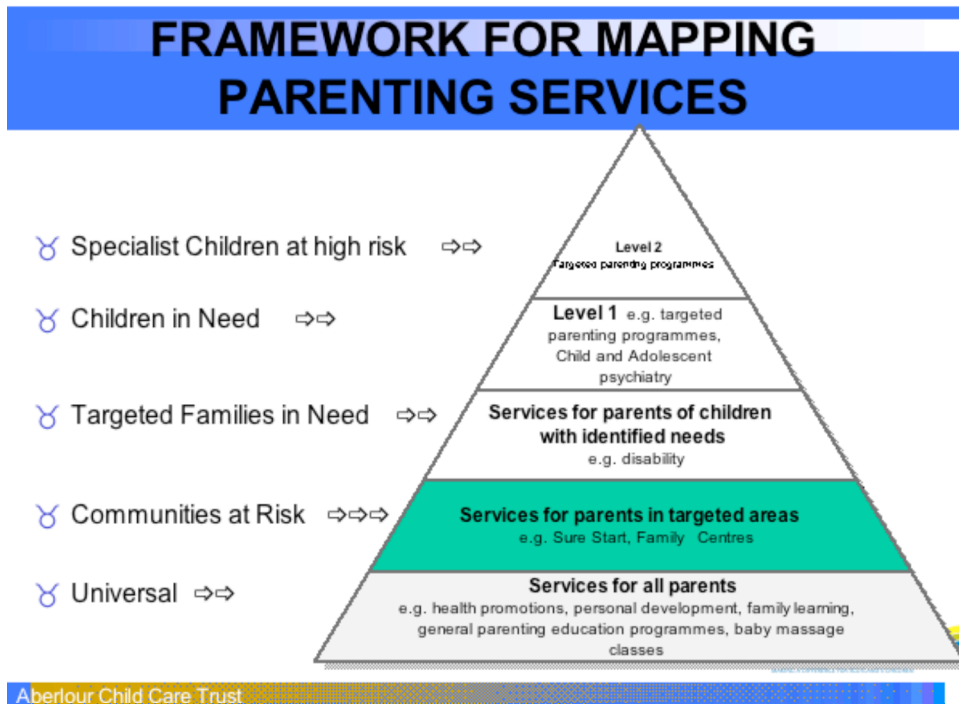
5.17   Ensuring sustained funding has been a significant for all three case studies during the course of this evaluation. The temporary nature of funding clearly impacts on the opportunity to develop longer-term planning and vision as well as the ability to measure the longer-term outcomes.

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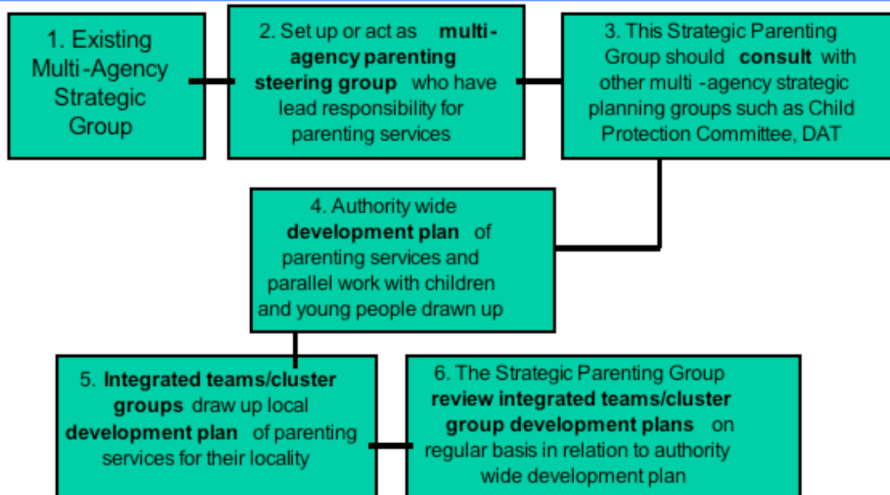
APPENDIX ONE

The NPDP Framework for an audit of parenting services

FRAMEWORK FOR MAPPING PARENTING SERVICES

- ♉ Specialist Children at high risk ⇨⇨
- ♉ Children in Need ⇨⇨
- ♉ Targeted Families in Need ⇨⇨
- ♉ Communities at Risk ⇨⇨⇨
- ♉ Universal ⇨⇨

Level 2 Targeted parenting programmes

Level 1 e.g. targeted parenting programmes, Child and Adolescent psychiatry

Services for parents of children with identified needs e.g. disability

Services for parents in targeted areas e.g. Sure Start, Family Centres

Services for all parents e.g. health promotions, personal development, family learning, general parenting education programmes, baby massage classes

Aberlour Child Care Trust

The NPDP Framework for the Strategic Development of Parenting Services

APPENDIX TWO

Recommendations of an Audit of Parenting Work in Moray

1 Parenting Strategy
To develop a parenting strategy which outlines a 'continuum' of parenting interventions.

2 Interagency Training
Need for both 'core skills' training which addresses engaging with parents; work with fathers; assessment and a selection of parenting programmes.

3 Practitioners Group
In the long term set up inter-agency practitioner groups as forums where practitioners can reflect on research and practice and share ideas.

4 Continued mapping of parenting work in Moray
Identify central point in each geographical area where information and planning about parenting work can be co-ordinated.

5 Resourcing
To identify funding and resources to both deliver parenting work and offer child care provision.

6 Evaluation
Need to build in more consistent evaluation methods that focus on outcomes for children as well as for parents.