



ISLINGTON

Islington Children's Services

Parenting Support Strategy

2008-2011



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Islington Children's Services

Parenting Support Strategy

Section 1 Introduction

Being a parent is an important, complex and challenging task. The recognition that all parents and carers need access to some degree of advice, support or specific help in order to successfully undertake their parenting role is the starting point for this Parenting Support Strategy.

"Being a parent is wonderful, exciting, rewarding and scary..."
Islington parent

"It is in our nature to want to be happy...we also want our relatives to be happy. A parent's love being the strongest example"
Lord Richard Layard, Robbins lectures on Happiness 2003

"Love is the best"
Islington parent

Please note that throughout this document we refer to **parents** and mean by this those **mothers, fathers and carers** who have parenting responsibilities.

Parenting support services are any activity or facility aimed at providing information, advice and support to parents and carers to help them in bringing up their children' (Parenting Support Guidance, DfES 2006)

This strategy is based on a comprehensive Needs Assessment, which contains a detailed analysis of data relating to enabling parents to support their children's health and well-being. This includes demographic data as well as an analysis of extensive consultation with parents and other stakeholders. It considers evidence of good practice drawing from local and national research and describes the services and gaps in provision in the borough.

Vision

We want to achieve a future in which any parent in Islington who needs support in bringing up their children will know where to turn and be able to benefit from high quality, inclusive and accessible services. Seeking help will be seen as a strength, not a weakness. We will make every effort to reach the families least likely to ask for help. We will enable parents to fulfil their children's potential as well as having the opportunities to fulfil their own.

“Families are in most cases the key determinant of positive outcomes for their children, and good parenting is a major factor in improving children and young people’s life chances.” (DfES Inter-agency co-operation to improve the well being of children: children’s trusts)

Aim

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that support for parents will be available in all universal services and that more targeted help for those with particular needs will be easy to access from universal settings.

Principles

We recognise that it is parents who bring up children and that some parents will need information, advice and support at different times as their children grow up. When parents need this help we will work to the following principles:

- Listening and responding to parents
- Working with parents as equal partners
- Parenting support seen as everyone’s responsibility – ‘think parent, think family’
- Providing supportive, trustful and caring environments
- Developing flexible, creative ways of working
- Using evidence-based practice
- Developing a professional, well-trained and supported workforce
- Measuring the effectiveness of our work
- Ensuring services are non-stigmatising with targeted services embedded in universal provision
- Working in partnership across agencies

The local context

In Islington 32,300 parents bring up our 39,200 children aged 0-19 years. From our needs assessment we can estimate that about 15,000 -20,000 parents will use services for all such as health visiting and education and between 6,500 and 12,000 parents will need services targeted at those with additional needs. (Ref: *Parenting Strategy Needs Assessment (PSNA) 2008*)

In Islington we recognise the importance of early intervention and prevention by offering timely help through our Children's and Young People's Plan 2006-2009. The plan emphasises the central role of parents and carers in supporting improved outcomes for children and addressing the Plan’s priorities.

The Children's Centre Strategy puts parents and children at the heart of a integrated offer of early education, family support, information and development opportunities for all young families which respond to their needs ‘in the round’. Similarly, our Extended Schools Strategy emphasises the importance of support for parents and providing accessible services as locally as possible.

Islington's *Standards for the Involvement of Mothers, Fathers and Carers* aim to ensure that all organisations develop ways of communicating, engaging and involving parents in the development, implementation and evaluation of services for them and their children. All Islington staff working predominantly with parents will be expected to meet the *National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents*.

Islington has also signed up to the national *Every Disabled Child Matters* Local Authority and PCT charter committing to provide accurate and timely information and advice to parents of children with disabilities about the full range of services available to them. We are currently developing our *Strategy for Children and Young People with Disabilities and their Families*.

This strategy reflects the objectives of the *Sustainable Community Strategy* which are to: reduce poverty; improve access for all and realise everyone's potential and the Council's vision for One Islington and its priorities of listening to residents and service users, building a stronger community and making Islington a safer, cleaner and greener place to live.

Islington's Parenting Support Strategy will build on these documents and initiatives and offer a coherent framework for all parents which aims to meet their needs throughout their parenting years.

The national agenda on parenting

"Parents have the biggest single influence on their children's lives and are their child's prime educator" (DfES 2005, Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All)

The Government has described the important underpinning role of parents in ensuring their children achieve the five outcomes as set out in "*Every Child Matters*" framework (DfES 2004). In support of this the Government has issued a range of legislation, policies and guidance all of which underline the centrality of parents. This emphasis is reflected in the 10-year *Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* where partnership with parents is a consistent thread throughout the plan. The *Reaching Out: Think Family* review (Cabinet Office) sets out an approach for supporting a minority of families experiencing complex and multiple problems (For details of the main sources of Government guidance see PSNA 2008)

What we know about what works

From research, reviews of international evidence of what works and a survey of nearly 2,000 parents across Britain the following is a summary of what we know about what works in helping parents with their parenting. (Ghate, D, & Hazel, N (2004) and Moran, P, Ghate, D & Van der Merwe, A (2004):

- Both early intervention and later intervention work – early intervention reports better and more durable outcomes for children, but later intervention is better than none and may help parents deal with parenting under extreme stress.
- Targeted services are required to tackle more complex types of parenting difficulties.
- Services with a strong theory base and a clear model which describes the predicted mechanism of change.
- Services using more than one method of delivery (i.e. home visiting, group work, guided learning as part of a package)
- Group work where issues involved are suitable to address in a ‘public’ setting
- Individual work where problems are severe or parents are not ready/able to work in a group
- Services that have programmes with a workbook/manual and where the core programme maintains ‘programme integrity’
- Services delivered by appropriately trained and skilled staff – backed up by good management and support
- Services that pay attention to practical factors: child care, transport and location, are in comfortable and welcoming venues with delivery at convenient times and that are well advertised and marketed
- Services that pay attention to relational factors i.e. trusted local professionals (especially for ‘hard to reach’ groups)
- Services that pay attention to cultural and contextual factors: awareness of parents’ personal context and circumstances; good interagency working practices for onward/outward referral diversity issues e.g. awareness of issues for fathers.

The Strategy

This strategy has been based on extensive feedback from parents and other stakeholders. Its structure is set out in line with our age range strategic approach i.e. considering children and parents in the early years, between 5-13 years and 14-19 years. We also recognise that parents have different levels of need which this strategy aims to address.

Section 2 All Parents

What all mothers, fathers and carers in Islington want

Parents want the best for their children; most will do this with the informal support of family and friends, occasionally needing to ask for help from other sources. Some parents will need additional help and some more formal support at some time during their parenting.

What do all parents need to fulfil their parenting role?

Better access to information and services, knowing where to go for help

In consultations with parents, carers and stakeholders, the difficulty of getting information on what help and support is available for those caring for children came up repeatedly. There is a good range of provision in Islington but we are not always able to make the best use of it.

“More joined up knowledge and activities please”
Islington parent

In addition, the information needs of staff were identified as a priority; many are not confident in their knowledge of what is available and what is known about the quality of services.

Some of the key messages:

- Parents want up to date information about activities for children in the local area on a very regular basis (*Consultation with Parents, January 2008, Direct Roots*)
- Health visitors, friends and GPs are the most common sources of advice
- Parents want help with returning to work including confidence-building, childcare and other skills training
- Practitioners want better information in order to support parents
- Parents want more information on how they can support their children’s learning

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- better delivery of information about parenting services and sources of help and advice with better access for both parents and practitioners. This should take account of whom parents feel comfortable approaching and where this might best take place, with particular emphasis on working with schools, GPs and community organisations. We need to consider the needs of parents with English as an additional language, those with low-level literacy and parents' own background and experiences when deciding how to disseminate and convey information;
- a named person in each setting, including health centres and GPs, to act as a resource for the information needs of their parents and with the remit of developing knowledge and understanding of what agencies offer, especially in their Area Children's Network. In each setting all staff will be expected to develop a basic knowledge in relation to the information needs of parents;
- reassuring parents that asking for help with bringing up children is normal and to be welcomed, paying careful attention to the use of language;
- developing a public health approach to the challenges of parenting using a range of media (radio, TV, newspapers). This will include messages about what is 'normal' at stages of a child's or young person's development, including helpful hints about common concerns of most parents (tantrums, sleeping, smoking, staying out late, dealing with loss and bereavement);
- the continued development of the Children's Information Service;
- all agencies accepting that it is their responsibility to engage with parents, and particularly from those communities least able or likely to access their service. Ensuring they are always the 'right door' to information and support and that as first point of contact this is a positive experience for parents.

Support and advice on bringing up children Accessible help for parents in their communities:

The main messages from the needs assessment showed that Islington has relatively high numbers of lone parents and an ethnically diverse population which is growing. It emphasised the importance of promoting positive parenting and the benefits of supporting parents' couple relationships. Parents testified to wanting support with the emotional aspects of parenting and stressed the importance of having workers whom they could trust.

Many stakeholders (and parents) recognised that parenting can be isolating especially for lone parents and others who may be marginalised and highlighted the need for support available in communities when and where parents can access it. Informal and community support can be fostered through parent-friendly approaches. More affordable, child-friendly and safe public places, such as cafes and parks, would enhance most parents' experiences in Islington.

When needing additional help, parents report positive experiences of the assessment process (Common Assessment Framework) as involving them and offering individualised support.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- a feasibility study into developing 'parent to parent' support through volunteering for parents of children of all ages;
- service specifications which ensure that parenting services have high visibility to parents, are inclusive, flexible, accessible and non-stigmatising;
- better links between adults' and children's services to ensure a coordinated approach;
- services to develop an 'assertive outreach' approach which ensures that service users match the local population;
- all practitioners to be supported to have a clear understanding of what contributes to positive, authoritative parenting and of how to help parents build on their strengths and foster resilience in children and young people, building on the work of the Community Child Psychology Service in children's centres;
- building long term, consistent relationship with parents;
- an accessible service to support parents in a couple relationship whether living together or apart;
- access to a family mediation service which parents can access directly and with short waiting times, especially for parents with older children;
- a co-ordinated programme of parenting courses aimed at those parents with additional needs and access to a range of Family Learning opportunities.

Fathers

The needs assessment highlights what we know about the centrality of the role of fathers in ensuring positive social, emotional and cognitive outcomes for children and young people.

Boys who have 'involved' fathers or father-figures, when compared to those without such involvement are less likely to be alienated from school, less likely to be involved in crime and less likely to suffer from depression or suicidal thoughts (Kats, Buchanan and McCoy, 1999)

In order to consider this further the Thomas Coram Research Unit was commissioned to scope the parenting support needs of fathers in the borough.

Some of the key messages

- The 'feminised' atmosphere of services for parents and the attitude of some providers are deterrents to fathers approaching and using services. Having male staff can help this, however it is the approach which is key
- When and where fathers' services are offered is crucial to involvement as well as appropriate marketing.
- Most provision is for fathers of children under five; there is little for fathers of older children.
- Services are not meeting the needs of fathers from a range of socio-economic groups.
- Fathers from hard to reach groups, including from refugee families and young fathers need targeted support.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- raising the awareness of key support staff in the principles of successful work with fathers, to be incorporated into the workforce development plan;
- disseminating some common messages about what works with models of successful delivery;
- prioritising development of services for fathers of older children and those 'hard to reach' groups identified, especially young fathers;
- prioritising the engagement of all fathers, and especially young fathers, during pregnancy and in the period around and after the birth;

- disseminating messages on how important fathers are to the development of their children, using messages from research as part of the public health approach on normalising the need to ask for help;
- a clearer focus on fathers' work within children's centres, community settings and schools, including engagement in Family Learning.

Housing

Stress resulting from housing issues (overcrowding and homelessness) was considered by both parents and stakeholders to have a major negative impact on parenting and outcomes for children. This has been recognised in the Supporting People Strategy for Vulnerable Families. Our approach to work with families experiencing housing stress needs also to link with the youth crime prevention strategy, that for Integrated Services for Young People and the Housing Strategy currently being developed.

We also need to work to mitigate the effects of housing stress for families through access to activities and services.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- a family-friendly approach to housing and planning issues;
- developing more effective ways of working with Homes for Islington and Registered Social Landlords, particularly in the areas of sharing information and working together to address anti-social behaviour and implementing compulsory measures;
- improved access for parents to information on what is available in their local community i.e. children's centre services, positive activities for young people, sports and leisure;
- a close partnership between Children's Services and Supporting People providers

Poverty and Worklessness

We have relatively high numbers of children and parents experiencing poverty and the associated effects of deprivation with negative impacts for children and lack of access to services for parents. In particular for families with children with disabilities, one third of children in poverty are disabled and often this is because the parent cannot work.

Accessing training and work opportunities is an important means of addressing and overcoming the experience of poverty. However routes into training and work were perceived as unclear and not joined up. Parents want training and support with returning to work including confidence building, basic skills and English as an additional language as well as practical support with childcare.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- better access for parents to advice on benefits and income maximisation including information about disability specific entitlements and to legal advice as well as advice on budgeting and debt management;
- support and training for parents to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and aspirations within their communities including help with being 'work-ready'; the development of peer support, with particular reference to the needs of fathers;
- clearer routes into training and work particularly at entry level i.e. more EAL (English as an Additional Language) and basic skills classes and access to Family Learning with continuity of offer and clear progression for parents;
- access to childcare;
- services operating at time for working parents to access with childcare support available

Section 3 – Parents who have additional needs

This section considers what happens when some parents are unable to meet the needs of their children because of problems with their own health and or because of circumstances in their lives that impact on their ability to parent.

In Islington evidence from our needs assessment highlighted the following groups of parents as having particular challenges in relation to their parenting role:

- Parents misusing drugs and alcohol
- Parents with mental health needs, which may be undiagnosed
- Parents experiencing domestic violence

These parents are likely to experience high level needs. It should also be noted that the above factors account for a high proportion of child protection cases and children coming into local authority care. For example, parental substance misuse is a contributory factor in around two thirds of all care proceedings.

Parental mental ill health is likely to be affecting a high number of children. High thresholds in adult services can mean undiagnosed and lower level mental ill health remains untreated.

Other groups with additional needs are: parents with physical and learning disabilities, those either in prison or affected by imprisonment and parents with their own educational needs.

We know that there are a number of families 'at risk' (approximately 2%) who either are not engaging with services or are not getting a service which could help to change their situation; they include some of the above parents. The *Reaching Out: Think Family* review spells out the range of disadvantages experienced by these families and suggests a re-evaluation of how we work with them using a 'whole family' approach. The voluntary and community sectors have a record of successful work with families with high needs.

In Islington we have been thinking about these very vulnerable individuals and families and are addressing the issues raised as part of this strategy. The challenge for Islington is ensuring the inter-related working with adult services and supporting them to see the individuals they are working with as parents.

For these parents, as with all parents, it is important for them to be able to access practical as well as emotional support i.e. linking into community services, benefits and housing advice.

Involving parents fully in the assessment process is valued by them and needs to be built on.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- universal services, including staff with a range of skills, being able to assess need and support parents with additional needs to access specialist help, ensuring that throughout someone is 'holding the baton' and that families feel supported by the Lead Professional;
- clear links between the Parenting Support Strategy and other relevant strategies e.g. Domestic Violence, Supporting People, Substance Misuse and Young Carers to ensure that all services are working effectively together and covering service gaps;
- continuing to improve joint working arrangements with adult services across health and social services on parental mental health to ensure better outcomes for families and reduce impact on children and young people;
- close collaboration with specialist services designed to support parents with drugs and alcohol misuse difficulties e.g. CASA and Supporting People services;
- integrated working between adults' mental health and social services and children's services with joint commissioning of services for families;
- better co-ordination of support and interventions for parents with additional needs including those without parental agreement (see Section 7) including the use of Family Group Conferences (FGCs) where appropriate.

Section 4 Parents of children pre-birth to 5 years

There are currently just under 12,000 children under five with 2,700 births in 2007. By the end of 2008 Islington will have 16 children's centres for the whole borough that are charged with reaching out to **all** young families in their catchment areas.

Children's centres are a major contributor to the borough's approach to prevention and early intervention work with families. They aim to be locally responsive in their support for young families pre-birth to five years, offering family and parenting support through a multi-agency team of family support workers, community nursery nurses, midwifery care assistants, clinical psychologists, bi-lingual community link workers as well as early years practitioners.

The team provides services for families with all levels of need and is able to pick up when families need extra support. The attachment of health visiting and social work support to children's centres underpins the preventive approach and offers the capability to pick up concerns at an early stage. The provision of high quality childcare not only supports parents to be in work but can assist when families are experiencing high levels of stress.

The importance of parenting for young children is well evidenced; positive parenting and good parent-child attachments are the foundations of successful emotional, social and cognitive development in children and in ensuring supportive, mutually beneficial relationships within families.

Building a relationship with parents before and around the birth is particularly important, especially for the continued involvement of fathers. This has particular significance for the identification and support of women with post-natal depression.

Parents surveyed requested: being able to have a named midwife throughout the pregnancy and birth; a 'more personal' ante natal service; help and support with breast feeding and taking account of the emotional needs of mothers and fathers.

Some of the key messages

These included:

- ensuring positive early bonding and attachment between mothers and fathers and their babies using evidence-based programmes of support and through engagement in the antenatal period and after the birth;
- postnatal depression affects between 10 – 15% of mothers and can affect children's development and socialisation;

- targeting services for lone parents and others at risk of experiencing deprivation such as young parents, refugee and asylum seeker parents, those on low incomes and parents of children with disabilities especially those who do not readily access services;
- the importance of children's early learning within and outside the home including parents' key role in supporting this, encouraging regular attendance once children start nursery class and the need to focus on those groups of children with low attainment levels;

Information needs have been referred to in the previous section, but the Children's Information Service also plays an important role in ensuring parents can access a range of sources of advice and support.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- effective outreach services working with and developing relationships with voluntary and community sector organisations to ensure hard to engage families can benefit from the range of children's centre services;
- engaging with and supporting vulnerable families using the Family-Nurse Partnership model and/or other innovative approaches both pre-birth and beyond;
- improving links between the PCT and children's centres so that our services can be more responsive to families' needs;
- establishing a more consistent approach to antenatal care and support which inspires confidence using the team approach
- children's centres acting as hubs, co-ordinating provision with the voluntary sector, schools and childminder networks;
- continuing with the early learning pilot, Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL), and other approaches in involving parents in early learning both at home and at nursery;
- providing affordable and accessible childcare places, including for children with disabilities, so that parents can access work and training opportunities;
- improved access and support to self development and training opportunities for parents;
- ensuring practical support for all parents to engage with services, especially crèche provision'

Section 5 Parents of children 5-13 years

There has been lower investment in services for parents of children in this age group and our commitment is to build on our provision to offer a range of preventative and targeted support services.

The particular challenge for parents of children and young people in this age group is of transitions from nursery or home into primary school and from primary to secondary school. We will continue to encourage parents to make the best use of the specialist staff available to support this such as the School Choice Advisors.

All schools are expected to develop extended services by 2010. The core offer includes providing support for parents. Parents should, therefore, be able to access information, support and advice through contact with their child's school. It will be important to provide support to schools in terms of these functions particularly for their key staff leading on work with parents.

Key messages highlighted parents' vital role in supporting and improving their children's learning which is well-evidenced (*ref: PSNA 2008*) and there are a number of initiatives in Islington schools to support them. This is of particular relevance as attainment levels in our schools are still below the national average and we know that focussed work with parents of children from low-attaining groups has had a positive effect on outcomes with some effective models being developed. There continues to be concern about the under achievement of particular groups e.g. White British, Black Caribbean and targeted work will need to continue to address this.

Absence rates are high for both primary and secondary school pupils and whilst there is a strategy to address this, parents' role in improving their child's attendance is an important tool for improving attainment.

The Common Assessment Framework will ensure a holistic approach to meeting levels of need and will encourage the working of the 'Team around the Family.'

For children who are demonstrating higher levels of disruption and distress, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Education Social Work Service work with parents as well as children within and outside schools to address problems and behaviour. Support is also provided through a range of voluntary and community organisations.

Evidence and individual testimony show that work with parents goes extremely well when there is a dedicated staff member with responsibility for work in this area. The Government pilot of the Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) has shown positive early outcomes and the *Children's Plan* provides for the development of this model in all local authorities.

Some of the key messages

These included:

- the need for somewhere to go for help and advice about parenting older children before 'things go wrong', there was felt to be not enough available and parents preferred the option of one recognisable place which could help them;
- the importance of what happens in schools to support parenting and what is offered through extended services;
- the need for support for parents through transitions i.e. from early years provision to primary school and from primary to secondary school;
- the importance of supporting parents' own learning;
- the need to breakdown the 'scariness' of secondary schools

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- a named dedicated staff member with responsibility for pro-actively ensuring information about services for parents are well known to staff and parents;
- parenting support offered through schools linking effectively with the development of the Parent Support Adviser model;
- good quality information, advice and training for school staff to develop expertise at a school level;
- flexible and responsive access to advice and support through extended services utilising voluntary and community sector providers, Education Social Work, Social Care Services, CAMHS and commissioned services for higher levels of need;
- comprehensive assessment looking at the child within the family and providing support on the 'Team around the Family' model through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF);
- the need for effective support to be provided alongside sanctions such as parenting orders to ensure long term impact;

- the need for support for parents as children are entering the teenage years;
- the availability of parenting programmes in or near schools for all levels of need;
- better availability of opportunities for parents' own learning;
- sharing good practice models developed in schools

Section 6 Parents of young people 14 – 19 years

As with parents in the previous section, there has been an underinvestment in meeting the needs of parents of young people in the 14 – 19 age range. Often resources have had to be found to manage crises rather than at an earlier stage.

The needs of parents of older teenagers are broadly the same as those parenting 5-13 year olds in relation to school, attainment and absence. However, these needs can change as, in addition, the growing independence of the young person requires them to review and adjust their role in supporting their young person into adulthood.

Therefore, parents need help with understanding teenagers – their development, changing relationships and their current challenges, particularly help during transitions at school, college and into work. They particularly need to know how to support their young people to manage in their communities with the risks associated with the availability of drugs and alcohol, the prevalence of crime in some areas including gang involvement and violence.

Research into what works tell us that parallel work with the parent and the young person is the most effective and using more than one method of intervention brings about optimum results.

Young people and parents with higher level needs have few places to go for help and often these are provided after serious problems occur – for example parenting support provided through the Youth Offending Service when a young person has some involvement with the criminal justice system.

This is a particularly difficult time for families where the young person has a disability, especially in relation to transition to adult services; access to high quality information and support is crucial.

Some of the key messages

These include:

- the need for support and help with managing the behaviour of young people as they get older;
- strengthening support for parents of young people with disabilities in the planning and transition into adult services;
- the need for parents' involvement in young people's learning at secondary school;
- the need for earlier support, not just when young people are in trouble;

- the need to offer support in appropriate settings as parents may not always go to secondary schools for this;
- making secondary schools more welcoming to parents, though offering Family Learning or meeting parents' own learning needs;
- the need to provide support for parents whose children go to secondary schools outside the borough whilst ensuring parents stay in touch with schools where possible;
- support for parents whose children have left school;
- the need to develop models of joint work between parenting support services and targeted youth support services to ensure a whole family approach to the most difficult issues.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- disseminating some common messages about what is 'normal' in teenage behaviour and what kinds of behaviour might cause concern and what to do – the 'public health approach';
- a one-stop shop model of delivering information advice and support for parents based on appropriate community venues, linking with schools;
- a co-ordinated approach to offering advice and support to parents with teenagers using a range of interventions;
- the development of effective models of working with teenagers and their parents, including support being available after the intervention ends and access to family mediation and/or Family Group Conferences;
- the availability of parenting programmes in appropriate settings for all levels of need , delivered using multi-agency teams/approaches;
- ensuring that there are clear links between specific strategies e.g. Parenting Support, Children with Disabilities and their Families (currently under review) Youth Crime Prevention and commissioning of targeted youth support services;
- improvement of transition planning for young people with disabilities.

Young Parents

The needs of young parents have been considered through a scoping exercise commissioned from Thomas Coram Research Unit. A summary of the main findings and recommendations is in the needs assessment (PSNA 2008) and the full report is also available.

This work will be mainstreamed through the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and will be co-ordinated with services offering targeted support for young people and family support in children's centres.

The picture emerges of the need for better co-ordination across a range of issues.

Key messages:

These include:

- data collection is not systematic; there is a need to establish a minimum data set to inform planning;
- there is not equitable access to specialist midwifery services for all young mothers;
- to ensure better transition between maternity and health visiting there needs to be a specialist lead in the health visiting service;
- the supported housing needs of young parents are still not clear and need improving;
- children's social care services need to be part of the strategic agenda for supporting young parents;
- for very young parents the education options should be flexible and responsive to individual need;
- there should be more co-ordination of support and outreach for teenage parents;
- younger parents are engaging less with services;
- targeted support is needed for young fathers.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- improving the co-ordination of data and services and to support outreach;
- developing the expertise of family support workers in children's centres and improving outreach to young parents;
- reviewing current commissioning of maternity services to ensure equity of offer of specialist pregnancy services for all teenage pregnant women;
- establishing a specialist lead for teenage parents within the health visiting service to ensure smooth transition from maternity to health visiting services;
- exploring the development of a peer mentoring scheme with older young parents supporting newly pregnant young women and mothers;
- providing training to children's centre staff on the needs of young parents;
- developing support services for young fathers to enable them to play an active role in their children's lives;
- as in Section 4, considering the development of the Family-Nurse Partnership model of intervention pre-birth and beyond with regard to delivery of services for young parents.

Section 7 Parents who cannot or do not want to engage with support services

Families at risk need to be supported and challenged to take responsibility for their children's behaviour. Parents need to take an active role in planning and reviewing their own progress towards agreed goals within a framework of support and challenge. Parenting Contracts and Orders are examples of a framework that matches the needs and circumstances of the whole family to the particular changes required. (Reaching Out: Think Family, Social Exclusion Task Force, Cabinet Office 2007)

A Parenting Contract is an agreement negotiated between a service provider and the parents of a child. This is a voluntary undertaking and is not legally binding.

A Parenting Order is made in similar circumstances by a Criminal Court, Family Court or Magistrates' Court acting under civil jurisdiction. Parenting orders are often applied for when a parent has failed to co-operate with a parenting contract.

Parenting contracts and orders recognise the powerful impacts that parental behaviour have on children's futures and are designed to reinforce parental responsibilities. They can include a parenting programme to help parents address their child's misbehaviour and a specification of particular ways in which parents are required to exercise control over their child's behaviour. For example, this might involve ensuring that the child goes to school everyday or is home during certain hours.

Parents subject to orders should be linked into services to support them in addressing the issues that affect their ability to parent successfully e.g. parental substance misuse, mental health and domestic violence.

Agencies currently using these interventions include the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, the Youth Offending Service, the Education Welfare Service, local authorities, school governing bodies, school staff, the police and Registered Social Landlords. Parenting orders can also be imposed by the courts, following prosecution in connection with a pupil's poor school attendance. With such a range of agencies able to seek a parenting order, there is a need for better co-ordination between agencies using these interventions.

The two Expert Parent Advisors announced in the *Children's Plan* are expected to focus on the needs of parents and children experiencing multiple levels of disadvantage including those with 'at risk' behaviours.

What does this mean for service delivery/future action?

- better co-ordination of the work with families at risk, working within information sharing protocols, common assessment and lead professional arrangements making use of common standards of induction, training and supervision;
- to develop good practice guidance, with particular reference to the triggers and criteria when considering applying for parenting orders and ensure consistency of implementation of support and to enable parents to make the changes required.

Section 8 Parenting Programmes

Parents we consulted asked for specific training with parenting skills, understanding children's development and help with managing the behaviour of children especially as they get older.

There are a number of parenting programmes available to support parents in their parenting task. Each programme varies in the extent of evidence to support its effectiveness with universal parent populations through to those experiencing problems. Each programme has specific aims and is designed to work with parents of children of certain ages.

The Triple P and Webster-Stratton programmes were both developed to prevent and intervene early on with behavioural problems through enhancing parental knowledge skills and confidence. Their development came in the context of a rising prevalence of serious anti-social behaviour in Britain and Western countries (Scott 2005). Both courses have a significant evidence base and are rooted in a theoretical base of behaviour theory.

Current situation

The following programmes are currently in use in the borough include:

- Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities
- The Incredible Years, Webster-Stratton
- The Challenging Years, TSA
- Triple P Group Teen
- Entering the Teen Zone
- ICON

For a full description of each of these are included in the Parenting Support Strategy Needs Assessment.

Summary of delivery of parenting programmes during 2007 is also included in the Needs Assessment.

Some of the key messages

The choice of parenting programmes has emerged over time as agencies have decided which would best suit the parents accessing their services and dependent upon the aims of the services.

At the moment parenting programmes are generally delivered in an ad hoc way by individual agencies for their parent population as the need arises when they have enough parents to sustain a programme and where appropriate staff can be released.

The picture emerges of an uncoordinated delivery of parenting programmes so that parents who are already in touch with agencies (children's centres, schools, voluntary organisation, CAMHS) may get access to one. But parents in the community or those in touch with other professionals may miss out.

Just delivering a parenting programme on its own is not the solution to problems with parenting – there is a need to supplement this for some parents with one to one support before, during and after they have attended the programme. Sometimes support is needed for both parents around co-parenting and providing consistent parenting as well as access to other forms of community support as parents' needs become evident.

What does this mean for service delivery?

This will require:

- a co-ordinated approach to delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes across the levels of need and age groups, with the aim of access to parenting programmes for any parent who needs or is referred, aiming for waiting times of no more than one month. This will need dedicated staff hours to co-ordinate, undertake liaison with managers and support training and be a point of reference for staff delivering programmes;
- agencies to have better understanding of the benefits and outcomes of parenting programmes as a borough resource;
- parenting programmes needing to consider/address the issue of co-parenting;
- agencies releasing staff on a regular basis and recognition of time needed to prepare, deliver and support parents outside course time;
- offering some parents support beyond the course time, usually one to one, phone etc.;
- agreement on which approaches and programmes will best meet the needs of our parent and child populations.

Recommended programmes to be adopted over the course of the strategy:

- *Webster-Stratton, The Incredible Years*; need levels 2-3; target children 2 – 8 years, all parents, mental health, parents of children with behaviour difficulties, truancy. Extensive evidence base for reducing anti-social behaviour and for preventative use.

Islington will continue to invest in and seek to extend this programme

- *Triple P, positive parenting programme*; need levels 1-4; for all parents; group; phone; one to one; excellent RCT evaluation studies - Triple P Group Teen is being used in some schools through CAMHS with reported good results

Islington will expand investment in this programme

- *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities* (Race Equality Foundation) need levels 1-2; all parents of children 5-10 and adolescents, black and ME communities - used by a number of community groups, children's centres and schools in Islington, does not have robust evidence of independent evaluation.

Islington will continue to offer but will not be committing new resources

- *Solihull Approach - the first five years*: need levels 1-3; target parents of children - pre-natal, babies to 4 years; all parents including child protection, lone parents, mental health, special needs etc.; strong evidence base from a number of independent evaluations.

To be piloted in Islington with all health visitors and family support workers in selected children's centres.

- *Entering The Teen Zone*

A 7 week course for parents of children aged 8-13 that looks at development and pressures faced at transition points (school, puberty, peer pressure etc.). It supports parents to understand and plan for transitions. It stresses the importance of discussion and negotiation with older children to support them to work towards being self disciplined and understand their rights and responsibilities.

Islington will continue to run in partnership with schools and community organisations

- *Speak Easy* (Family Planning Association)

An 8-week programme for parents to increase their knowledge and confidence around puberty, sex and relationships to support them to speak to children and the young people and help them to make informed decisions about their bodies, sex and relationships. Parents can work towards an Open College Network accreditation at Level 1 and 2.

Islington will continue to run as part of its preventive arm of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Section 9 Workforce Development

Training and developing our parenting practitioners

The workforce is the key tool in delivering the recommendations of this strategy.

More training and development opportunities for staff in work with parents were a key theme at all the stakeholder meetings. This included involving parents in this process.

Some of the key messages

- More training on working with parents, including implementing the Training for Work with Parents course (to the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents)
- Use parents to train professionals and other parents with particular emphasis on involvement in planning and support for children in families using Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes (preparation for Team around the Child/Team around the Family)
- Use the Common Assessment Framework to pick up on particular needs e.g. mental health
- Practitioners' forums to share good practice and support with problems
- Need to train staff on how to consult with parents, how to help parents identify their needs and measure outcomes and feed this into service improvements
- Using the Area Children's Networks to deliver multi-agency training in a locality
- Ensuring all practitioners have a common understanding of what makes for positive parenting and how to support parents building on their strengths
- Provision of regular supervision including access to specialist advice
- training/development for workforce in joint working across Adult Services and Children's Services, building on the model in use in the drugs service

Attached as *Appendix A* is a diagrammatic summary of the different types of training currently on offer and what is planned; this includes the training necessary for the full implementation of a coherent delivery of parenting programmes to across the borough.

Section 10 Commissioning Priorities

In establishing commissioning priorities for the Parenting Strategy, consideration is being given across Children's Services to ensure that these align with and are complementary to commissioning priorities contained within other relevant strategies e.g. Children's Centres, Extended Schools, Young Carers, Integrated Services for Young People and Supporting People etc..

What additional resources are being made available for parenting support?

This strategy will seek to influence the use of mainstream resources to improve parenting support as well as determining priority investment for any additional resources becoming available.

Specific additional resources will be provided for Parenting Support over the next three years. This includes:

- Islington Council growth of £100,000 rising to £300,000 by 2010/11
- Children's Fund – up to £140,000

These will be pooled with the resources identified within the extended schools budget for parenting support.

In addition, the *Children's Plan* signals the establishment of two Parenting Support Expert Advisers in each local authority.

There will also be some specific additional funding for parents of children with disabilities through *Aiming High – Better Support for Disabled Children and their Families* programme. It will be important to ensure that the parents of disabled children are addressed consistently across both strategies.

The following commissioning priorities reflect both the specific and related funding being made available over the coming years.

All parents:

- Secure, produce and disseminate 'tip sheets' on common concerns of parents, normalising messages about parenting including about importance of fathers through a public health 'campaign' using range of media
- Improve accessibility of information for all parents on universal and specialist services, including information access points in libraries, schools and children's centres

- Develop a volunteer 'parent to parent' support scheme within children's centres and undertake a feasibility study on extending this model for parents of older children;
- Provide focused support for parents to successfully co-parent whether living together or apart;

Developing parents skills

- Provide basic level confidence building programmes, including targeting fathers
- Provide more Family Learning courses as a way of parents accessing educational opportunities

Fathers

- Ensure the focus of Fathers' work in children's centres and extended schools

Parents with additional needs:

- Pursue joint commissioning with all adult and social care services to meet the needs of families at risk, with particular regard to parents with mental health needs

Parents of children - Pre-birth to 5 years

- Seek to establish a model of midwifery practice which will provide high quality care, acknowledging the importance of continuity of approach.
- Establish the Family Nurse Partnership model
- Increase the number of family support workers in children's centres including outreach for hard to reach families
- Maximise external funding for crèche and respite services to support learning and self development to enhance employability

Parents of children 5-13 years

- Develop the Parent Support Adviser Scheme and consider models provided through the Area Children's Networks
- Develop the model of delivering social work support to schools through the Area Children's Networks

- Commission family support services through the Voluntary and Community Sector as part of an integrated approach to parenting and family support

Parents of children 14-19 years

- Establish 'one-stop shop' provision of information advice and support to parents, with a team of skilled practitioners able to work one-to-one and in groups with parents and young people with a range of needs which link parents into existing provision
- Extend Family Group Conferencing and family mediation to other children's services where possible
- Commission improved support for parents in transition planning for children with disabilities

Young parents

- Consider the establishment of a lead practitioner/co-ordinating post;
- Develop the skills of family support workers in children's centres to address the needs of young parents
- Develop mentoring for young parents by older young parents
- Review current commissioning of maternity services to ensure equitable access to a specialist midwife across the borough

Parenting programmes and workforce development

- Provision of training to facilitate recommended parenting programmes ensuring cultural appropriateness
- Establishing a dedicated staff capacity to develop, support and co-ordinate the delivery of parenting programmes ensuring equity of provision and that it meets all levels of need
- Provision of training for all parent workers on what contributes to positive parenting, using a strengths-based approach
- Provision of training on work with fathers and young parents, particularly for staff in children's centres

Section 11 Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy

Performance Indicators

It will be important to establish a sound framework for monitoring and evaluating the strategy. This will need to measure both impact and cost-effectiveness.

This will seek to monitor the inputs in terms of resources dedicated to the activity, the outputs in terms of activities provided etc. but more importantly it will seek to assess the impact in terms of outcomes. This could focus assessment in a number of ways:

- Impact in relation to the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan
- Impact in relation the borough-wide Parenting Support Strategy
- Impact in relation to meeting identified needs within each Area Children's Network
- Impact in relation to particular groups
- Impact in relation to different age ranges
- Impact for individuals

We will engage with parents and stakeholders to establish the key performance outcomes required from commissioned services and use appropriate methodology drawn from national best practice in assessing impact at individual or group level.

This will centrally involve service users and the views of service providers and other stakeholders as necessary. There will need to include both surveys, and appropriate user and stakeholder questionnaires. This would look at the impact both on the parent and on the child's health and well-being.

Commissioned services will detail the target groups and outputs required but have an emphasis on setting out the required outcomes. Where necessary, baselines will need to be established in order to measure progress.

A ongoing audit of provision will be developed to establish a spend baseline across all levels of provision. This will enable both a better matching of resources to needs and reduce overlap and duplication as well as identifying service gaps and priorities at a borough-wide and local level.

This will seek to embed a Value for Money approach which makes best use of existing resources and invests any new resources to address identified service gaps as cost effectively as possible.

Role of Family Support Strategy Group

The Family Support Strategy Group will review the strategy at regular intervals alongside the Family Support Strategy. The Group will ensure that all initiatives and programmes in support of parents delivered across all agencies offer a coherent, organised range of services for all parents whatever their need.

The Family Support Strategy Group will monitor each aspect of the strategy and receive quarterly reports on specific aspects with a view to making recommendations on best use of resources. This will need to look at all levels of need and in some cases, this will be to influence mainstream expenditure and in others will have a more direct influence over commissioned activity by allocating / reducing / increasing / resources or in some cases decommissioning and re-commissioning alternative provision.

Section 12 Resources and Services Available

A detailed audit of serviced has been undertaken on the range of parenting support resources and services available in Islington.

This has been compiled from the Children's Directory and submissions from individual organisations. However, more work needs to be done on this to ensure accuracy and provide a more reliable ongoing bank of information for parents and service providers.

In term of resources spent specifically on parenting, this has proved difficult to disentangle from other aspects of services except in relation to specific parenting support programmes.

In order to aid consideration of the range of resources available, the following diagram has been compiled to provide an indication of the range of services available at different 'tiers' of provision.

One of the priorities of the strategy is ensure better co-ordination and communication of what is available and ensuring a more comprehensive and integrated offer of parenting support for parents of children of all ages, particularly in the teenage years.

Parents of children pre-birth to five years

Parents of children & young people 5-13 years

Parents of young people 14-19 years

Tier 1
Tier 2
Tier 3
Tier 4

Common Assessment Framework
Information Sharing
Lead Professional
Specialist Assessments

Children's Centres, Health visiting & GPs, Maternity services, CAMHS Vol/Comm Sector provision, Children's Information Service,

Extended services in schools, GPs & school health, Vol/Comm Sector provision, Children's Information Service: Libraries/Leisure.

Parent Partnership (SEN),

Children's Centres, Health visiting & GPs, CAMHS; Specialist Vol & Comm orgs, EY Inclusion Service

CAMHS in schools, CE@Islington: Education Social Work, EWOs, Learning Mentors, EPS; Specialist Vol/Comm orgs; Adoption & Fostering; Drugs & Alcohol Team; Family Support

Specialist Vol and Comm Orgs (FWA, Chance UK)

Parenting Programmes e.g.
Webster Stratton Entering the Teen Zone Triple P

Children's Social Care, incl Disabled Children's Team, EPS Specialist Vol/Comm Orgs (e.g. CASA), CAMHS, specialist health PCT

Parenting contracts
Education Social Work,
YOS Parenting Support,
Anti-Social Behaviour Team

CAMHS LAC & Parent Support Service, LAC in social & health care, Parenting Orders (YOS, ASB, RSLs, schools)

ICON,
AMASS

Parenting Support Services in Islington

Training and development of practitioners delivering parenting support

Training available for all parenting workers

Training course	Who for	Target of programme. Needs levels	Description and Outcomes	Accreditation and level
Children's Services Induction Programme	All starters in children's services	-	To ensure all new staff receive appropriate introduction in line with the National Induction Standards and the Common Core	
Specialist inductions	i.e. family support workers, ASB parenting support workers, social care	-	To build on common induction with focus on needs of service and parent populations	
Integrated Working training programme	All staff (incl VCSF & independent sectors) who work with C&YP from 0-19	For staff working across all needs levels	Includes courses on: Common Assessment Framework, Lead Professional role and management, information sharing, inter-agency working	
Training for Work with Parents 22 weeks	All staff whose main work is directly supporting parents	For staff working across all needs levels	Delivers to the <i>National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents</i> ; offers complete overview of theoretical, philosophical and practical approaches to direct work with parents one-to-one and group	OCN 2 and 3 (to level NVQ 2 and 3)

Training in order to facilitate recommended parenting programmes

Training to facilitate will be planned and staged over time, focussing on key staff as resources become available

Parenting programme	Parents aimed at, needs level	Summary of content	Outcomes/evaluations	Accreditation and costs
Webster-Stratton –the Incredible Years	All parents, mental health, Parents of children have behaviour difficulties; children 2-8 years Levels 2-4	Research-based, proven effective programmes for reducing children's aggression in behaviour problems and increasing social competence	Multiple evaluations -: increase in parental positive affect such as praise and reduced use of criticism, increase in parent use of effective limit-setting, reductions in parental depression and increase in parental self-confidence etc.	£1,000 each participant
Triple P, GroupTeen 3 days plus 2 days accreditation	All parents including those of adolescents and of looked after children, child protection concerns, lone parents, mental health, of children with behaviour difficulties etc. Levels 1-4	An evidence-based model for the prevention and treatment of behaviour problems in children and adolescents. Enhances parents' knowledge, skills and confidence by addressing family risk factors Draws on social learning theory, cognitive behavioural and developmental theory	Product of over 25 years of rigorous research in childhood development and the relationship between parents and children. Successfully trialled with parents of teenagers, BME families (in Australia), parents at risk of maltreating children. Strong results for individual families and improved social outcomes.	University of Queensland Varies circa £14,000 (up to 16 participants)
Solihull Approach, The first five years 2 day training	Parents of babies and children 1-4 Levels 1-3	Integrated psychodynamic and behavioural approach for work with families affected by behavioural and emotional difficulties	Multiple evaluations across health visiting service	Level 6, 12 points Univ of Central England