



PARENTING SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008-9

Background and Context

Parents are the single most important factor in shaping their child's well-being, achievements and prospects. Government wants to support the development of a wide range of services for parents to access as and when they need to.

(Alan Johnson, Every Parent Matters, 2007)

Research shows that 75% of parents say they have a need for more support at some point in their child's life. For many, informal support through family and friends and access to information and general advice will be enough. Some parents need more focused support at certain times while others need intensive support to cope. A few need a coercive approach to ensure that they parent properly. This strategy is part of a co-ordinated Worcestershire response to how we will meet the range of needs parents have. It has at its core two main premises:

- that parents are and must remain central in ensuring that children achieve successful outcomes;
- that local authorities and their partners have an important role in ensuring that parents are adequately supported as they carry out this challenging task.

For the purposes of this strategy, parent and carer refers to the person with parental responsibility including mothers, fathers, grandparents and other family members or significant people in the life of that child or young person, including the local authority if children are looked after.

Definitions of *parent* support and *parenting* support vary. Indeed, government guidance appears to use the terms interchangeably. It is clear, though, that local authorities are expected to include a wide range of support for parents as they develop provision. Throughout this document, *parenting* refers to the "job" of bringing up children. *Parenting support* refers to interventions, whether universal and low intensity or specialist and high intensity, aimed at helping parents provide safe, nurturing and effective care for their children. Parent support refers to the full range of provision from information to intensive interventions and includes *parenting support*.

This focus of this strategy is *parenting support*.

Links with Other Strategies and Initiatives

Parenting support is not a stand-alone entity. It takes its place alongside other critical elements of the support we must ensure is available to parents: family information; family learning; and family support. Nor is it delivered through dedicated services. Our challenge is to ensure that those working with children and families, whatever the setting, are equipped either to deliver parenting support or to enable parents to access it.

The proposals outlined in this document must therefore be seen as part of an integrated approach in which they complement and support the implementation of a number of other initiatives. These include the following.

- Information to Parents Strategy
- Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Strategy
- Extended Schools
- Children's Centres
- Family Learning
- Family Support Strategy
- Strategy for engaging parents and carers
- Strategy for children with disabilities and complex health needs
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy
- Play strategy
- Healthy lifestyles
- Workforce development
- Integrated Working Programme.

Drivers for Change

The government has placed support for parents, including parenting, high on its agenda.

- Its document *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England* (October 2006) complements *Every Child Matters* and sets out the main expectations on local authorities and children's trusts. This includes the adoption of evidence-based models such as Positive Parenting Programme and Webster-Stratton for parent training.
- *Every Parent Matters* (DfES 2007) sets out for parents what sort of provision they can expect to be developed.
- *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families* (HM Treasury, 2007) sets out the government's plans to improve support to parents from 2008 to 2011.
- The LGA/DCSF programme *Narrowing the Gap* aims to make a significant difference in narrowing the gap that exists between children against the five ECM outcomes.
- The establishment by the government of the *National Academy for Parenting Practitioners* brings a national programme of accredited training for those who work with parents, along with research capacity and the development of regional and national networks and information transfer arrangements.
- The *Respect* agenda requires the implementation of parenting support as a response to anti-social behaviour by children and young people. Drives to improve behaviour and school attendance place similar emphasis on parenting work.
- Extended schools and children's centres are expected to include parenting support in their offer.

- The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services sets standards for children's health and social care, and the interface of those services with education.
- *Teenage Parents – Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts*, (DoH/DCSF, 2007) sets out requirements for the delivery of enhanced support to teenage parents.

The Local Authority Duty

Local authorities are required by government to develop a “strategic and joined-up approach to the design and delivery of parenting support services, ideally through a parenting support strategy that informs the CYPP and takes account of parents’ views” (*Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England, October 2006*). In doing so, they need to plan and commission a continuum of support for parents, from early intervention and preventive services through to the use of enforcement measures. This support needs to be accessible to mothers and fathers who may need it, when they need it from pre-conception until their child reaches 19 years.

Also clear from government guidance is that local authorities are not expected to resource or deliver all parent support. Instead, they are to take on a co-ordinating and commissioning role, working through Children and Young People’s Plans and with partners. In particular there are expectations of strong partnerships with the voluntary and community sector.

Current Situation

Consultation with Worcestershire parents has given us valuable information about how they see provision and how they would like it to be. While those who have used parenting support are positive about it, and in particular value the professionalism of practitioners, they say that they experienced difficulty in accessing the services they need when they need them.

Parents tell us that provision is:

- Patchy, not easy to find;
- Often not available when first needed;
- May end before they feel ready;
- Less available when their children start school;
- Almost non-existent for parents of teenagers;
- Not aimed at fathers;
- Harder to access for parents in rural areas;

They tell us that they:

- Prefer to use existing informal networks such as family, friends and peers for support;
- Want local, community-based support;
- Want public services that provide information, access to advice and guidance and targeted home visits;
- Look to news media for information, advice and guidance;
- Would like opportunities to share learning with their children, particularly on health, fitness, food and ICT.

Practitioners give similar messages. In particular there is concern at the lack of available places on parenting courses when and where needed. Registered Social Landlords, Youth Offender Service staff, Anti-Social Behaviour teams and Education Welfare Officers in particular have outlined their difficulties in accessing places for their service users.

Vision

We want all parents in Worcestershire to have ready access to consistent, high quality parenting advice and guidance to help them provide their children with the best possible start in life.

Principles

- Parents and carers are the most important influence in a child's life and have unique knowledge and information about their child.
- Parents and carers are responsible for their children and have a duty to try to discharge this responsibility in a socially responsible way.
- It is preferable wherever possible to enable parents to meet their child's need than to have to rely on professionals.
- Many families will need additional support at some stage and there should be no stigma in seeking such help.
- Early intervention is the most effective approach and should be prioritised in commissioning parenting support.
- Parenting support should be accessible to all communities and families including those with specific or additional needs.
- Fathers have an important role to play and we must ensure services take steps to engage with them.
- Parenting support should be available at all levels of need and for all stages of childhood.
- Practitioners who deliver parenting support should be suitably skilled and trained.
- Families will be fully involved in the planning of services.
- Provision will be evidence-based and of high quality.
- Partnership working is essential to maximise effectiveness.

What We Will Do

Our aims and objectives are as follows.

Aims	Objectives
1. Develop a virtual Parenting Support Centre to deliver Aims 1-8	1.1. See below 1.2. Benchmark developments against the Narrowing the Gap framework.
2. Increase the availability of parenting support at different levels from tip sheets (Tier 1) to intensive interventions (Tiers 3 and 4).	2.1 Work with providers and potential providers to promote the value of parenting support. 2.2 Provide advice, guidance, materials and training to providers and potential providers. 2.3 Work with registered social landlords, Anti-Social Behaviour teams, police, YOS and Education Welfare staff to build capacity and develop consistent responses to ASB, Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders. 2.4 Develop materials and resources to help providers engage with fathers. 2.5 Develop materials and resources to help providers engage with pregnant teenagers and teenage parents
3. To ensure that parenting support is delivered within a consistent, quality-assured framework.	3.1 Examine the feasibility of establishing a Worcestershire “kite-mark” for parenting programmes that meet an agreed set of quality standards. 3.2 Co-ordinate, with SDM – Workforce Development, of practitioner training in line with government/NAP requirements and agreed evidence-based models such as PPP and Webster-Stratton. 3.3 Promote the use of evidence-based models of parenting support.
4. To improve the availability and accessibility of parenting support to both mothers and fathers.	4.1 Publish advice and guidance for parents through a web-site and tip-sheets. 4.2 Publish a web-based schedule of parenting groups etc to ensure practitioners and parents can locate information and access arrangements easily. 4.3 Establish brokerage arrangements for practitioners and parents needing to access particular types of parenting support e.g. one-to-one and family-based delivery.
5. To establish mechanisms for collating and disseminating information about parenting support and for co-ordinating the delivery of parenting programmes.	5.1 Publish a web-based schedule of parenting groups etc to ensure practitioners and parents can locate information and access arrangements easily. 5.2 Establish brokerage arrangements for practitioners and parents needing to access particular types of parenting support e.g. one-to-one and family-based delivery.

<p>6. To develop a workforce that is trained in line with national parenting practitioner standards.</p>	<p>6.1 Co-ordinate, with SDM – Workforce Development, of practitioner training in line with government/NAP requirements and agreed evidence-based models such as PPP and Webster-Stratton.</p> <p>6.2 Develop a register of practitioners who are trained and accredited in the different models of parenting.</p> <p>6.3 Provide advice, guidance, information and materials to practitioners on parenting models and parenting training.</p> <p>6.4 Provide regular updates to practitioners and managers on relevant research and developments.</p>
<p>7. To make sure that the profile of parenting issues and parenting support is raised across Worcestershire so that to seek advice and help is seen as normal.</p>	<p>7.1 Secure regular parenting features in local newspapers and on local radio stations.</p> <p>7.2 Arrange and co-ordinate events during National Parents Week and other relevant local and national campaigns.</p>
<p>8 To develop a culture of continuous improvement in service delivery that is informed by regular monitoring and evaluation including the use of outcome measures.</p>	<p>8.1 Collation, recording and analysis of data on parenting in Worcestershire, including numbers of parents accessing the different types of support, longitudinal impact studies, continuing needs analysis and other data to support commissioning.</p> <p>8.2 Examine the feasibility of establishing a Worcestershire “kite-mark” for parenting programmes that meet an agreed set of quality standards.</p>

Progress to Date

We have established a multi-agency Parenting Strategy Group, ParentsMatter. This group includes parent representatives. Resourced through the Children's Fund and government grants, it has undertaken a range of work

- It has promoted, co-ordinated and commissioned a range of parent support activities including drop-ins, school parent assemblies, parenting groups, family counselling, practitioner training, local community parent support forums and the publication of tip-sheets for parents.
- It has undertaken a needs analysis including consultation with parents, young people and professionals about parent support and parenting in Worcestershire. The findings from this work have informed the development of this and linked strategies.
- It has published a series of tip-sheets for parents, offering advice and guidance on frequently asked questions. Web-pages, linked through the County Council's site, are at an advanced stage of design.
- It has allocated funding from the Children's Fund and government parenting grants. To enable Worcestershire to meet government requirements to promote and develop the delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes, it has commissioned PPP training for up to 80 practitioners.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Measuring Impact

We will develop an implementation plan to support the delivery of this strategy. This will set clear actions, responsibilities, timescales and measures. Through the proposed Parenting Support Centre we will work with providers to identify a core data set related to the aims and objectives set out above. This will include a register of practitioners trained in delivering evidence-based programmes, a register of programmes delivered by locality, numbers of parents participating in programmes and programme evaluation information.

We will collate, analyse and use data to measure effectiveness and inform future development of provision. We will also use parent surveys to test impact against qualitative measures, asking question about ease of access, relevance and helpfulness of parenting support.

Impact measures that we will use will be drawn from the following table.

ITEM	SUCCESS CRITERIA
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tell us that they can access the advice and help they need as parents when they need it. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell us that parent support provision meets their needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Say that they feel more confident as parents. <input type="checkbox"/> Report better relationships with their children. <input type="checkbox"/> Are actively involved in the shaping and design of services. <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to the delivery of services, in particular as co-ordinators and deliverers of peer support networks.
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have a clear understanding of agreed key parent messages. <input type="checkbox"/> Have an increased awareness of the role of partner agencies and how to access provision. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a planned development and training programme for work with parents. <input type="checkbox"/> We have year-on-year increases in the numbers of trained parent practitioners (National Occupational Standards).
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tell us they feel safe <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy learning and show improvement in learning and achievement <input type="checkbox"/> Are healthier <input type="checkbox"/> Are more engaged in education and employment-based training <input type="checkbox"/> Are less likely to be the subject of schools exclusions, Parenting Orders and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) <input type="checkbox"/> Are less likely to become homeless
Public Awareness & Publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parents are aware of press coverage and of what they can access where. <input type="checkbox"/> Column centimetres and radio/TV minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Hits on parenting websites and phone lines <input type="checkbox"/> Parent support calls to FIS/ Parent Partnership and ParentsMatter <input type="checkbox"/> Parents registering for programmes in response to promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity for fathers and other under represented groups
Service Delivery	<p>Number of—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> structured evidenced-based and age appropriate programmes delivered across the county <input type="checkbox"/> parents who have attended and completed a recognised and structured parenting programme <input type="checkbox"/> parents who have participated in a personalised parent/family support programme <input type="checkbox"/> parents tell us that support has increased their ability or confidence as parents
Governance, Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> identified parent support champion <input type="checkbox"/> agreed interagency values, goals and performance measures <input type="checkbox"/> agreed monitoring and evaluation processes <input type="checkbox"/> agreed interagency management information systems that can be used to inform and shape service delivery <input type="checkbox"/> clear cross-agency service co-ordination <input type="checkbox"/> pooled funding and joint delivery <input type="checkbox"/> parents actively involved in contributing towards shaping services
Partnerships & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> coordinated & joined up working with comprehensive & accessible information <input type="checkbox"/> clear links to regional and national parent support organisations <input type="checkbox"/> sustainable & adequate funding

Appendix 1: Parenting Support Centre – Summary of Functions

