Improving Children's Behaviour and Attendance through the Use of Parenting Programmes: An Examination of Good Practice

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Executive Summary

Background

There is powerful evidence that attendance at school and academic performance are positively related and that those who are excluded and do not attend school regularly, whatever the reasons, are more likely to become involved in crime. Recently, much emphasis has been put on the role that parents can play in improving the attendance and behaviour of their children. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to apply for a parenting order to help address children's behaviour in school. This court order compels a parent to attend a parenting programme and to fulfil other requirements as determined necessary by the court for improving their child's behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 already allowed courts to make such orders following a successful prosecution for truancy under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Some LEAs encourage parents to attend such programmes on a voluntary basis when their child's attendance or behaviour has given cause for concern. It is now possible for courts to order compulsory attendance at parenting programmes following exclusion from school as well as for irregular attendance.

Aims of the research

The purpose of this research was to examine when parenting programmes were most effective in the context of improving attendance and behaviour in school and to identify good practice.
- It explored who provided programmes, how they were funded, how they were quality assured and how effectiveness was evaluated.
- It examined a range of factors, including the curriculum, the organisation of programmes and the mechanism of referral to programmes to explore the relative effectiveness of different types of programmes on parents' attitudes and behaviour and the impact of any changes in parenting on children.

The relative lack of education focused programmes which was established during the initial survey led to the issues being explored in relation to the more general parenting programmes that were available and their impact on parenting skills and subsequently children's behaviour in a range of contexts.

Methodology

The research was undertaken in two phases. In phase 1, a survey of responsible LEA officers and parenting programme providers was undertaken (through telephone interviews or e-mail conversations) to establish the range of parenting programmes available, how they operated and were funded, their perceived success in changing parental behaviour and the impact on their children.

134 LEAs (89%) made some form of response to the survey. In some cases this was to report that they had no information, in others they indicated that the questionnaire was being passed on to a programme provider for completion. Questionnaires were sent to 296 providers. 158 responses were received (53%), of these 30 indicated that they had not yet run or no longer ran programmes.

On the basis of the survey, 23 parenting programmes were selected for more detailed investigation. These represented examples of contrasting approaches, serving different parent populations with children experiencing different types of problems. Interviews

were conducted with key staff to provide a detailed account of the programmes' operation, funding, success, quality assurance and evaluation procedures. Parents were asked to complete questionnaires before and after programme participation to assess changes in their behaviour and attitudes and their perceptions of changes in their children. Interviews were undertaken with a sample of parents, children, their teachers and those supporting them to provide example case studies of the effects of the parenting programmes on children. Data were also collated for the children of participating parents relating to attendance, behaviour and exclusion where this was possible and appropriate.

142 parents from 20 programmes responded to the pre-programme questionnaire, 73 from 17 programmes to the post-programme questionnaire (51% of the initial sample). As the programmes were not randomly selected but were chosen as examples of varied practice and there was a lower response rate to the post-programme questionnaire the findings from these data need to be interpreted with caution. Interviews were undertaken with 33 programme providers/facilitators, 52 parents, 12 children and 20 teachers or other LEA staff whose work was linked to the programmes in various ways or who supported the children whose parents were attending programmes.

Findings

Infrastructure, organisation and funding
The systems in place for co-ordinating and providing parenting programmes in LEAs were fragile. Provision was generally inadequate to meet need and often operated in an unco-ordinated way because of a lack of organisation at local level. Links between LEAs and providers were on the whole not well established and in many cases communication was limited.

There were some examples of existing good practice where there were well established networks providing information to the public about what was available and where voluntary and statutory bodies worked well together. Some LEAs acted to co-ordinate the activity of the various voluntary bodies, others offered support and some were developing their own programmes. The availability of parenting programmes depended on location. Overall, demand outstripped provision.

Over the country as a whole, responsibility for the provision of parenting programmes in relation to education lay with a wide range of personnel within LEAs most of whom had considerable responsibilities elsewhere. There was also a wide range of different types of providers.

Funding for the programmes came from a variety of sources and was reported to be insecure in the long and short term and inadequate to meet the need for programmes. This constituted a major difficulty for providers. Providers reported that if the provision of parenting programmes was to expand secure funding was essential.

To date relatively few compulsory parenting orders had been made relating to education. Parents tended to be referred on a voluntary basis. This may change as a result of the Anti-social Behaviour Act. Most LEAs may not have the capacity in available programmes to cater for an increase of parents on compulsory orders.

The set up of programmes and referral procedures
There was wide variability in the number and type of parenting programmes available in Local Education Authorities. In most areas programmes were available for parents of children of different ages. Few programmes were specifically designed to address issues relating to education. Most parenting programme provision was of a more general nature.

Provision for parents self-referred, referred by others voluntarily or compulsorily was usually delivered within the same programmes. This appeared to be successful particularly where compulsorily referred parents were offered individual support prior to the programme and the facilitators were skilled in supporting them during it. A few programmes were designed to cater for the needs of particular groups of parents but these were relatively rare, and where parents were experiencing serious difficulties one-to-one provision was often made. Decisions of this nature depended on the assessment of the individual case.

Referrals were made through a wide range of agencies. 33% of providers indicated that they had referrals relating to behaviour and attendance at school. The criteria for referral to parenting programmes related to parental need. Some providers excluded particular groups of very needy parents or required them to be receiving support from other agencies. Some programmes accepted any parents who genuinely wished to improve their parenting skills.

Participants and drop-outs
The low response rates to questions regarding participation in parenting programmes from LEAs and providers made it difficult to draw any conclusions about the type of parents attending parenting programmes. There was no reliable information about the numbers of parents who were referred voluntarily or self-referred, and the numbers of parents referred compulsorily were very small, particularly in relation to education.

The data revealed wide differences in the overall number of parents attending programmes. The figures from LEAs for those voluntarily or self-referred ranged from 0 to 350 while for providers from 0 to 800. This reflected the diverse nature of the types of programmes operating and also the size of the LEAs.

There was agreement that it was difficult to persuade parents to join parenting programmes. Attendance at a programme was perceived by parents as indicating some kind of inadequacy. A change in culture was needed so that it became normal practice for parents to attend a parenting programme. Most providers in the survey reported substantial drop out rates, although the programmes that were visited had low rates. They followed up non-attendance and where parents were known to be experiencing family difficulties, particularly where they had been referred compulsorily, contact was made with them prior to attendance at the programme. This reduced their anxiety levels and gave providers an opportunity to assess the nature of their problems. Skilled facilitators were able to successfully engage parents in such a way as to reduce drop out.

Types of programmes
There was a wide range of models which could be used as the basis for developing parenting programmes. Increasingly, LEAs were developing their own parenting programmes with a focus on the child's educational outcomes rather than more generalised outcomes relating to family functioning. This provision was sometimes, although not always, school based. In some cases parallel programmes were provided for children. There was a range of examples of good practice in relation to these LEA and school based programmes. This was complemented by parenting programmes provided by other providers from the voluntary sector, the two sectors increasingly working together.

Programme content
There was a wide range of approaches to parenting programmes. However, most providers adopted an eclectic approach drawing on the best aspects of each. The key themes were assisting parents in managing children's behaviour largely using

behaviourist techniques while concurrently improving relationships and communication in the family. Most programmes were based on facilitated discussion with parents drawing on each other for support and the development of strategies to implement. The support systems which parents developed were important outcomes of the programmes. Crucial to the success of the programmes were the skills of the facilitators.

Some programmes had developed parallel programmes for children. Where the focus was educational outcomes this was particularly appropriate as children's behaviour was affected by circumstances at school over which the parent had no control.

Most programmes acted as brokers for other services and agencies but many were sceptical about the impact that other agencies had.

Programme delivery, evaluation and staff training
Most respondents in the survey indicated that programmes were delivered in community centres, although some were delivered in schools. At primary level, school based programmes were welcomed by parents and staff, although there were sometimes difficulties with accommodation. Transport problems were minimal, links between home and school were increased and there was increased potential for monitoring the educational impact on children.

Programmes varied in their length, timing and duration. Most sessions were held weekly at a range of different times of day and times of year. Programmes varied in length between 1 and 14 sessions although most were between 8 and 12 with sessions lasting 1 to 3 hours. It may be the total number of hours spent working together which is important rather than the number of sessions per se. In addition, parents with greater needs at the start of a programme take longer to change their thinking and develop their skills than those with lesser needs.

Some LEAs provided a telephone helpline to support parents. Parents valued this. Some providers insisted that families with serious difficulties had ongoing support from other agencies while attending a programme.

The provision for follow up sessions varied between programmes but all providers encouraged parents to develop their own self-help groups which would continue after the programme came to an end. Parents indicated a need for follow up work to the courses and ongoing support. The self-help groups were very successful, although there were sometimes difficulties with venues, transport and the provision of crèche facilities.

Most providers undertook systematic evaluation of the programmes through parent questionnaires in the final session. These provided positive indications of the outcomes. Some programmes went beyond this and assessed the perceived impact on the behaviour of the children. Most did not. There is a need for systematic evaluation of the impact on children in the long and short term and on the impact on parents in the long term.

Unless programmes were run by LEAs, they had no direct control over the way parenting programmes operated or their quality. While many providers had evaluation systems in place the information derived from these was not always fed back to the LEA. Systematic monitoring of the quality of programmes is necessary.

Staff working on the programmes were recruited from a wide range of backgrounds. Many were hourly paid, although many were also highly qualified. Training was a requirement for all facilitators but its extent and depth varied depending on the particular

programme being implemented. Some training was accredited. There is no nationally recognised qualification framework for working with parents.

Impact on parents and families

The programmes, overall, were reported by parents to have a very positive impact. 97% of responding parents reported that the programmes were enjoyable and helpful. They contributed to increased confidence in interacting with and understanding their children. Conflict at home was reduced and family life was calmer and happier. Parents' self-esteem and confidence improved, they developed support networks and some went on to attend further courses, gaining qualifications and employment.

The extent of change depended on the starting point of the parents. For those whose parenting skills were at a low level initially attendance at a single programme was insufficient and ongoing support was needed. For others a single programme was adequate in improving their parenting skills.

Some parents, having co-ordinated a follow up support group, went on to train as facilitators. Even where parents did not become long term engaged with the programmes in this way many became advocates for parenting programmes in their local community. This enthusiasm could be an important vehicle through which to engage the most needy parents in the community who may be the most reluctant to attend parenting programmes.

Impact on children and their behaviour

In almost all cases parents reported improvement in the child's behaviour at home and in interactions with the family. Although the data were limited, there was evidence of improved behaviour and attendance at school as a result of parents' attendance at parenting programmes. However, improved parental control of children's behaviour will not alleviate situations where problems are located specifically in the school environment for instance where children are being bullied or relationships with teachers have broken down.

Where provision was school based head teachers were supportive of it and it was useful in providing a bridge between home and school which previously did not exist for some families. There were positive changes in the ways in which parents interacted with school staff and they reported being better able to support their child's behaviour and attendance at school.

Recommendations

- There is a need for all Local Education Authorities to have a named person with responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of parenting programmes within the authority and for ensuring that that provision is of a high quality. Working with providers each LEA should be able to offer a 'menu' of parenting services from those available for all parents to those targeted at specific groups whose children may be presenting particular difficulties.

- Where parenting programmes have an educational focus, in order to foster better communication between parents and the school and enable closer monitoring of the impact on children, it may be beneficial to hold them in schools. If an increase in the number of parents attending such programmes is anticipated most schools will need to offer programmes so that they are easily accessible. It may also be beneficial to hold parallel programmes for pupils.

- Systems need to be put in place to monitor children's attendance and behaviour when parents attend programmes and to facilitate long-term evaluation of the impact of programmes.

- Schools might consider having a key contact with responsibility for parenting issues and also providing training for school staff in developing relationships with parents. This would facilitate home and school working more closely together.

- LEAs need to ensure that programmes are available for the parents of pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils and that appropriate crèche facilities and transport are available.

- Strategies for engaging the most needy parents in parenting programmes need to be developed. These may utilise the enthusiasm of parents in the community who have already attended programmes. In addition, wider availability of programmes for all parents may reduce the stigmatization of attending a parenting programme.

- Where parents have been issued with compulsory orders contact should be made with them prior to the running of the programme to reduce any anxiety, enable them to express their anger and optimise the likelihood of their attending. Programme facilitators should offer additional support to these parents throughout the programme and receive specific training in dealing with difficulties that may arise as a result of any negative attitudes expressed in the group work.

- Opportunities for follow up activities need to be made available. If this is through self-support groups appropriate venues need to be made available and consideration given to the provision of crèche facilities and transport.

- There is a need to adopt common standards for parenting education as outlined by the National Parenting Education Support Forum. A national qualifications framework, to include core competencies, which acknowledges prior learning and experience needs to be developed. Modules addressing the skills and knowledge required to facilitate parenting programmes, which could be taken by staff already engaged in working with parents and children, could provide initial training and continuing professional development and provide an effective means of expanding provision.

- Secure, long term, core funding is required if LEAs are to be in a position to meet possible demand following the implementation of the Anti-social Behaviour Act.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The importance of access to full-time education

Non-attendance at school is not a new phenomenon. Since the education of children became compulsory it has often been the focus of political and media attention. Recently with the imperative to raise academic standards it has become the focus of a range of government initiatives as there is evidence that there are relationships between poor attendance at school, for any reason, and academic performance (DfES 2001). In the long term persistent truants and those who are excluded from school tend to have lower status occupations, less stable career patterns and greater unemployment in comparison with others sharing similar backgrounds (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990). Some, but not all may be involved in delinquency (Audit Commission, 1996; Cullingford, 1999). Reducing exclusion and improving attendance are therefore crucial for the individual pupil and for society as a whole.

1.2 Attendance

Attempts to improve attendance at school since national statistics have been available have had mixed results. In maintained secondary schools between 1995/96 and 2002/03 the percentage of authorised absence has varied from 8.4% in 1995/96 to 7.21 % in 2002/3 (measured as a percent of half day sessions missed). Unauthorised absence has remained fairly stable at around 1% in most years. In primary schools unauthorised absence has varied from .5% in 1996/97 to .43% in 2002/03 while authorised absence has varied from 5.19% in 1999/00 to 5.71% in 1997/98. For 2002/03 it was 5.38%. (DfES 2002; 2003).

The causes of non-attendance are many and complex (Hallam and Roaf, 1995; Hallam, 1996). Pupils may not attend because of:
- illness or anxiety;
- holidays, special occasions, outside activities;
- family circumstances (helping at home, family needs or desires, extreme family pressures);
- issues within school (the environment, school requirements, school circumstances, attitudes towards school, relationships with teachers and peers, exclusion);
- attractions outside school (peer pressure, excitement of truanting, employment opportunities).

Schools vary considerably in the extent to which they maintain high levels of attendance even when they have similar catchment areas. Their procedures and ethos are implicated (Hallam et al., 2002) in particular, pupil teacher relationships (Bealing, 1990, O'Keeffe, 1994). Teachers tend to see truants as lazy, lacking concentration, restless, and difficult to discipline (Farrington, 1980), while truants believe that they are picked on unfairly, not treated with respect, handled inconsistently and dealt with too harshly (Buist, 1980). While the school has an important role in promoting attendance, families also have a part to play. Recent evidence from 'truancy sweeps' suggests that parents often collude with their children in non-attendance at school. Improving attendance requires the adoption of a range of strategies including those involving parents (see Hallam, 1996).

1.3 Exclusion

The ultimate sanction for poor behaviour in school is exclusion. This can be a fixed term or permanent exclusion. Anecdotal evidence suggests that exclusions also occur without regard to official procedures, where parents are asked to keep a child at home for a few days. While the causes of exclusion are many and complex (Parsons, 1999; Munn et al., 2000; Osler et al., 2001), the reduction of exclusions depends on schools developing inclusive approaches to the curriculum and teaching, while also developing strategies for working with other agencies in supporting pupils who are at risk. Successful interventions to reduce exclusion and improve behaviour often actively involve parents (Hallam and Castle, 1999).

1.4 Parenting orders and contracts

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers for LEAs to apply for a parenting order to help address children's behaviour in school. A parenting order compels a parent to attend a parenting programme and to fulfil other requirements as determined necessary by the court for improving their child's behaviour, e.g. ensuring that the child arrives for school on time. Parenting orders are already available following prosecution for non-attendance. Under the Anti-social Behaviour Act they are available following a permanent exclusion or a second fixed term exclusion within 12 months. They will be used when a pupil has been excluded for serious misbehaviour and where parenting is considered a factor in the child's behaviour and the parents are unwilling to engage with the LEA or school in attempting to bring about change on a voluntary basis.

In the past, some LEAs encouraged parents who had not been issued with a parenting order but whose children were experiencing school attendance problems, to attend such programmes on a voluntary basis. The Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003) has enabled schools and Local Education Authorities to arrange parenting contracts which are voluntary and will involve the parent agreeing to carry out specific actions to improve their child's attendance or behaviour in return for the LEA or school providing or arranging support, typically a parenting programme, with which the parent will be required to co-operate.

In all of these instances, the aim of parenting programmes is to encourage parents to satisfy their responsibilities by equipping them with skills to enable them to deal with their child's behaviour or attendance problems. In providing parenting programmes it is therefore important to establish what works best in providing parenting programmes in education-related cases and to provide information on best practice in the running of such programmes.

1.5 Parenting programmes

In recent years there has been an increased recognition of the importance of parenting and the way in which parenting programmes can be an effective preventative service (Hoghughi, 1998; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). In a review of the literature Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) concluded that parental involvement in the form of 'at home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much greater than the differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. This is evident across all social programmes and ethnic groups. Differences in level of parental involvement are associated with social programme, health, poverty, parental confidence and their perceptions of their role.

Most parenting programmes are based on one of two main approaches, behavioural or improving relationships. The former seem to be more effective in changing children's behaviour while the latter seem to have more positive effects on the cohesive functioning of families (Barlow, 1997). Practices in delivering parenting programmes in the UK in relation to the former are largely derived from the work in the USA of Webster-Stratton with conduct disordered young children and their families, the latter from Bavolek's approach with dysfunctional families (Lloyd, 1999).

Evaluations of parenting programmes have largely relied on parental reports and there have been relatively few studies which have included independent observations of children's behaviour. Where evaluations have relied on parental self–report, satisfaction has tended to be very high. Those studies that have adopted observational methods have indicated that parent education programmes are effective in improving the behaviour of young children (Barlow, 1997; Barrett, 2003), although effective behaviour change at home does not always transfer to other environments including school (Firestone et al., 1980). While the evidence suggests that the effects can be successful in the long term, a large proportion of parents may still have difficulties with their children. Some groups are particularly likely to experience problems – those characterised by their single parent status, maternal depression, lower social programme status, and with a family history of alcoholism and drug abuse (Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1990). There is also an acknowledgement that particular community factors can be important (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Typically, in the region of 30% of parents drop out of parenting programmes (Forehand et al., 1983). These parents are often those in most need.

A recent extensive review of meta-analyses of a range of different types of parenting programme (Barrett, 2003) indicated that group-based programmes for parents of children with behaviour problems appeared to be successful in the reduction of emotional and behavioural problems in children of all ages. For children aged 0-3 the types of programme which were more successful were not clear, although for the parents of 3-10 year olds group programmes using behavioural approaches appeared most consistently effective. For children aged 10-17 the effects were not consistent in relation to reducing offending although there were more positive results in reducing other measures of delinquency and substance abuse. Programmes in the Parent and Child Series developed by Webster- Stratton and colleagues were effective particularly when training in child management was combined with training in other parenting skills, when teachers were involved and when the programme adopted a range of media for engaging parents including video, verbal, and written materials. Overall, the review concluded that group based programmes were as effective or more so than individual programmes except for the treatment of drug abuse where family therapy was more effective and for delinquent youths where some negative effects of group parenting programmes had been found.

Much of the research to date has concentrated on developing the parenting skills of those with young children. There has been much less systematic evaluation of the impact of parenting programmes with the parents of adolescents. In the UK, the most encompassing evaluation of such parenting programmes was undertaken by the Policy Research Bureau for the Youth Justice Board (Ghate and Ramella, 2002). This evaluation focused on the effect of parenting programmes on reducing re-offending among children and young people who had been convicted of a crime. The findings demonstrated that a wide range of very different approaches were adopted in the parenting programmes. No two projects assumed the same form. Most evolved considerably from the original designs that were planned at the outset. Programmes saw themselves broadly as 'preventative' or 'therapeutic', although some combined both approaches. Therapeutic approaches tended to be aimed at families in crises - those with well-established psycho-social problems.

The work with parents generally addressed issues related to dealing with conflict and challenging behaviour; learning to constructively supervise and monitor young people's activities; setting and maintaining boundaries; communication and negotiation skills; and family conflict in general. Most existing courses for working with parents had to be adapted to meet the needs of this group of parents of disaffected adolescents. Many programmes offered a mix of group work and individually tailored one-to-one work.

There was wide variation in the systems for referral and assessment. Parents on the programme, mainly single mothers, reported very high levels of need including debt and housing problems, health difficulties and problems with personal relationships. Most said that they particularly wanted help in managing difficult behaviour in their child. The young people whose parents attended the programmes were a difficult and needy group. Seventy two percent had emotional and behavioural difficulties. They were also prolific offenders.

Parents completing courses reported improved communication with their child; improved supervision and monitoring; reduction in conflict and better approaches to dealing with it when it occurred; better relationships; giving more praise and approval; being less critical and losing their temper less; feeling better able to influence behaviour; and feeling better able to cope with parenting in general. Exit ratings were very positive. Staff also indicated on a rating scale that that nearly half of the parents had benefited substantially. There was also evidence of positive change in the young people, including improved communication and mutual understanding, a reduction in conflict with parents and improved relationships. Reconviction rates reduced by nearly one third, offending dropped to 56% and the average number of offences was reduced by half. Of course, the parenting programme alone may not have been responsible for these changes, but it is likely to have made a contribution. An important additional positive outcome was the benefit to parental relationships with younger children.

To date, there has been relatively little research exploring the effectiveness of different types of parenting programmes with different groups of parents. There is a need for research considering the most effective programmes for single family parents, step families, families from different ethnic groups, parents of different ages, parents with children of different ages and parents with children experiencing different kinds of behavioural or attendance problems. Such evidence as there is suggests that 'one size does not fit all'. Therefore, it is important to try to identify which interventions best match particular needs. The purpose of this research is to examine when parenting programmes are most effective in the context of improving attendance and behaviour in school and to identify good practice.

There is powerful evidence that attendance at school and academic performance are positively related and that those who are excluded from school and do not attend school regularly, whatever the reasons, are more likely to become involved in crime. Recently, much emphasis has been put on the role that parents can play in improving the attendance and behaviour of their children. Parenting orders can be issued by Magistrates where a parent is proven guilty of an offence relating to school attendance and can now be made in relation to their children's exclusion from school. The Anti-social Behaviour Act also enables LEAs and schools to enter into a parenting contract to help address children's behaviour and attendance at school in return for the LEA or school providing or arranging support. This will typically be a parenting programme with which the parent will be required to co-operate. The purpose of this research was to examine when parenting programmes are most effective in the context of improving attendance and behaviour in school and to identify good practice.

1.6 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The overall aims of the research were:

1. To determine the provision of parenting programmes used by LEAs as a means of improving children's behaviour and/or attendance at school including who provided the programmes, how they were funded, how they were quality-assured and how effectiveness was evaluated. These issues are considered in Chapters 3 and 8.

2. To determine what type of parenting programmes were most effective in bringing about improvements in children's behaviour and/or attendance at school. These issues are considered in Chapters 3, 4 and 6.

3. To examine whether parenting programmes work best for different types of family in terms of improving the child's behaviour and/or attendance, for example:
What type of attitudes (towards their child's behaviour/attendance and to the course) do parents hold prior to the course?
Which parents feel they have benefited most from parenting programmes?
Is the type of behaviour and/or attendance problem a factor in the effectiveness of a parenting programme? These issues are considered in Chapters 6, 9 and 10.

The research revealed very few parenting programmes which focused specifically on children's behaviour and attendance at school. However, LEAs identified the programmes that they did use and it was possible to address the research questions by reference to these programmes. Because of the paucity of data regarding the educational outcomes for pupils it was not possible to evaluate the impact of each of these on pupils' behaviour in school. Data were collected regarding parents' beliefs and attitudes about their child's behaviour and attendance at school prior to and after attending a parenting programme but the nature of the available programmes, which had a general rather than an educational focus, meant that the children of most of the participating parents had no school related behavioural or attendance issues. The research was able to explore the value to parents and children of the parenting programmes and how they might impact on the well-being of both with possible repercussions on school behaviour and attendance.

Chapter 2
Methodology

This chapter sets out the research methodology for the two main phases of the research and describes the analyses undertaken.

2.1 Phase 1: Survey of LEAs and the programme providers with whom they work

In Phase 1 data were collected from all LEAs in England to explore the different types of parenting programmes available (voluntary and compulsory), how they were funded, how they were quality assured and how their effectiveness was evaluated. Data were collected relating to perceived success in improving parenting practices and the perceived impact on pupils. Information was also sought regarding the length of time that parenting programmes ran and how these might impact on effectiveness.

2.1.1 Interviews with responsible LEA officers in England and providers of parenting programmes used by LEAs

Telephone interviews or e-mail conversations were conducted with responsible LEA officers in England to establish their use of parenting programmes and the providers that they used. The providers of these programmes were also contacted and interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to:

- obtain detailed information about the nature of any parenting programmes operating in the LEA either voluntary or compulsory;
- establish the nature of the relationship between the LEA and the parenting programme provider;
- establish how parents were referred to the programmes;
- establish the extent of take up of the programmes;
- establish the type of parents accessing the programmes and why they took part;
- establish which parents dropped out and why;
- obtain detailed information about the approaches and teaching methods used in the programmes;
- establish any differences in curriculum and organisation of programmes catering for parents of pupils with different types of problems, particularly behaviour and attendance;
- establish the time scales involved in delivering different types of parenting programmes;
- explore the perceived effectiveness of different types of programmes on parents;
- explore the perceived effectiveness of different types of programmes on children;
- establish how the programmes were quality assured;
- establish how the programmes were evaluated and whether this presented any difficulties;
- explore the availability of data for monitoring the progress in school of the children of the parents attending the programmes;
- identify any difficulties experienced in providing the programmes;
- identify areas where there was perceived room for improvement in the provision of the programmes;
- identify any areas which appeared to be working particularly well;
- obtain detailed information about how the programmes were funded and the effectiveness of this.

134 LEAs (89%) made a response of some kind to the telephone/e-mail interview. Further details are given in Chapter 3. Questionnaires were sent out to 296 providers.

Responses were received from 158 (53%), of these 30 indicated that they had not as yet run or no longer ran programmes. Where LEAs or parenting programme providers had data readily available relating to individual pupils whose parents were participating in the programmes (e.g. exclusions, attendance, behaviour, attainment) these were analysed to assess improvement.

On the basis of Phase 1 of the research, 23 examples of contrasting approaches to parenting programmes were selected for more in depth study. The selection of these examples made by the steering committee at the DfES and the research team was informed by the views of the quality assurance and advisory group set up at the Institute of Education. The selection took account of different types of programmes for parents of children with different types of problems, geographical area (rural, urban), level of deprivation in the LEA, and involvement in other programmes, e.g. Behaviour Improvement Programme, Excellence in Cities. A brief description of each of the visited programmes is provided in the appendices.

2.2 Phase 2: Field Work

For each of the 23 programmes visited more detailed information was obtained regarding the structure and content of parenting programmes, how they were funded, how quality was assured and how their effectiveness was evaluated. Participating parents were asked to complete a short questionnaire before and after they had participated in the programme to assess changes in their attitudes and behaviours and that of their child. This was based on the questionnaires developed for 'Positive Parenting' the evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's Parenting Programme (Ghate and Ramella, 2002). The questionnaire collected information regarding the type of family, ethnicity, the particular reason for attending the programme, changes in attitudes and behaviour and statements evaluating the programme. The full questionnaire is included in the appendices.

The sample of parents was not random. They were attending programmes which had already been identified as examples of different types of 'good' practice. 142 parents from 20 programmes responded to the pre-programme questionnaire, 73 (51%) from 17 programmes to the post-programme questionnaire. The lower level of responding to the post-programme questionnaire was due to the absence of some parents from the sessions where it was administered and the reluctance of some providers to ask parents to complete this questionnaire in addition to their own evaluation questionnaires. This difference in sample size between the pre and post responses may have biased the findings. Parents more favourably disposed towards the parenting programme were more likely to have responded to the request to complete the questionnaire. A database was created and the data analysed to compare the responses of parents to the statements pre and post attendance at the programmes.

When parents dropped out of programmes they were contacted by the authors by telephone to establish the reasons for the drop out, their experiences of the programme and whether anything could have been done to enable them to continue. Only three parents dropped out from the programmes visited.

Interviews were undertaken with parents and their children from each programme visited. Where possible three parents from each programme were interviewed. Some were parents who had already completed a previous programme. This provided insights into the longer-term effects of the programmes on their behaviour and that of their children. Some parents did not permit their children to be interviewed and most were reluctant for contact to be made with their child's school. A total of 52 parents were interviewed, 12 children and 20 teachers or other LEA personnel who were actively engaged in working in relation to the programmes and/or the children. Where the school

was identified contact was made to establish whether teachers were aware of the parent's attendance at the programme and short interviews were undertaken with teachers.

2.2.1 Interviews with those responsible for and involved in running parenting programmes

The interviews with those responsible for and involved in running parenting programmes explored in greater depth the issues raised in the survey. Thirty-three interviews were undertaken with providers and facilitators. There was a focus on the experiences of specific groups of parents and any changes in their attitudes and behaviour towards their children. Staff perceptions of the reactions of the children to changes in parental behaviour were also sought. Interviews explored:

- the types of difficulties which the parenting programmes addressed;
- the perceived impact on families of the parenting programmes;
- particular aspects of the programmes which had a major impact on parents' attitudes and behaviour;
- whether attending the programmes enabled parents to draw attention to particular needs which could then be met by other agencies;
- the perceived impact of the parenting programmes on the behaviour and attendance of the children whose parents were participating;
- perceptions of the likelihood of long term change in parents' behaviour;
- any difficulties or obstacles experienced in running the programmes;
- any ways in which the programmes could be improved;
- aspects of the programmes which seemed to be working particularly well;
- any other perceived outcomes, positive or negative.

2.2.2 Interviews with other LEA personnel (e.g. EWOs, EPs, members of BESTs) or others working closely with the affected pupils

Interviews with those working closely with the affected pupils within the LEA explored:

- the types of difficulties experienced by the students whose parents were attending the programmes;
- the perceived impact on families of the parenting programmes;
- the perceived impact of the parenting programmes on the behaviour and attendance of the children whose parents were participating.

Interviewees were asked to provide illustrative examples of individual cases.

2.2.3 Interviews with parents

Case study interviews with parents explored:

- their experiences of the parenting programmes;
- whether, and to what extent, they felt that the programmes had been helpful in improving their parenting skills;
- how the programme had impacted on their behaviour in relation to their child;
- the extent to which they perceived the parenting programmes to have been helpful;
- any difficulties that they experienced;
- what they thought might be improved in the programmes;
- any unexpected benefits of attending the programmes in relation to other needs;
- the impact of the changes in their attitudes and behaviour on their child's behaviour, self-esteem, confidence, attendance at school and school work;
- any change in the nature of their child's plans for the future;
- whether they thought that the changes in their behaviour and parenting skills would be maintained in the long term and what might support this;
- any other outcomes of attending the programmes.

Telephone interviews were conducted with parents who had dropped out of the programmes to establish the reasons for this, to explore their perceptions of the parenting programme and what might have helped them to remain in it.

2.2.4 Interviews with teachers

Interviews with teachers/classroom assistants explored:

- the perceived impact of the parenting programme on the behaviour and attendance of the children whose parents were participating;
- the extent to which they believed that the parenting programme was successful for supporting the parents of particular groups of pupils;
- the extent to which the parenting programme appeared to be successful in assisting parents to support the academic and personal development of their children;
- any difficulties that they perceived with the parenting programme;
- any aspects which they believed had been particularly successful;
- what they thought could be improved in relation to the parenting programme and the way it impacted on pupils;
- the extent to which the parenting programme was likely to be successful in the long term in improving behaviour and attendance;
- the factors that they believed might be important in promoting success for the programme in the long term.

Interviewees were asked to provide examples of improvement in children's behaviour and attendance relating to their parents' involvement in parenting programmes and also examples where the programmes were unsuccessful.

2.2.5 Interviews with pupils

Depending on the nature of the purpose of the parenting programme, interviews were undertaken with pupils individually or with their parents. The interviews explored the experiences of the pupils in relation to their circumstances prior to their parents attending the programmes; any changes in their parents' attitudes and behaviour since they attended the programmes; what, in particular, they found helpful about the changes; what other changes in their parents might have been helpful; current levels of support that they had in school (if any); the extent to which their parents had been influential in helping them improve their behaviour or attendance; the impact of returning to school on their schoolwork and social life; their plans for the future; any other outcomes of their parents attending the parenting programmes.

The data from the interviews with involved LEA personnel, pupils, parents and teachers were used to provide example case studies of the success of the parenting programmes for different types of pupils. They were also used to identify the difficulties experienced, the ways the programmes might be improved and what might sustain behaviour change in parents and children in the longer term.

2.3 Analysis of the data

The qualitative data from the survey were coded to enable frequencies to be computed. SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data relating to the survey of LEAs, attendance and the responses to the questionnaires. The pre and post parenting programme questionnaires completed by a sample of parents were analysed using Wilcoxon Matched Pairs tests to assess whether the changes reported over the time of the parenting programme were statistically significant or could have occurred by chance.

The qualitative data from the interviews was used to provide the case study examples of good practice in delivering parenting programmes, the case studies of individual pupils

and their parents and to provide validation of the survey and questionnaire analyses.

A consultative conference was held with representatives of participating LEAs, providers of parenting programmes, the DfES and OfSTED to facilitate the validation, clarification and interpretation of findings.

Chapter 3 reports the findings relating to infrastructure, organisation and funding of parenting programmes, Chapter 4 considers referral procedures and the way that programmes were set up, while Chapter 5 describes the participants and issues relating to drop-outs. In Chapters 6 and 7, the types of available programmes and their content are discussed while Chapter 8 considers issues relating to the delivery of programmes including staffing, training and qualifications. Chapters 9 and 10 present the analyses of the data relating to the impact of programmes on parents, families and children.

Chapter 3
Infrastructure, Organisation and Funding

This chapter describes LEA infrastructure relating to parenting programmes, the personnel with responsibility for managing the infrastructure within the LEA, and the way that parenting programmes were co-ordinated in the LEA. It provides contrasting examples of good practice, outlines how parenting programmes were funded and considers the likely impact of the Anti-social Behaviour Act.

Overall, it was difficult to get LEAs to respond to the initial survey questionnaire. Subsequent telephone calls revealed that most LEAs had not responded because they had few structures or personnel in place relating to parenting programmes. Many passed the questionnaire on to a specific parenting programme provider for completion. Some LEAs stated that they were unable to complete the questionnaire either because they did not have the available information or because they did not have time. Overall, 134 (89%) LEAs responded to requests for information, either by completing the questionnaire (92), undertaking a brief telephone interview (22), passing the questionnaire onto a programme provider (11) or providing a list of programmes (9). In many cases, although LEAs responded, they supplied little or no information about parenting programmes. 61% of LEAs provided detailed information regarding the programmes available in their LEA. Table 1 provides a breakdown of responses from each region of the country and the number of programmes from which data were collected in each region. Questionnaires were also completed by 128 parenting programme providers 53% of those asked for information. These were contacted through the LEAs and are therefore representative of the types of programmes to which LEAs refer parents whose children have difficulties relating to behaviour or attendance at school.

Table 1: Geographical spread of survey responses

Region	Questionnaire completed by LEA	Telephone contact made but questionnaire not completed for a range of reasons	Questionnaire passed on to programme provider	LEA simply provided a list of available parenting programmes	No response	Number of parenting programmes from which data were collected
Northwest 22 LEAs	13	3	1	1	4	14
Yorkshire and Humber 15 LEAs	9	2	3	1		19
West Midlands 14 LEAs	7	2	1	2	2	7
East Midlands 9 LEAs	7	1			1	6
London 33 LEAs	18	7	2	1	5	25
South West 16 LEAs	10	1	1	3	1	23
South East 19 LEAs	13	4	1		1	13
North East 12 LEAs	8	1	1		2	7
East 10 LEAs	7	1	1	1		14
Total	92	22	11	9	16	128

3.1 Relationships between LEAs and parenting programmes

Although direct communication was established with all but 16 of the LEAs in England many were able to provide little information about the parenting programmes available in their area. Some were able to provide a list of parenting programmes but had little information about how the programmes operated, others were unable to complete the questionnaire because no information was available. Of those LEAs that did respond with information about parenting programmes, there was wide variability in the number of programmes reported. 32 LEAs (21%) listed one provider, 25 (17%) listed 2, 12 (8%) listed 3, 8 (5%) listed 5, 4 (3%) listed 4, 3 (2%) listed 6, while 7 and 8 were listed by only one LEA each. Overall, 64 LEAs (43%) provided no information about available programmes.

There was variability in the personnel with responsibility for parenting programmes within LEAs. The three most commonly reported responsible personnel were a senior level Education Officer (45% of responding sample), an Education Welfare Officer or Social Worker (23%) or a Service Manager (12%). The latter was often working in relation to social inclusion. 5 LEAs (5%) had personnel for whom parents or families were a key focus. Other personnel mentioned by less than 2% of LEAs included the Head of Behaviour Support Services, Head of School Plus, and the Youth Offending Team.

Several LEAs reported that they were rethinking their structures to enable them to appoint personnel with dedicated responsibilities for parenting programmes. In some cases Home School Liaison Co-ordinators were taking on this role. For instance, in one LEA, this role included disseminating information throughout the county about parenting programmes and supporting colleagues in the running of the courses. The LEA officer took the lead responsibility for parenting orders that came from the Legal Intervention Team. The Home-School Liaison Workers were based at the Primary and Secondary PRUs, the latter being part of the Behaviour Support Team. In many LEAs, the increased need for having access to parenting programmes had led to the interface between independent providers and LEAs becoming closer.

3.2 Organisations responsible for overseeing the programmes

The providers of parenting programmes were asked to state under the auspices of which organisations their programmes operated. Only two providers did not respond to this question. The details of the responses are given in Table 3. There was wide variation in the organisations under the auspices of which the programmes operated. The largest providers in the participating sample were Barnado's and Youth Offending Teams. Some respondents indicated the name of the programme rather than the particular overarching body. Details are provided in Table 2.

3.3 Co-ordination of parenting programmes

Overall, most LEAs had few, if any structures in place, in relation to the co-ordination of parenting programmes. However, there were a few exceptions to this. Some examples are given below.

Table 2: Organisations reported by LEAs to be running parenting programmes

Organisation/ Programme	Number of programmes	Percentage
Barnardos	17	13%
Youth Offending Team	17	13%
Family Centre	9	7%
Social Services	8	6%
Sure Start	7	5%
National Health Service Trust/ Counselling and Mental Health Services	7	5%
Behaviour Support Service	5	4%
Independent Parenting Provider	4	3%
Health Visitors/ Primary Care Trust	3	2%
Early Years provision	3	2%
Special Educational Needs/ Educational Psychology	3	2%
School	3	2%
Parent Partnership Service	2	2%
NCH	2	2%
NACRO	2	2%
Parent Support Group	2	2%
Educational Welfare Service	2	2%
Family Learning	2	2%
IAT and Adult and Community Learning Service	2	2%
Family Links	2	2%
Clinical Psychology Service	1	1%
Children's Society	1	1%
Playlines	1	1%
Curriculum Services	1	1%
YMCA	1	1%
Children's Fund	1	1%
Pupil Referral Unit	1	1%
Families and Young people services	1	1%
Promoting Effective Parenting	1	1%
Community Family Trust	1	1%
Parenting Network	1	1%
Relate	1	1%
Parent Care	1	1%
Parentline Plus	1	1%
Child Guidance	1	1%
Workers Educational Association	1	1%
Charity	1	1%
Family Matters	1	1%
Welcare	1	1%
Children's Services	1	1%
Family Focus Project	1	1%
Counselling and Parenting Support Service	1	1%
Adolescent Services	1	1%
Strengthening Families project	1	1%
Total	126	

* percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number

3.3.1 Case Study 1

In one County LEA, the Parenting and Family Learning Manager, who was part of the Early Years and Childcare Service, managed and supported projects which offered support to parents. A great many parenting programmes operated within the LEA run a by a wide range of different providers some on a voluntary basis. The most common was the Family Caring Trust which provided materials and guidebooks, and informal training through workshops. Some of these programmes were implemented through Family Centres, some by churches. The LEA periodically undertook a mapping exercise of the range of courses that were available. Health Visitors also organised a number of their own programmes often using Family Caring Trust as did the major hospital in the area. Overall, approximately 4000 parents a year attended a parenting programme, although even this level of provision was thought not to be sufficient, partly because attendance at most of these programmes had to be paid for by parents, although Family Links and Parent-Talk were free. The LEA would have liked to be able to run programmes in every school partnership area at no cost to parents so that parenting programmes would eventually become something that were an integral part of school life.

In the LEA, the Parenting and Family Learning Manager acted as a co-ordinator for programmes, managed the Parenting Forum Co-ordinator, oversaw training for people who worked with parents, and managed the Parent-Talk project and a team of home-school link workers who supported families whose children were not attending school or who were underachieving because of home issues. Supervision for Family Links was offered and help in setting up projects in schools. This was funded by the Children's Fund and targeted at deprived areas. Within the LEA the Family and Community Support Manager managed the Local Authority Family Centres, of which there were eight. There were service level agreements with nine others. Within the Community Learning Branch of the authority, which embraced adult education, youth work and early years and childcare, there was a Parent Education Development Team (PEDT). The budget for this group was largely from funding streams with a focused aim mainly from the Adult Education Department and the Early Years Childcare Service. There was no funding from the education budget. The PEDT was formed at a time of structural changes in the LEA and the International Year of the Family when such issues were high on the political agenda. The PEDT supported and advised on parenting programmes focusing on training and development, and promoting quality rather than actually running programmes. The exception was the Parent-Talk programme, which was managed by PEDT and subsidised by community learning. The LEA had several levels of provision, Parent-Talk, Family Links, an early education partnership for pre-school children and the Family Nurturing Network. The latter emerged from the same organisation as Family Links but adopted a more clinical psychological approach and developed specific programmes for parents and children where there were difficulties with behaviour. The programmes were free-standing and rooted in the Webster-Stratton model.

Referrals to the various aspects of provision were not routed through a central point. Parent-Talk had a specific pattern of referrals and these were referred to its director from a variety of sources including education. The Parenting Forum provided advice for those seeking programmes and PEDT directed parents to relevant organisations focusing on different levels of need and taking account of the age of the children. Parents with compulsory orders tended to be directed to Parent-Talk which was deliberately set up to meet this need, although some were referred to the Family Nurturing Network which was co-ordinated by the Youth Offending Team. The Youth Offending Team had set targets to be working with 10% of the parents of the pupils that they were working with. Funding for this high level of provision came from a range of

sources, for instance the Building Links Parent support worker was funded in part by Lloyds TSB.

The parenting forum which brought together all those involved in parenting education within the LEA was a voluntary body that had a remit to promote the development of parenting education, influencing county policy with regard to parents and children. It acted as a network for sharing information:

'The Parenting Forum was set up in order to co-ordinate, raise standards, promote quality and training and to encourage policies to change so that more funding could be secured for the future. What was really wanted was to get the main providers together and map out their areas of specialism in conjunction with the needs of parents to try to make sure that there was an entitlement in all areas of the county for this. As yet this has not been achieved – but there has been progress. It has taken the drive of social and health care, CAMHS to raise questions about the co-ordination of parenting programmes.'

Despite this degree of co-ordination and the high level of provision there were doubts as to whether it was sufficient to meet increasing demand.

3.3.2 Case Study 2
A metropolitan borough described a different approach to the development of parenting programme provision. Four years ago, a team of 12 from the LEA education team were trained to deliver a school based pupil nurturing programme and a parenting programme. The team initially delivered the programme twice each term, but after 18 months the schools were felt to be ready to take on the responsibility. More facilitators were trained drawn from a range of agencies including school nurses and community workers. Initial funding came from the Education Action Zone. More recently, funding for training facilitators has come through the Behaviour and Education Support Team (BEST), the Behaviour Improvement Programme and Sure Start. Each BEST (there are 3 in this LEA) had staff who were trained to deliver the programmes. For many of the BEST this was part of their induction. The BESTs promoted the programme and encouraged parents to attend. The CAMHS worker also made use of the programme materials in individual work with parents. This was very successful. Across the LEA all primary schools had received information about the school based nurturing programme for pupils. Ideally, school staff were trained in the nurturing programme and implemented this before the parenting programme was implemented, although this had not happened in practice. The school training involved two days of INSET. Schools were then primarily responsible for recruitment into the programme.

Both the pupil and parents programmes followed the Family Links Nurturing Programme. The material for the programme was derived from the book "The Parenting Puzzle" – written by Family Links (Hunt and Mountford, 2003). The programme was based on ten sessions and focused on giving praise, family rules, self-esteem, choices and consequences, using "I" statements, nurturing ourselves, children's development, sexual issues, problem-solving and taking stock. The Nurturing Programme, drawing on the work of Stephen Bavelok in the US, was based on four ideas (the Four Constructs): self-awareness and self-esteem, appropriate expectations, empathy and positive discipline. All the facilitators were very positive about the programme, the book and the training received. As an organisation, Family Links is well structured and has facilitators delivering the programme throughout the country. In each geographical area there is a Family Links Co-ordinator. In this LEA, the co-ordinator was also the Area Co-ordinator for BEST. The programme co-ordinator oversaw the work of the facilitators and ensured that supervision was in place. The Education Action Zone bought in the supervision, but the LEA was exploring the possibility that some of the current facilitators could train as supervisors. All facilitators received supervision twice during

the duration of each course. The number of parents attending courses was monitored, the course was publicised within the LEA and the co-ordinator also spent time with schools which were proposing to implement the programme. Ideally, the parenting programme is school based and the school also implements the Nurturing Programme for pupils. However, in this LEA, although the LEA does have a nurturing programme, it was implemented in different schools to the parenting programme.

Two parenting programmes from this LEA were explored in more detail, one in an infant school and the other based in a community centre. The infant school programme was well appreciated by staff and there were no difficulties in recruiting parents. Most attending parents were self-recruited but in some cases the head teacher targeted and encouraged parents to attend whom she felt would benefit. Some of the parents attended the course twice, the first attendance addressed issues while the second enabled consolidation of ideas and deeper reflection on practice. These parents also acted as buddies/mentors for new parents to the group. Parents were offered incentives to attend - a £5 Boots token for attendance for the first four weeks, bubble bath in the nurturing yourself session and board games for parents to play with their families (Sure Start funded). On completing the course all parents were awarded a certificate, which was presented in the school assembly. Pupils reported feeling a great sense of pride when their mothers received a certificate. A crèche was provided (funded by Sure Start). This was seen as crucial in facilitating attendance.

The second programme visited was based in a community centre and drew in a wide range of parents and carers, including grandparents, and some who worked with children professionally, e.g. a teacher and a youth worker. Recruitment was through advertising within the community and the vicar (female), who facilitated the programme and encouraged her congregation to attend. The different experiences of attendees were reported to have engendered an interesting exchange of ideas based on experiences with children of different ages. The programme ran during the evenings.

Both facilitators felt that the programmes were life-changing experiences for participants. Family life came to be viewed as being fun. The head teacher of the infant school was confident of the impact and cited recent difficulties at the related junior school where parents who had attended the course did not respond aggressively to a difficult situation but in measured terms. The groups were seen to empower parents who often went on to take other courses, e.g. computer studies, first aid. Parents' self-esteem and self-beliefs had changed as a result of attendance and had become more positive.

3.3.3 Case Study 3
In contrast, one unitary authority had developed its own set of programmes, Parenting Plus, in conjunction with the Educational Psychologists, Primary Integration Team, a Teacher and the Co-ordinator of Adult Education. The programme had been running for four years and was being updated. The courses offered were:
- Coping with kids - A Fresh Start – for under 4's
- Coping with kids - Getting it Right – for 4 – 8 years
- Coping with kids - We're Good Enough Parents – for 8 – 16 years
Other courses offered included Confidence Building, The Importance of Play, and Healthy Eating. The programmes for the younger children were based on the Webster-Stratton model. The programmes were modified as necessary depending on the needs of the parents participating in each course. The facilitators of the courses assisted parents in identifying and contacting other agencies where necessary.

When parents started one of these programmes an education plan was completed which considered short and long-term goals. This was revisited at the beginning, middle and end of the course. On completing the course an exit strategy was considered and

future plans made. This was completed with the tutor on a one-to-one basis. The course concluded with a celebration when certificates were given out. The 'Coping with Kids' course led to a Level 1 (ONC) accreditation. The programmes were promoted through outreach workers in the community, general advertising in the local newspaper, at health centres, in childcare settings and through national and local newsletters. Information was also sent out to parents already on the database.

Some courses were over subscribed and parents were on waiting lists. This was often because of the limited number of crèche places available within the facilities of the building being used. Each course catered for between 6 – 8 parents. Parents were referred through Social Services, YOT, EWS, Health, Young Persons Centre (drugs), Teenage Pregnancy, GPs, and CAMHS. Parents who were referred by support services did not engage with the course as fully as those who self-referred. The outcomes for the latter were usually more positive. The programmes were funded through Adult Education, the Learning and Skills Council, Health and Social Care, and the Education Welfare Service. The funding was reported as being inadequate to meet needs.

3.3.4 Case Study 4
The issues arising in relation to providing parenting programmes in rural LEAs differed from those in urban areas. One rural County LEA was divided into 3 areas with three programmes each year provided jointly in each area by the YOT and EWS teams. There was a volunteer driver who took parents to the programmes. The provision of transport and crèche facilities was viewed as crucial in this rural environment. The venues for the programmes were moved around within each area to provide opportunities for different parents to attend more easily. Some of the parents had previously had bad experiences with outside agencies and held a very negative view of authority.

3.4 Raising the profile of parenting programmes

There was consensus among LEAs and programme providers that parenting programmes should be given a higher profile. Parents needed to be made aware of the availability of programmes in such a way that it was clear that they were not only for parents who were experiencing difficulties with their children. Schools were seen as one avenue for disseminating information. Some LEAs were making progress towards this end:

'One difficulty that is becoming less, particularly in areas where things happen quite regularly, is people's perception of what a parenting programme is. Whether it is something for bad parents to go to. Now we have a culture in lots of parts of the LEA where this is not the case. (Parenting Programme Provider)

3.5 Funding

LEAs were asked how the parenting programmes were funded. 46 LEAs responded to this question (31%). Figure 1 illustrates the proportions of funding derived from different sources. 11% of all LEAs indicated that their funding came from the LEA, 9% did not specify the sources of their funding, 8% indicated that they had no funding, 7% indicated that funding came from Youth Offending Teams, 6% from the Children's Fund, and 5% from Social Services. 2% received funding from the Behaviour Improvement Programme. Other sources, for a very small number of LEAs, included the Family Learning Budget, Sure Start, Relate, the Parent Partnership Fund and the Adult Education Budget.

Figure 1: LEA reported sources of funding
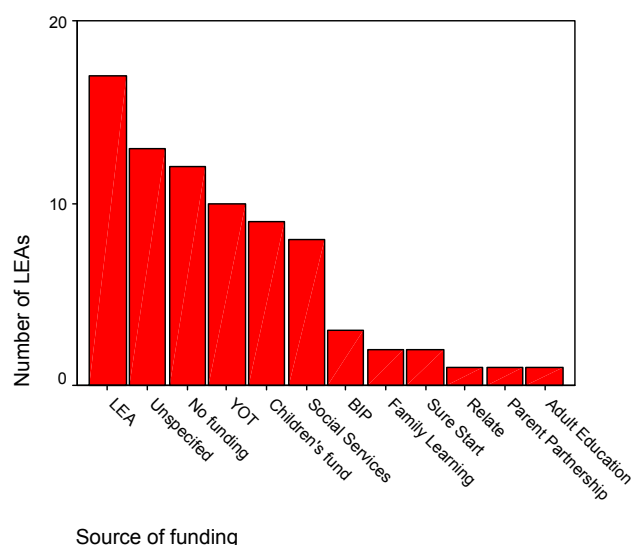
Providers were asked how their programmes were funded. The key funders were Social Services (21%), The Children's Fund (19%), Youth Offending Team (16%), the LEA (16%) the NHS (14%), Sure Start (13%) and Barnado's (12%). Other funding came from a wide range of sources (see Table 3).

The variability of sources of funding was confirmed in the field work. Concerns were expressed about the transitory nature of funding from the various sources, its lack of stability and the need to constantly seek out new sources. The single biggest issue raised with regard to funding was that it was inadequate to satisfy demand and need. Some providers indicated that as referrals were made by a range of agencies they should all contribute to the funding.

To overcome funding difficulties some programmes were exploring the use of peer-support which was less expensive. Another route was through Family Centres. This was less costly because staff were already experienced and could take on the facilitator role as part of their normal work. The more organisations where employees ran parenting programmes as part of their normal work the cheaper it became.

Some providers made a small charge for attendance at programmes unless parents were on income support in which case they did not pay. However, the success of programmes in reaching some groups of parents was reported to depend on there being no charge for attendance. Those in most need often would be unable to pay and charging would be a major deterrent to attendance. A further difficulty was providing funding to support parent's attendance, for example for transport and crèche facilities.

Table 3: Sources of funding for parenting programmes

Funder	Number of programmes	Percentage of participating sample
Social Services	27	21%
The Children's Fund	24	19%
YOT	21	16%
LEA funding	20	16%
Health/NHS trust	18	14%
Sure Start	16	13%
Barnado's	15	12%
Youth Justice Board	8	6%
Adult Education	6	5%
Self funding	6	5%
Behaviour Improvement Programme	4	3%
Schools	4	3%
CAMHS	4	3%
Education Department Funding	3	2%
Standards Funding	3	2%
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	2	2%
Community safety/education	2	2%
Long Life Learning	2	2%
NCH	2	2%
Wider Family Learning	1	1%
Basic Skills	1	1%
Education Action Zone	1	1%
Other	37	29%
No funding available	5	4%

3.6 Impact of the Anti-social Behaviour Act

LEAs were unsure about the impact of the Anti-social Behaviour Act on the provision of parenting programmes. There was an expectation that it would lead to more compulsory orders. At the time of the research these were very few. There was concern that, if the number of referrals of any type increased dramatically, there would be insufficient places on programmes. 40 LEAs indicated that they were experiencing difficulties in relation to the provision of sufficient parenting programmes (27%), although 45% of providers indicated that there were sufficient programmes to satisfy demand. Associated reported difficulties included transport, venues for programmes, providing crèche facilities and recruiting experienced facilitators. Eight LEAs reported that they had waiting lists for existing programmes. Despite this, some LEAs were broadly supportive of the move towards more compulsory orders:

'I think the general impression of parenting orders is that they are not as damning as they might first feel. If you approach them in the right way, in a very supportive, non-judgmental way, and are prepared to be flexible to meet parents' needs, they can benefit and do benefit. I don't think it is necessarily a bad thing to have more parenting orders. If it gives some parents a push to attend a course then so be it. I'd much rather we did it voluntarily. But there are some parents who don't listen.' (Education Welfare Officer)

3.7 Summary

The findings reported in this chapter indicate that there was considerable variability in the number and type of parenting programmes to which LEAs had access. While for most LEAs the infrastructure relating to parenting programmes was under-developed and fragile, with poor links between the LEA and providers, there were examples of good practice. In some LEAs parenting programmes were provided through the

voluntary sector but co-ordinated at LEA level, in others the LEA supported the co-ordinating process but was not responsible for it, while some LEAs provided their own parenting programmes. In the LEAs which constituted examples of good practice, programmes were available which addressed issues for parents of children at different ages and different levels of need. There was variability between LEAs in the personnel with responsibilities for parenting issues. Many had considerable responsibilities elsewhere and in some LEAs no individual had overall responsibility. Funding came from a wide variety of different sources and was transitory in nature and inadequate to satisfy need. To date there have been relatively few compulsory parenting orders made in relation to education and LEAs felt that the Anti-social Behaviour Act would lead to greater demand for parenting programmes. Most felt unable to meet this demand.

Chapter 4

The set up of programmes and referral procedures

This chapter will report the findings relating to the number of parenting programmes available in LEAs, provision for parents attending compulsorily and voluntarily, for parents of children of different ages, and for different types of parents. It will also consider the criteria for referral adopted by LEAs and parenting programme providers.

4.1 Number of programmes being run by providers

There was wide variation in the number of programmes being run by different providers. 91% (117) of providers offered this information. Almost half (43%) reported that they only ran one programme, 18% each reported that they ran 2 or 3 programmes, while 9% reported that they ran 4 programmes (9%). Decreasing percentages ran 5 (4%) and 6 programmes (3%), while two providers reported running 10 and 15 programmes each.

4.2 Provision for parents attending compulsorily or voluntarily

LEAs were asked if separate provision was available for parents attending compulsorily or voluntarily. Only 36 LEAs responded to this question. 13 (9% of all LEAs) reported that they had specific programmes for those attending voluntarily rather than compulsorily. A similar question to providers revealed that only 3% of those responding (6 providers) ran separate classes for voluntary and compulsory referrals. Overall, programmes did not differentiate provision on the basis of the nature of the referral. Parents attended the same programmes whether they were referred voluntarily or as the result of a compulsory order. This was supported by the evidence from the fieldwork. In most programmes very few parents had been ordered to attend. Referrals were generally made before parents were taken to court. As there were very few compulsory orders, in practical terms it was not possible to run courses solely for those ordered to attend. Parents referred compulsorily were reported to have more negative attitudes initially than those referred voluntarily. Providers reported that integration of those on compulsory orders could be successful providing that the parents had the opportunity to express their anger and frustration, preferably in individual meetings prior to the start of the group programme. The skill of the facilitator was important in maintaining their engagement during the programme. Usually, those on compulsory orders were told that it was up to them whether they wished to share the status of their referral with other group members. The mixture of compulsory and voluntary referrals seemed to work well in most cases, for example:

'It has been positive that voluntary and ordered parents are attending the same programme. During the current programme both parents ordered to attend shared this with the group during the third week – this had been unanticipated by the providers. This led to another parent speaking about the support that she had received from a Family Conference, and rather than the ordered parent feeling that she was always being 'done to', she began to consider whether she might seek additional help. This was quite a change. It may be that the mother will now seek help rather than have it foisted on her.' (Facilitator)

Some providers reported being cautious about including compulsory referrals in voluntary groups and generally approached each case on its merits.

'You have to be careful when you have a parent at that level joining a group. You have a chance of a reasonable role model, but sometimes the parents can be quite intimidating and I suspect might cause the other parents some difficulties' (Parenting

Programme Provider).

There were some programmes exclusively for parents attending compulsorily but these were related to youth offending and not education. In some cases parents referred on a compulsory order were seen on a one-to-one basis. A few programmes focused on parents with extreme and complex needs where it was felt that a different kind of approach was needed. These programmes tended to be small (perhaps 4 parents) and participants were selected to share similar types of problems.

When parenting programmes were hosted by schools, typically, attendance was voluntary and all parents were invited and welcomed into the programme. In some schools parallel courses were run for children. In those cases, teachers encouraged parents to attend the programme because their children were doing it. As programmes developed within the school traditions developed, and parents often asked to attend. In the longer term this had an impact on the whole school. Some parents actively sought out support. In some cases, the parents that the school would have liked to attend were the ones who did not attend. Some parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs felt that they had particular problems and that the same principles did not apply to them as other parents and children. Providers disagreed with this. Overall, persuading parents to attend programmes was viewed as problematic:

'Stepping Stones is proactive in advertising courses in school newsletters and at transition evenings held in secondary schools. There remain difficulties in reaching some parents. In one school where a course was being set up, 30 parents were specifically targeted having previously spoken to Learning Support Assistants or other members of staff in requesting help with parenting. Of the 30 only 2 came forward to the course.'(Parenting Programme Provider)

Forty three LEAs responded to a question asking if they experienced difficulties in engaging parents. Of these only 9 said that they did. 6 LEAs indicated that they found difficulties in meeting the needs of parents, 3 indicated that attracting families at risk was a problem, while 1 LEA stated that they had difficulties in establishing groups or parents.

4.3 Programmes for parents of children of different ages

LEAs were asked if they had provision for parents of children of different ages. Only 36 LEAs responded to this question. 7% of LEAs (11) indicated that they provided programmes for the parents of children of 5 years and under, 22% (33) reported that they provided programmes for the parents of pupils aged 5-12 and 11-17 years. When providers of programmes were asked the same question 69% responded (89). 54 (42% of all providers) indicated that they ran programmes for parents of the under fives, 51 (40% of all providers) ran programmes for parents of children aged 5-11 and 54 (42%) indicated that they provided programmes for parents of children aged 12-17. Overall, there seemed to be insufficient provision at LEA level to satisfy the needs of parents with children of different ages.

4.4 Programmes for different types of parents

Providers of parenting programmes were asked if they ran programmes for different types of parent. 29 providers indicated that they ran single gender programmes (23%), 46 held programmes for parents of different ages (36%), while 52 indicated that they provided programmes for children and parents with different needs (41%).

Some providers had programmes for groups of parents with different levels of problems:

'For Mellow Parenting the parents must be experiencing:
- *parenting difficulties or relationship problems, including child protection issues;*
- *family violence;*
- *or at least two of the following (a) child behaviour problem (b) mother with mental health problems (c) difficulties with current family relationships or with family or origin.*

For the Positive Parenting Programme the parents must be experiencing parenting difficulties alone'. (Parenting Programme Provider)

Another provider offered *Coping with Kids* which anybody could attend, *Promoting Play* where the provider did a home visit to assess the situation and the *Parent Child Game* where there was an initial individual appointment and parents had to be motivated to attend.

4.5 Longevity of programmes

LEAs reported considerable variation in the longevity of programmes. One programme was reported as having been running for nine years while one had only been running for 6 months. Most had been running for 1 (7 LEAs), 2 (6 LEAs), or 3 years (7 LEAs). Similar variability was reported by providers with a range from 4 months to 20 years.

4.6 Referrals to programmes

LEAs were asked if parents could self-refer to the programmes. 58 LEAs responded to this question. Of those, 27 LEAs (47% of responding LEAs) indicated that parents could self-refer. 91 providers (71%) indicated that parents could self-refer to programmes.

LEAs and providers were asked how parents were referred to programmes. 10 LEAs (7% of all LEAs) said that referrals could be made through the Youth Offending Team, 40 indicated that referrals were made through the LEA (27%), 15 (10%) reported that referrals were made through the courts. 14 LEAs (9%) reported that referrals were made through schools, while 8 LEAs (5%) reported that referrals were made through Social Services. Only 1 LEA reported that referrals were made through the PRU (1%). Three reported that referrals were made through the school nurse (2%), 1 LEA reported that referrals were made through Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCAs) (1%), 3 through CAMHS (2%), 5 through Health Visitor Services (3%), and 10 from other unspecified sources (7%). Providers were also asked how parents were referred to the programmes. There were 125 responses to this question. The details of the responses are set out in Table 4. Most referrals were made through a range of health or social services related agencies.

One question asked specifically whether LEAs referred parents whose children had attendance or behavioural problems. 110 providers responded to this question. Of those 63 indicated that they did (57%). This constituted 33% of the participating sample.

Table 4: Sources of referral as reported by parenting providers

Source of referral	Number of responses	Percentage
Self-referral	91	71%
Social Services	88	69%
Health Visitors	71	55%
LEA	55	43%
Schools	51	40%
Youth Offending Team	31	24%
General Practitioners	21	16%
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Workers	18	14%
Voluntary sector	17	13%
School Nurse	10	8%
Sure Start	9	7%
Courts	7	5%
Police	6	5%
Social and Health Care	4	3%
Educational Psychologists	4	3%
Youth Justice System	3	2%
Educational and Behavioural Difficulties Workers	3	2%
Teenage Pregnancy Unit	2	2%
Multi agency	2	2%
GRIP	1	1%
Other	30	23%

*Respondents were able to provide more than one response. Percentages therefore total more than 100%

4.7 LEA Criteria for referrals

LEAs and providers were asked if they had criteria for referring parents to programmes. 30 LEAs (13%) responded, 23 (15% of all LEAs) indicating that they did. The field work revealed that the criteria which LEAs indicated that they used for selecting parents to be referred to programmes were in the first place related to the child and his/her behaviour, the extent to which s/he was seen as being out of parental control, the extent to which behaviour was seen to be preventing the child's access to the curriculum, the possible risk of the child being excluded from school, poor attendance at school, and the prevention of anti-social behaviour. In some cases referral was related to a compulsory order made by the courts, but this was rare. LEAs preferred to refer parents on a voluntary basis before cases reached the point where legal proceedings were instituted. Programme facilitators believed it was advantageous to have self-referring parents. However, a mixture of self-referrals and ordered parents was welcomed since this encompassed parents with a range of experience and backgrounds that was seen as valuable in group work.

In most LEAs, parents needed to live or, in some cases work, within the appropriate geographical area. The sources of referral within LEAs varied but might include the school, the Behaviour Support Team, the Education Welfare Service, as a result of child protection issues or on the basis of the child's vulnerability. Generally, LEAs reported consideration of each individual case. Referrals to particular programmes depended on the age of the child because of the age related nature of the programmes. In some cases parenting programme providers set criteria which needed to be satisfied. LEAs also took account, in many cases, of parents' requests to receive help and support, their need for help specifically with parenting skills, their willingness to attend, their commitment to attend throughout the whole course, and the extent to which attendance at the programme was due to poor family relationships and lack of communication.

Where parents were ordered to attend each individual case tended to be assessed in terms of whether group work or one-to-one tutoring would be most appropriate. There were also issues relating to the availability of programmes for parents ordered to attend. There were sometimes difficulties because programmes were not available in the

appropriate location. If a programme was soon to be available parents were sometimes put on a waiting list. If no programme was to run in a nearby area then one-to-one support might be offered. Usually, LEAs preferred group work as it was perceived as more effective educationally and financially. Overall, there had been few compulsory parenting orders relating to non-attendance or poor behaviour at school. It was therefore rare for programmes to be set up exclusively for parents with compulsory education orders.

4.8 Criteria set by programme providers

Programme providers were asked if they had specific criteria for referral. 118 providers responded to this question, 66 (35%) indicating that they had specific criteria for referrals. The criteria set by the parenting programme providers were in many respects similar to those set by the LEAs. The age of the child had to be appropriate for the particular programme being attended by his or her parents. The parent had to live in a particular geographical area and in some cases be in an area where a particular government initiative was operating, e.g. Sure Start. Some programme providers insisted that parents had appropriate arrangements for travel. In some cases, the child's behaviour had to fit a particular category, e.g. non-attendance, at risk of offending. Some programmes stipulated that the parents themselves must be struggling to cope with their child's behaviour, that there were relationship problems and a lack of communication, that there was a genuine need, that violence had been identified as an issue, or that the mother had mental health problems. Some providers would not work with parents who were already engaged with social workers. Some would not include parents in the same programme where the relationship between them was in crisis. Where violence was an issue most providers required an assessment of the situation to see if group work was appropriate or whether it might be better for individual work to be undertaken with the parent. In cases where the parents were experiencing a range of distressing circumstances, individual support was sometimes given. Parents attending group programmes had to indicate their agreement to confidentiality procedures:

'The parent must agree with the referral, and must attend an interview prior to the group to discuss confidentiality. We describe the group process and establish what the parent wants i.e. goals. Our assessment is confidential and not provided by us to the referring agency, unless there are crime or child protection implications.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Some programmes excluded particular groups of parents where the family difficulties extended beyond parenting, for instance, mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, sexual abuse or complete family breakdown, for example one provider indicated:

'It would not be appropriate for us to accept a referral if the following circumstances currently apply:
- *If there is severe concern about mental illness in the parent/s or carer/s*
- *If the parent/carer is currently abusing drugs or alcohol in a way which would affect their attendance*
- *If there has been sexual abuse of the children - this needs to be dealt with first before referring the family*
- *If the family is in a crisis or in a stage of transition that would make it difficult for them to make a 9 week commitment.*
Also, we do not cater for the 'worried well' parent who might feel uncomfortable in the group because of the extent of the problems of other parents present.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Some Centres worked closely with Social Services in identifying family needs. In some

cases parenting programme providers expected work to have already been undertaken by primary care/tier one services. In one case, the length of the waiting list meant that the referring agency was asked to continue to provide support to the family until a place became available. Some providers insisted that the referring agency must be committed to providing ongoing field support. Most providers indicated that there must be at least a willingness on the part of the parent to attend. If they were interested, prepared to take responsibility for their behaviour and prepared to change this was very helpful and in some cases a requirement for attendance.

In contrast, some providers were prepared to take any parent who expressed interest and groups might include a mixture of parents, single partners, even grand-parents. Such programmes were open to the whole community and had much broader aims, for example:

'to promote healthy relationships, in a preventative way, rather than being crisis management driven. It is important that all parties (especially the participants) understand that this is a community led initiative to support and encourage parents in their role as a parent, in a fun and informative way, and to facilitate group discussion.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Where programmes were school based, parents appreciated the approach to attend a programme coming from the school with an open invitation. This removed any sense of stigmatization or failure.

4.9 Summary

In summary, there was wide variation between the number and type of programmes available in each LEA. Provision for parents self-referred, referred by others voluntarily or compulsorily was usually mixed. Parents referred compulsorily could be integrated successfully into more general parenting programmes providing that they had been offered support prior to the commencement of the programme and that the facilitators were sufficiently skilled. A few programmes were designed to cater for the needs of particular groups of parents but these were relatively rare, and where parents were experiencing serious difficulties one-to-one provision was often made. Decisions of this nature depended on the assessment of the individual case. Most LEAs had provision for the parents of children of different ages and some were developing programmes designed to address issues relating specifically to education, but most provision was of a more general nature. Referrals were made through a wide range of agencies. 33% of providers indicated that they had referrals relating to behaviour and attendance at school. The criteria for referral to parenting programmes related to parental need. Some providers excluded particular groups of very needy parents or required them to be receiving support from other agencies. Some programmes accepted any parents who genuinely wished to improve their parenting skills.

Chapter 5

Participants and drop-outs

This chapter describes the findings relating to the number of parents participating in parenting programmes and the characteristics of those attending compulsorily or voluntarily. It reports the ways in which programmes encourage participation and explores the proportion of drop outs from programmes and why participants drop out.

5.1 Number of parents participating in parenting programmes

Only 34 LEAs were able to provide figures for the number of parents referred to parenting programmes. The number varied from none to 448 with a mean of 42. This variation depended, in part, on the size of the LEA but also on local policies regarding referrals. When parenting programme providers were asked how many parents were attending each programme 124 responded. There was wide variation. The minimum on a programme was 4, the maximum was 35. The most common responses were 10 parents (29%), 12 parents (27%), 8 parents (13%) and 15 parents (9%).

5.2 Compulsory parenting orders

54 LEAs (36%) responded to questions regarding the number of parents who had received compulsory orders in the last academic year. Of these the majority (19 LEAs, 13% of all LEAs) reported that no parents had been issued with compulsory orders. 7 (5%) reported that two compulsory orders had been issued, 6 (4%) that 6 compulsory orders had been made, 5 (3%) that one had been issued, 4 (3%) that 4 had been issued, and 3 (2%) that 3 had been issued. Two (1%) reported that 5 and 9 had been issued, while individual LEAs (.5% each) reported that 7, 8, 12, 14, 17 and 18 compulsory orders had been made. Overall, there were very few compulsory orders. The number of parents attending programmes following receipt of compulsory orders was also reported by LEAs to be low. 26 LEAs responded to this question. Of these 5 (3% of all LEAs) reported that 2 parents had attended, 4 LEAs reported that 1 and 6 had attended (3% each), 3 LEAs (2% each) reported that 0 and 4 parents had attended. 2 LEAS (1%) reported that 5 parents had attended and single LEAs (.5% each) reported that 3, 8, 9, 10 and 12 parents had attended.

Programme providers were also asked how many parents in receipt of compulsory orders had attended programmes. 77 providers responded to this question. Most indicated that no parents who had been issued with compulsory orders were currently attending programmes (32, 42% of responding sample). However, a small number of programmes were catering for substantial numbers of parents with compulsory orders but the number of parents referred on compulsory education related orders was relatively few. One programme had had 14 referrals but most providers who responded had none (15, 36% of the responding sample). Out of the total number of programmes participating in the survey only 21% had received compulsory education related referrals. The number of parents with compulsory orders referred to the programmes by the LEA was very small. Only 18 responding providers (14% of the participating sample) had received referrals from the LEA. When asked about the number of parents with education-related orders actually attending programmes 30 responses were made (23% of the participating sample). Of those responding, 33% indicated that they had no parents attending with education-related compulsory orders. A similar number of programmes (31) reported parents attending in response to other kinds of compulsory orders. Overall, 19% of the participating sample reported that parents on non-education related orders were attending their programme.

5.2.1 Gender differences in compulsory orders

25 LEAs (17% of all LEAs) indicated that females had received compulsory parenting orders. The responses indicating whether they were actually attending a parenting programme were too few to be reliable. Twenty eight providers indicated that females in receipt of compulsory orders had been referred to their programmes (22% of the total participating population). A total of 17 programmes provided information about how many females with compulsory orders were actually attending classes. The range was from 1 to 17 with most programmes having a single individual attending compulsorily.

LEAs were asked how many males had been referred to programmes as a result of a compulsory order. Of the 20 LEAs responding to this question, 14 reported that there were no males referred, 3 reported that 2 males were referred, 2 that 1 male was referred and 1 that 3 males were referred. Overall, 8 LEAs (5% of all LEAs) reported that males compulsorily referred were actually attending programmes. 18 providers responded to a question asking if males had been referred to programmes on compulsory orders. Of these 8 indicated that they had not. Overall, only 6% of participating providers indicated that males had been compulsorily ordered to attend a parenting programme. When asked if the males on compulsory orders actually attended the classes 13 providers responded positively. This represented 10% of the participating sample.

5.2.2 Ethnicity

When asked how many parents from minority ethnic groups were attending programmes compulsorily responses were received from 16 LEAs. Only 1 indicated that parents from minority ethnic groups were attending a programme compulsorily. Two providers indicated that they had specific provision for minority ethnic groups (2% of the participating population). 12 indicated that they had parents from minority ethnic groups attending programmes who had compulsory orders (9% of the participating sample).

5.3 Voluntary referrals to parenting programmes

5.3.1 Numbers of voluntary referrals

When asked about voluntary referrals to parenting programmes 34 LEAs responded. The number of voluntary referrals varied from 0 (8 LEAs) to 350 (1 LEA) with a mean of 46. LEAs were asked how many voluntary referrals related to attendance issues. Twenty three LEAs responded to this question. The mean was 12. Seven LEAs reported that parents were voluntarily referred to programmes for reasons other than attendance (5%) usually behaviour. LEAs were asked how many of those referred voluntarily were actually attending programmes. 19 LEAs responded to this question (13% of all LEAs). There was wide variation between LEAs.

99 providers (77%) indicated the number of voluntary referrals that they had had in 2002-2003. The responses ranged from 0 to 800. Six providers reported 50, 5 providers reported 20, four providers reported 10, 12, 30 and 100. The mean was 68. 81 providers (63%) indicated how many LEA referrals had been made on a voluntary basis. 50 (39%) reported that they had received none. There was wide variation in responses from 0 to 60 with a mean of 7. Only 2 providers indicated that they had referrals from other agencies (21% of the participating sample). When asked how many of those attending voluntarily actually attended 70 providers responded (55%). The responses varied from 1 to 143. The mean was 28.

Evidence from the field work indicated the difficulties experienced in persuading some parents to attend parenting programmes, for example:

'Some of them are non-engagable, they really are. It is very difficult. You can just keep

on trying and that is all you can do. Sometimes if an official route is put before a parent they will go voluntarily, i.e. if you don't do this we will go down a court route. They may then attend the course, which is a way of getting officials off their backs. Sometimes you can persuade them to do things but some of them are just unreachable. We need to be a bit pragmatic about it. We will not get to them all but we can keep trying.'(Parenting Programme Provider)

5.3.2. Gender differences in voluntary referrals

19 LEAs (13%) indicated that females were referred to parenting programmes on a voluntary basis. Only 9 LEAs (6%) responded to the question regarding the number of female voluntary referrals who were actually attending programmes. The range was from 1 to 61 with a mean of 13. 90 providers indicated that females were voluntarily referred to their programmes (70%). 31 provided information about the number of female voluntary referrals who actually attended the programmes (24%). There was wide variation in the numbers reported from 1 to 129 with a mean of 28.

11 LEAs responded to the question asking if males were referred to parenting programmes voluntarily. Of those 7 (5% of all LEAs) indicated that they were. 10 LEAs provided figures for the number of males actually attending programmes voluntarily. Figures ranged from 0 (5 LEAs) to 12 (one LEA) with a mean of 2. 47 providers (37%) indicated that males were voluntarily referred to their programmes. 35 providers (27%) gave information about the number of voluntary male attenders. 10 indicated that they had no male voluntary referrals (8%). In contrast, one programme had 17 voluntary male attenders.

5.3.3.Ethnicity

9 LEAs (6%) responded to a question regarding the voluntary referral of parents from minority ethnic groups. 6 (4%) indicated that those from minority ethnic groups were referred voluntarily to attend programmes. Only 1 LEA indicated that they had specific programmes for those from minority ethnic groups. 4 providers indicated that they had provision for minority ethnic groups to attend programmes (3%) and 35 providers indicated that they had referrals from voluntary minority ethnic groups actually attending programmes (27%).

5.4 Age

LEAs were asked whether parents of different ages were sent to different parenting programmes. Only 18 LEAs (12%) responded to this question. Of those only 2 (1%) indicated that there was provision for parents of different ages in available programmes.

5.5 Encouraging attendance at programmes

During the field work, one of the greatest operational difficulties reported by providers was getting parents to engage with the programmes and attend in the first place. In the current climate, attendance at a programme indicated some kind of inadequacy in parenting. A change of culture was needed so that it became a normal practice for parents to attend some kind of programme. Related to this were difficulties with child care, finding baby sitters, providing crèche facilities and providing transport. The latter was particularly relevant in rural LEAs. There were also issues of providing appropriate facilities for parents with disabilities.

Providers were very aware that the parents who would most benefit did not attend programmes. For some of these hard to reach parents attending a group was very challenging. Their lack of self-esteem and confidence was a barrier. For some, the commitment to a long programme was problematic as they were unused to regular

routines and many were at work. There were also reports that some children were reluctant for their parents to attend.

5.6 Drop outs

Only 20 LEAs responded to the question asking how many parents in receipt of compulsory orders had dropped out. Of these 50% (10 LEAs) indicated that no parents had dropped out. 6 indicated that one parent had dropped out (30%). Two LEAs reported that 2 parents had dropped out, one that 3 had dropped out and 1 that 6 had dropped out. 34 providers responded to the question regarding the drop out rate of those in receipt of compulsory orders. 20 indicated that they had no drop outs (16% of the participating sample), while other programmes reported higher levels to a maximum of 7.

LEAs were asked to give an indication of the number of voluntary referrals who dropped out of programmes. 19 LEAs responded to this question (13%). Of these 6 reported no drop-outs. In some cases the number of drop outs was high, although this has to be viewed within the context of the number of referrals. 64 providers responded to a question about the number of voluntary referrals who dropped out (59%). 9 of those indicated that there were no drop-outs (7%). The range was from 1 to 33 with a mean of 5.

The parenting programmes that were visited during the fieldwork had low drop-out rates. One mother of a child with profound special needs dropped out because, compared with other parents, she was having limited success with her child. His special needs related to relationship difficulties and at school he had a Learning Support Assistant with him all day.   The facilitator phoned her to talk things over and she did return for the last three sessions. On another programme, two parents dropped out because they were uncomfortable with the Circle Time at the end of each session. Later, one of these parents signed up for the next course. Similarly, another parent dropped out because she did not like having to share issues with others. In another case the illness of a relative of the mother, inappropriate timing of the programme for the father and difficulties getting baby sitters made attendance impossible. This family was considering returning to the programme.

The programmes visited adopted a range of strategies to ensure good attendance. They visited parents prior to the start of the programme, followed up non-attendance immediately to explore the reasons for it and in some cases provided one-to-one support where group work was not appropriate. Providers admitted that in some cases they were not able to prevent drop out and that they were sometimes surprised by which parents dropped out.

5.7 Summary

The low response rates to questions regarding participation in parenting programmes from LEAs and providers made it difficult to draw any conclusions about the type of parents attending parenting programmes. There was no reliable information about the number of parents referred voluntarily or self-referred and the number of parents referred compulsorily was very small. The data revealed wide differences in the overall number of parents attending programmes between providers and LEAs. The figures from LEAs for those voluntarily referred ranged from 0 to 350 while for providers from 0 to 800. This reflects the diverse nature of the types of programmes operating and the size of the LEAs. There was agreement that it was difficult to persuade parents to join parenting programmes. In the current climate, attendance at a programme indicated some kind of inadequacy in parenting. A change of culture was needed so that it became normal practice for parents to attend some kind of programme. Most providers

in the survey reported substantial drop out rates, although the programmes that were visited during the field work had low rates because of the particular strategies that they adopted to ensure attendance.

Chapter 6

Types of programmes

This chapter considers the types of programme offered and describes examples of good practice operated by LEAs, schools and other parenting programme providers.

6.1 Approaches adopted to delivering parenting programmes

Forty four LEAs (29%) responded to questions about the models underpinning the teaching methods adopted. 8 (18%) had their own LEA model. 7 of those responding (16%) indicated that the Webster-Stratton model was adopted while a further 7 LEAs (27%) stated that different curriculum approaches were adopted for different types of problems. 4 (9%) adopted a Cognitive Behaviourist approach, 4 (9%) the 'Making Changes' model, 3 (7%) Positive Parenting, 3 (7%) the Living with Teenagers approach, 3 (7%) the Family Caring Trust model, and 2 (5%) the Let's Talk' approach. Single LEAs (2% each) reported adopting a Systematic Counseling approach, the Parent Plus approach, the Teaching Protective Behaviour model, the National Child Care Training Format, the Stepping Stones approach, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. One-to-one teaching was adopted by 8 LEAs (18%) and other unnamed methods by 13 (30%).

Providers were asked to give an indication of the models which underpinned their teaching approaches. Table 5 indicates the responses that they gave and the proportions of programmes adopting different approaches. There was variety in the type of responses made, some referred to types of programme, others to the methods adopted. 21 (16%) programmes reported that they adopted different curricula for different types of parenting problems.

6.2 LEA run courses

Some LEAs had developed parenting programmes focused on education related issues. Education Welfare Services were often responsible for such programmes. For example, one programme addressed issues relating to attendance and offending behaviour adapting parenting programme materials to the needs of parents and their circumstances. Parenting orders had been issued by the courts for the last two years and since then the programme had been used on a one-to-one basis with parents by the Education Welfare Service. Parents referred compulsorily and voluntarily now attended the same groups. In a recent development, letters were sent out by the Education Welfare Service via a school to the parents of all pupils in years 6, 7 and 8. 300 letters were sent out. Twenty responses were received and 11 parents attended. 3 of these dropped out. Home visits were made before the course started.

Another LEA adopted a different approach. The secondary school programme offered, Stepping Stones, was run by Home School Liaison Workers who were based at the Secondary PRU and who were part of the Behaviour Support Team. They linked with Special Education Needs and Pupil Support (SENaPS). At primary level the workshops were run by the Home School Liaison workers based in Primary Behaviour Support. The provision of the parenting programme was contracted out to the Behaviour Support Team, and to Social Services who offered one-to-one support where parents were unable to attend programmes or where it was inappropriate. Parents with compulsory orders were dealt with through the Behaviour Support Team, which already ran numerous programmes in school venues. Resourcing was through Family Centres.

Table 5: Approaches adopted by parenting programmes

Method adopted	Number of programmes	% of participating sample
Own programme	31	24%
Webster-Stratton	23	18%
Family Caring Trust	19	15%
One-to-one interactions with parents	18	14%
Workshop sessions	11	9%
Positive parenting model	9	7%
Let's talk programme	7	5%
Solution Focused Brief Therapy	6	5%
Fun and families model	5	4%
Strengthening Families Programme	5	4%
Assertive Discipline	5	4%
Parentline Plus	5	4%
Coping with kids model	4	3%
Living with teenagers	3	2%
NCH	2	2%
Teaching safety in the home	2	2%
Learning through play model	2	2%
Family learning	2	2%
Nurturing programme/groups	2	2%
Family Links nurturing programme	2	2%
Rainy day's play	2	2%
Transactional analysis	1	1%
Calmer, happier, easier parenting model	1	1%
Person Centred Group work theory	1	1%
The curtail C model	1	1%
Promoting effective parenting	1	1%
Promoting positive behaviour	1	1%
Parenting education model	1	1%
Range of approaches adopted	16	13%
Other non-specified models adopted	38	30%

A Service Level Agreement in place between the Legal Intervention Team/ Education Welfare Service and the Behaviour Support Team provided the basis for another programme. For some parents, it was only following a court appearance that they were prepared to work with the Education Welfare Service. In the previous system parents were provided with training on a one-to-one basis but many did not turn up. Subsequently the LEA decided to focus on group work. Parents attending voluntarily and compulsorily now attend together. Although parents fulfilling a compulsory order were not identified within the group, many identified the nature of their attendance during the programme. This helped other parents in the group who had truancy problems with their children.

One LEA had in the region of 3 to 4 courses, each lasting for six weeks, being delivered at any one time. The Behaviour Support Team and the Educational Psychologists initially ran the programme jointly but at the time of the research the parenting programmes were run by the Behaviour Support Team in schools. The LEA took the view that the school should be the focus of all delivery. Schools sent letters out and approached parents whom they felt would benefit. Parents could also get information through Community Education. Some schools had developed a directory of support agencies offering assistance to parents.

Making programmes available through schools was becoming increasingly common. In one LEA, Primary Behaviour Support undertook an annual audit of needs pre-Easter.

One of the options that the schools could request was to have a parenting programme, Family Workshops, running in their school. The level of provision that Behaviour Support was able to offer was prioritised in terms of need and previous work. Geographically the LEA was divided into four areas. Usually between six to twelve schools in each of the areas was offered Family Workshops. This was not as many as were needed. Schools made referrals relating to difficult children and a partnership plan was put into place. Behaviour Support staff worked individually with pupils in schools with an emphasis on modelling strategies. The Home School Liaison staff worked within a multidisciplinary team and provided the link between school and home, particularly in terms of consistency with regard to the strategies in place. All behaviour management was praise focused. Running the Family Workshops was part of the role of the Home School Liaison workers, although they only worked within school hours.

Some LEAs have recently implemented parallel courses for parents and young people. For example, one parenting programme ESCAPE stands for: Empathy, Situation, Care and Control, Approach, Positives, and Empowerment. Topics addressed included building communications, building relationships, self – esteem, health, drugs and peer pressure. The workshops were informal and adjusted to meet the needs of particular parents.

6.3 School based courses

LEAs commented on the value of parenting programmes being based in schools. Many interviewees from LEAs found that better links could be established with parents through school-based programmes. For example:

'We are very much based in schools and very much part of what the school is offering. At this moment this is a good way of being able to reach parents at an early age. Some of the comments we get back from parents suggest that every parent should have to go on parenting training and the earlier the better.' (LEA co-ordinator)

In some schools there were issues about the extent to which teachers were willing to engage with the aims of the programme. For instance, one programme aimed to offer support for parents and also offer professional development for teachers in how to work with parents. The programme experienced some difficulties because of teacher availability and an expectation that little of their time would be needed. Where parallel programmes were run for parents and children, providers reported that the pressures that schools were under and their concerns about academic performance led them to neglect to allocate sufficient time for the pupils to attend the social and emotional skills workshops. They failed to acknowledge the importance of these in underpinning academic success.

While those facilitating programmes welcomed the easy access to programmes made possible by holding them in schools there were some difficulties because schools did not always have appropriate space and some parents, having had poor school experiences, were reluctant to attend programmes at school venues.

6.3.1 Example 1
Typical of school based work is the Stepping Stones Programme, an 8 week group-based parenting support programme. Prior to the programme the facilitators carried out a home visit. The Behaviour Support Team worked with schools to establish programmes in specific schools, although parents of children from other schools attended. The venue for the programmes was moved to different schools over time. All facilitators were Webster-Stratton trained and followed a version of this programme. The programme began with a focus on child development, rather than the play focus in the Webster-Stratton model. The session focused on what was age appropriate in terms of

the stage of development as many parents had no knowledge of this. In addition, parents were asked to spend 10 minutes each night building a relationship with their child. In the next session the focus was behaviour – how quickly parents responded to their children and where the pressure points were. This was followed by consideration of the use of praise and encouragement and boundary setting. Many parents wanted to be punitive and had little awareness of lower level interventions. They tended to simply hit their children. They were also unable to diffuse a situation. There were also sessions on appropriate consequences for poor behaviour, and life after children, where parents were encouraged to think about their lives as their children grew up and became more independent. The facilitators provided parents with information about other local courses. The final session was a celebration and evaluation. The programme was built around several existing programmes including, "What can a parent do" which is based on the work of Terry and Michael Quinn, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), Living with Teenagers and the Webster-Stratton course. Parents had requested that they be able to meet up after the end of the course as they felt that they needed a 'top up'. Plans were under way to offer a three month follow up session. A Parent Help Line was offered on a weekly basis for any parent in the LEA to ring for advice.

6.3.2 Example 2
Family Workshops was a structured course that ran for six sessions, each lasting two hours, with an education focus for the parents of primary school children. Group meetings took place in schools during school hours. The programme was written within the LEA and drew on material from Webster-Stratton and Familywise. All the sessions involved practical exercises, problem solving and discussion. They included a focus on life as a parent which acknowledged that this is a hard job for which there is no preparation. Parents worked in small groups and pairs so that the workshop was seen as less intimidating. Familywise cartoons were used as a stimulus for discussion, since there was an awareness that many parents had difficulties with literacy. The programme considered stress - which situations were stressful and what skills and strategies could be adopted to cope. It focused on listening and talking and what might be hindering communication within the family and what might help to overcome it. There was awareness that emotional literacy was an important area for parents since many were unable to describe how they felt. They had a limited vocabulary for describing their emotions. The use of "I" messages, rather than "You" had a huge impact on the children. The programme encouraged the rewarding of positive behaviour, explored issues relating to rules and boundaries, setting limits, praise and reward. There was a session on managing difficult behaviour which stressed the importance of the clarity of what a parent said and the importance of not saying 'don't'. The final session drew the themes together. Parents were presented with certificates. The providers aimed to offer a top-up session in the term following the programme and encouraged schools to set this up.

The Family Workshops were open access. Schools were asked to encourage parents to attend if they had spoken about difficulties with their child, but parents were not instructed to go. Some of the parents attended because they thought that it would be interesting. Some parents and carers attended because they were lonely and wished to meet people, some because their children had specific difficulties e.g. ADHD, Asperger's syndrome. Many parents were concerned with their child's attitudes, back chatting, shouting, slamming doors and fighting with siblings. Homework also generated many difficulties. Some parents were very concerned about attention seeking behaviour. For many parents finding out that other parents had difficulties with their children was a huge relief. A parent helpline ran within the LEA, which any parent could use. Parents often telephoned about issues related to behaviour and were sent resources, offered support services or referred to a more appropriate agency. Parents attending the Family Workshops were given a lot of information about other options and courses, and information about holiday play schemes since it was recognised that

support was important. Some parents went on to do the Stepping Stones programme which was for parents who had teenage children. An early years programme was being developed the aim being that there would be provision for parents at each stage of their child's development (early years, primary and secondary). The strengths and difficulties questionnaire was used pre and post the programme. A further questionnaire explored relationships. Parents reported that they had stopped shouting at their children, that they were much calmer and that they were much more organised in terms of routines. There appeared to be a positive change in the way in which they acted as parents. The relationship with their child had improved in most instances and there were some positive changes in behaviour. The guide that was used for this programme was currently unpublished and the LEA was hoping to rectify this to make the materials widely available although the need to keep control of training was recognised. The LEA encouraged staff in schools to undertake the training programme so that schools would be able to offer the programme themselves.

6.3.3 Example 3
In some LEAs. there was recognition that there might be benefits from running courses for pupils and parents in parallel. In one LEA this procedure had recently been introduced. Programmes were run by the Education Welfare Service for parents and young persons. The parents' course, referred to earlier, was ESCAPE while the pupil's programme was called Parallel Lines. It aimed to enable children to develop an understanding of what their parents actually did for them and how they thought. A common vocabulary was used with the parents and the pupils. The programmes shared the same themes.

6.4 Other providers

The research revealed a wide range of providers of parenting programmes, increasingly working in close partnership with statutory bodies. As one provider indicated:

'The charity is seen as offering value added within the district to the statutory services. There are good links between statutory and voluntary organisations. The charity is offering a pool of expertise to address issues within the community. It adds value to what Social Services can do. This provides Social Services with resources for preventative work since generally there is less and less scope for preventative work.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

The parenting programmes provided by charitable organisations were reported to be being better publicised in LEAs. For instance, in one area, several years ago, a newsletter was established called the 'The Effective Parenting Partnership Newsletter'. This was to ensure that all schools and doctors' surgeries knew what parenting support was available in the area. The newsletter was produced termly and set out all the activities at the Centre for Parents and in all the other groups working under the Effective Parenting Partnership umbrella. All Heads, SENCOs and teachers were informed about available programmes. In addition, all the statutory services knew about the Effective Parenting Partnership including behaviour support personnel, social services, and school nurses. The Centre for Parents provided a large number of programmes and had just established its charitable status. An agreement was being made with the statutory services about the nature of the partnership between them. The district council bought in the services of the Centre for Parents, partly through the Children's Fund and partly from Children and Young People's Services. The co-ordinator had set up programmes and recruited facilitators supported financially by and administered through the district council. There was a strong team of facilitators who offered a huge range of programmes. The administration was undertaken by the Effective Parenting Partnership who employed an administrator, had a telephone line, ensured that parents were allocated to appropriate programmes and sent parent details

to facilitators. The administrator was based in Social Services. The Parenting Co-ordinator sifted through referrals and decided the most appropriate programme for parents to follow.

In some cases it was not necessary to advertise the parenting courses. Facilitators in the Stay and Play sessions suggested to parents who were experiencing difficulties with their 2-2 ½ year old child that they attended the parenting programme. A crèche was run alongside the programme and it was seen as critical that the children had a positive experience in the crèche. A group also ran to support parents with children who had special needs (the POSH group). A four-week course was run with the parenting partnership. There was extensive communication with parents before the course because they were already attending the centre. All parents attended voluntarily. They were mostly mothers since the courses ran during the day at the centre, although the father's group on Saturday worked well.

In some cases key personnel in charitable organisations concerned with parenting were technically paid for by statutory services for the work undertaken in facilitating courses.

6.5 Summary

There was a wide range of models which could be used as the basis for developing parenting programmes. Increasingly, LEAs were developing their own parenting programmes with a focus on the child's educational outcomes rather than more generalised outcomes relating to family functioning. This provision was sometimes, although not always, school based. In some cases parallel programmes were provided for children. There was a range of examples of good practice in relation to these LEA and school based programmes. This was complemented by parenting programmes provided by other providers, the two sectors increasingly working together.

Chapter 7
Programme Content

This chapter will consider the content of programmes including the extent to which contact was made with the parent before the programme began, the key elements in the successful operation of programmes and the extent to which programmes act as brokers for other agencies.

7.1 Contact before the start of the programme

There was variation in the extent to which parents were engaged with the programme before it started. In some cases parents were visited or contacted before the programme began. This visit allowed parents to talk about their home situation and what they wanted from the programme, while providers assessed their suitability for the programme. Those ordered to attend were reported as often being angry about what they regarded as an imposition and a preliminary visit or other type of contact was perceived to enable this anger to be discharged. For this reason they often received individual phone calls and a home visit prior to joining a programme. Those attending voluntarily also received home visits from some providers as they believed that this was crucial to the successful operation of the programme:

'It is important to know your parents before they come. Doing a home visit and building up a relationship with the parents is key. Getting to know the parents and what their life is about, who their children are and showing an interest in that is the key to getting them to come. We make two home visits, the pack recommends three. We see how things go and could make a further visit. If children are there, they are told about the programme. Young people will be seen at school about the programme. We do a Family Grid, which is useful for parents to identify what they would like to concentrate on.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Parents were reported to respond in different ways to being referred to a parenting programme:

'Some think it is yet another intervention and would almost prefer someone to take away their child. Others are relieved and wonder why no-one has offered this help before.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Contact with parents prior to the programme varied depending on the nature of the programme:

'The communication with parents before the programme varies depending on the set up. If, for instance, parents are involved with Sure Start they will have lots of involvement. Schools might set up taster sessions, the children might do a circle time assembly and people sign up. This is left up to the parenting group trainers. The aim is to lessen the formality of it being seen as an intervention.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

In some cases prior communication was minimal, simply a telephone conversation to ensure that parents were comfortable with attending. In some cases no prior contact was made beyond a letter inviting parents to attend. Initial contact was made by the facilitators during the first session of the programme. Where prior contact was made it was reported to help to alleviate the feelings of anxiety that parents may have had. Parents were often concerned that they may have the most serious problems in the group and would be perceived as 'failures' or that they would not be able to communicate effectively.

Where there were parallel programmes for parents and children, prior contact was sometimes made with the children:

'The Educational Welfare Officer and Senior Learning Mentor interviewed all the pupils. This was done in school. The EWO or the parents had spoken to the children about attending the course. They asked about things they liked and enjoyed and the difficulties that they had. They talked about their families. We just had a general conversation with them.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

This was reported to lead to a reduction in pupil anxiety about attending a programme and ensure that they understood the purpose of attendance.

7.2 Methods adopted

Whatever named approach the parenting programmes adopted all, with the exception of one-to-one work, were based on group work and facilitating discussion relating to parenting issues and strategies to adopt to overcome difficulties. All the programmes covered broadly the same issues.

7.2.1 Example 1

'We hold sessions asking parents to identify their current concerns, identifying behaviour difficulties and prioritising including self-assessment, relating to being a good enough parent (the role of being a parent, how little training we have), rules (having clear expectations, building on behaviour,) consequences (reinforcing behaviour), rewards and reinforcing through positive behaviour management, and then a review of what has been achieved, self-evaluation, and course evaluation. About 6 weeks later parents come back and talk about how things are going and whether they want to progress onto other things. Links to the Adult College or other courses that are available are made. There are courses in school that they can go on to do or they can meet as a group at school if the school is able to do it. Some schools have parent rooms for the groups of parents to meet.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

The programme was based on materials used for training people for working with young children with behaviour difficulties with added work on Assertive Discipline. The focus was on providing information and opportunities for discussion. The programme was very structured with a view to increasingly engaging the group in doing their own learning. In each session only 30 minutes was devoted to input from the providers, the rest was discussion. Home tasks were built in so that each week parents had more and more that they wanted to share. The parents supported each other. There was always a group activity - paired work, individual responses, group participation, or small group activities. This programme did not focus on problem solving per se. What was on offer was learning a process of thinking rather than being offered solutions.

7.2.2 Example 2

An alternative approach, the Family Links programme was an American-based programme which operated in schools and with parents. The aim was to create an emotionally literate environment for children to grow up in. The providers trained school staff in emotional literacy running the parenting groups alongside. The programme organisers worked with LEAs, Sure Start, Children's Fund, and others and trained teams of trainers. There was a local co-ordinator in each area who trained facilitators in that area. The original American model had been adapted for the UK context. The programme was based on a book which was developed with funding from the Home Office. Initially it was a 15-week programme but this was too long and it is currently 10 weeks which fits well into the school term. In addition to the work with LEAs, the programme has been used with Sure Start, asylum seekers, and male prisoners,

although the latter programme was discontinued because the fathers became distressed as they were unable to effect the changes with their children. One of the key elements of the programme was to look at the feelings that drive behaviour and to encourage parents to think about their own childhood and the impact that this has had on the way they parent their children. The programme dealt with relationships and the development of behaviour management strategies, for instance:

- How do I get my kids to go to bed without a fight?
- I'm feeling completely miserable – what am I going to do about it?
- How do I talk to my child about sex?

The programme was evidenced based and examined common denominators between parents with difficulties and children with problems. Four constructs were found: inappropriate expectations, negative and harsh discipline, low self-esteem in parents and lack of empathy. The emotional literacy component was viewed as absolutely key to the programme.

7.2.3 Example 3

Another positive parenting programme, mentioned in Chapter 6, offered a problem solving approach which included six elements (ESCAPE):
Empathy – how do I feel as a parent and how is my teenager feeling?
Situation – looking at things which might occur.
Care and Control – whose responsibility is it, the parents or the young persons?
Approach – how do we approach things as parents? How do we react? What are our parenting styles?
Positives – experiences, rewards, bribes.
Empowerment – parents should feel more in control as parents.

As parents progressed through the programme they increasingly adopted a problem solving approach. They became aware of the way that they were dealing with issues and approached difficult situations with more confidence and as parents.

7.2.4 Example 4

A common element in many programmes was Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline. One LEA used a six-week programme based entirely on this approach. Schools in the LEA had generally adopted the Assertive Discipline approach so it seemed appropriate to extend its use with parents. Each session was an hour long and was designed for between 4 – 12 parents. The first two sessions were mainly teaching about the methods, the remaining three sessions were based around the things that parents reported would be helpful. The final session was used to set up a support group. The model was adapted constantly to improve it and also to meet the needs of particular groups of parents and the school. Issues which arose included mealtimes, bedtimes, homework, and getting children to do what the parents had asked them to do. Relationships were also important - between the adults and the children, and within the family, and how they impinged on the way that the children behaved.

7.2.5 Example 5

In one programme for pre-teens, particularly targeted at children in Years 5-8, the Family Trust Green Book for Teens was followed although the sessions focused on issues raised by parents. The materials set out the underlying principles of the programme but the course operated psychodynamically working on the issues raised by the participants. Key themes frequently arose including issues relating to levels of independence, problem-solving, anger management, respect, discipline from the parents' perspective, and milestones in adolescence. Sometimes parents had different concerns, for instance, if children were school refusers. Using consequences was a major theme of the book and took up a lot of teaching time. Prior to the programme parents tended to see act and punishment rather than act and consequence. Emphasis was placed on explaining to their children what possible consequences of actions might

be. Links were also made with the effect of particular parenting skills on child development in the future, for instance, if I continue to be authoritarian what will be the consequences for my child's development.

7.3 Programmes focusing on behaviour and attendance

Although the focus of programmes for all parents was similar, different issues arose for different groups. For instance, Managing Inappropriate Behaviour was a 10-week programme focusing on behaviour and attendance at school. The topics for each week were:
- Introduction;
- Attendance;
- Rules/ Relationships/ Responsibilities;
- Communication;
- Positive Behaviour & Stress Management;
- Assertiveness;
- Drugs/ Alcohol/ Sex;
- Conflict Resolution;
- Action Planning.

The programme could be adapted, was flexible and was negotiable with parents in week 1 to match their needs. Schools were also asked about their perceptions of the parents' needs to inform the programme. The programme was written jointly by the Parent Partnership Service and Education Welfare Service. The programme focused on inappropriate behaviour and the low confidence and self-esteem of the parents. Much of the work was discussion based and flexible to adapt to parental needs. All parents attending the programmes self referred to the group. They were contacted by letter or phone and schools helped to promote the programme talking to parents about it through learning mentors and teachers. Facilitators attended staff meetings to keep staff informed and to ensure that they were positive about parents being in school. Follow up work was often undertaken by the school, in many cases the group meeting as a self programming group with one parent taking responsibility. Some parents having attended the programme returned to their own locality and set up support groups there. The programme worked on a cascade model.

Another programme aimed at the parents of teenagers was called SPOT (Supporting Parents of Teenagers). It was an 8-week programme which covered listening skills, teenage development, parenting styles, communication skills, conflict management, responsibility and independence, enjoying being a parent, and a session reflecting on the programme and allowing time for making future plans. The programme had an eclectic approach based on a range of theoretical positions including social learning/behavioural, humanistic, family systems, Adlerian, mediated learning, psychodynamic and solution focused brief therapy. Such an eclectic position was typical of many programmes as in general their focus was on changing parenting practices.

Most providers reported that they adapted their basic programmes to satisfy the needs of the particular group of parents who were participating. For instance, one provider indicated that their programme was based on Positive Behaviour Management – providing a framework of rules and boundaries, communicating those to your children, enforcing them with consequences and rewarding positive behaviour. This was reported to work well but there was an acknowledgement that Asian, African and mid-European parents approached programmes wanting much more teaching and looked to facilitators to take on the role of teacher. In these cases the core model was adapted to satisfy the needs of the particular group of parents.

In all the programmes, practising the skills and thinking about actions at home was very

important as was the feedback relating to the children's responses to the development of parenting skills:

'The feedback at every session works very well. That is where the successes actually come to light. One mum went home at the end of the first session using the skills introduced, keeping your voice down, staying calm. She came in the next session and said 'It works. I've had a very good week, I haven't shouted at all and I went into the garden on Friday and my neighbour thought I had gone on holiday because it was so quiet.' (Facilitator)

The implementation of the rewards system was reported as being particularly effective. Giving children rewards had a major impact on the functioning of families and parents were introduced to the idea that rewards did not need to be expensive, for example:

'Within the estate many parents have low incomes. When considering how they might treat their children, most think of spending money in terms of going to McDonalds or the cinema. At the start of the course they have no sense that you might treat your child by playing a game together at home. Within the programme there is a game called spoons, which is a card game. One mother came into the group after that session and said I play that game every day with my son. He loves it. We play it together every day and it means we have lots of fun.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

The emphasis on praise as opposed to criticism was also important, for instance on one programme a mother who was experiencing difficulties with her son because they always argued and he was often in trouble at school made a real effort to praise her son rather than focusing on the negative aspects of his behaviour. She found that they argued less and that their relationship was more enjoyable. This change impacted on his school behaviour which also improved.

One provider, at the request of a parent, had invited a guest speaker to focus on drugs education. This had been particularly effective. Overall, parents valued the information they received from the programme that they were attending and often referred to it later if they were having particular problems with their child. One programme not only provided information sheets but all the group comments were typed up and given to parents the following week. In this way the parents built up a Parenting Manual. Feedback from parents demonstrated that this was useful and that seeing their comments written up enhanced their feeling of contributing to the group. Parents were reported as referring to the manual months after the programme had ended.

7.4 Key elements supporting success

Overall, whatever named approach was adopted by programmes the actual practices adopted were very similar. They focused on improving communication, setting boundaries, rewarding and consequences. Much of their impact came from the increased confidence that the parents gained as they implemented the various strategies.

Crucial to the success of programmes were the skills of the facilitators. They had to be able to listen and be supportive but also to ensure that participants respected each other within the discussions. Also important was the way that the parents learnt from each other through the facilitator engendering discussion rather than instruction. Parents valued these interactions and the support that they received from each other.

Increasingly, in education-focused work, providers saw the need for working with children as well as parents. Attendance and behaviour at school will not improve through parents attending a parenting programme if the problems are school based, for

instance, bullying, an inappropriate curriculum, difficulties in relationships with teachers. An approach which improves parenting skills alongside developing skills in the child is likely to be more effective.

7.5 Programmes acting as brokers for other services

In the survey, 29 (19%) LEAs responded to the question asking if parenting programme providers acted as brokers to parents for other services. Of these, 72% indicated that the programmes did act as brokers. 86 providers also indicated that they acted as brokers for other services (67%). Many parenting programmes supported parents in making links with other agencies when it was necessary. There were some issues, however, about the lack of support which was available from other agencies. Some providers were very sceptical about the extent to which other agencies made a meaningful contribution to the problems experienced by families:

'We work with CAMHS. We have been working and having joint meetings/ projects with CAMHS for however long they have been around for. Waste of time. I have a very jaundiced view now after 20 odd years of working in the field and I have no time for Social Services, have little or no time for CFCS and health, I have little time for youth, I have little time for Education Welfare, because from what I have seen over the years they are ineffectual.' (LEA Officer)

'When you look at Social Services and health what do they actually do apart from observing, investigating and writing reports. No-one wants to get their hands dirty, no-one actually wants to work with kids and until they want to work with families and kids….. We have a quote from the man in charge of the Primary Mental Health Team, which is a joint funded team and he said 'we can't work with that family, they are in turmoil. Until they are calm enough we can't work with them. Education can't say that.' (LEA Officer)

This raises important issues relating to the way in which families are supported in a more general way. Some providers suggested that the way forward was for schools to facilitate ongoing support for the parents:

'The difficulty now, particularly in this area, is that there are not enough agencies to support parents. Parents might need other agencies but those other agencies just aren't there, or if they are there, they are not very effective. That is the big problem with it. The biggest thing for us is for schools, once we have done the job, to take on a support group within the school. One or two schools have done this. One is particularly successful. They were one of our first schools 10 years ago and they have been running a support group ever since. We would like that to be the model which is recreated every time. That support group still runs and they meet regularly. They have on going training for parents - there are new parents coming in - and they invite guest speakers'. (LEA Officer)

7.6 Summary

There was a wide range of approaches to parenting programmes. However, most providers adopted an eclectic approach drawing on the best aspects of each. The key themes were assisting the parents in managing the child's behaviour largely using behaviourist techniques while concurrently improving relationships and communication in the family. Most programmes were based on facilitated discussion with parents drawing on each other for support and the development of strategies. The support systems which parents developed were important outcomes of the programmes. Crucial to the success of the programmes were the skills of the facilitators. Some programmes had developed parallel programmes for children. Where the focus is educational

outcomes this is particularly appropriate as children's behaviour is affected by circumstances at school over which the parent has no control. Many programme providers acted as brokers for other services but some were sceptical about the extent to which they supported families in need.

Chapter 8

Programme delivery, evaluation and staff training

This chapter considers issues relating to programme delivery including location of programmes, frequency, length and timing of sessions, ongoing support and follow up, evaluation and issues relating to staffing.

8.1 Location of programme delivery

Providers were asked where parenting programmes were held. 125 providers responded. Most programmes were held in community settings (89, 71%), 12 were provided in schools (10%) and 24 in both types of location (19%).

Where parenting programmes were operating in schools, this was usually at primary level. These types of programmes were generally welcomed by school staff and parents. Programme facilitators reported that schools were supportive and that appropriate facilities were available, although lack of space was an issue in some schools. School based programmes were also reported to have very low drop out rates, perhaps because there were no transport difficulties for attending parents. Parents seemed to be more willing to engage with what their children were doing at school and programmes were reported to have helped in improving home-school relations and contributed towards the school being seen as a key part of the community. Many parents having attended parenting programmes in school were reported to have the confidence to visit school more often and sometimes to take on voluntary or paid work. One other positive outcome of school based programmes was that they facilitated consistent approaches to dealing with children's behaviour between home and school and made monitoring of the effects on the child easier. Where programmes were not school based teachers tended to know little about the parents' attendance on parenting programmes and were unaware of any possible impact on pupils. Where the programmes were run in and by schools the links were much better.

8.2 Frequency of sessions

31 LEAs (21%) and 73 programme providers responded to questions about the frequency of programmes. 29 LEAs indicated that programmes were held weekly, while 2 indicated that they were held fortnightly. 73 providers responded to this question (57%). All indicated that their programmes ran weekly.

Providers of programmes were asked for information regarding the time of day that their programmes ran. There were 125 responses. Most provided programmes at a range of different times of day, 23% only provided programmes in the morning, 7% only in the afternoon, 6% only in the evening and 2% at lunchtime. 9% reported organising programme schedules according to the needs of parents.

8.3 Timing of sessions

29 LEAs provided information about the time of year in which the programmes started. 13 reported running programmes termly, 1 indicated that programmes ran all year, 5 said several times a year, 4 had rolling programmes, and 6 said that the programmes were tailored to meet the needs of the parents. Providers were also asked when the programmes ran. 129 providers responded to this question. 50 (81% of those responding) indicated that the programmes ran termly.

8.4 Number and length of sessions

LEAs and providers were asked how many sessions were run within any single programme. 38 LEAs and 119 providers responded to this question. Responses ranged from 1 to 14 sessions. The most common responses from providers were 8 sessions (25 responses), 10 sessions (25 responses), 6 sessions (19 responses), and 12 sessions (9 responses). The most frequent response from LEAs was 8 sessions (12 LEAs). Some facilitators indicated that some programmes were too short for parents to be able to develop sufficient trust to share their problems. The number of sessions run was not the only issue here the length of each session was also important.

12 LEAs and 78 programme providers gave information about the length of sessions. Sessions were reported to last from 1 hour to 3 hours 15 minutes. The most common response was that sessions lasted for 2 hours (10 LEAs, 58 providers).

The programmes visited tended to vary in length between 6 to 15 weeks with sessions running for between 1 to 3 hours. Providers believed that the programmes needed to be contained within one academic term. However, a number of parents indicated that programmes were too short. No parents indicated that the programme was too long. Parents and providers indicated a need for follow up sessions.

8.5 Ongoing support and follow up work

Some LEAs had a telephone helpline available for all parents in the LEA including those attending parenting programmes. This provided support in between sessions if it was required. When families were facing serious problems, some providers made it a criteria of recruitment that parents/carers were offered ongoing support while the programme was running.

Parenting programmes varied in the extent to which they had follow up sessions. Some had one or two follow up sessions while other providers encouraged parents to set up their own support groups following attendance at the programme. In some cases this was a central focus of the last session:

'The sixth session is talking about forming a support group. The present school one is working and they have met. We talk to them about when they might like to come, how often, if they would like to have one session that is just them as a social event, one where you can invite a member of the Behaviour Support Team, Special Needs Co-ordinator, the Educational Psychologist, the school nurse, so that they have got outside interventions to help keep that going.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Parents are encouraged to go on and take other courses on completion of their programme. One provider arranged for the local college to talk about the courses that they put on which parents could attend as a follow up. Some parents wanted to repeat the programme but given the pressure on places this was not always possible.

Where parents were running their own support groups following completion of the programme, there were sometimes difficulties in finding venues which were available at no cost. Once programmes were over, funding for transport and crèche facilities ceased which precluded some parents from attending self-support groups. Where formal support groups were not convened facilitators often encouraged parents to swap telephone numbers and keep in touch.

Where children's education was the focus of the parent's attendance and the family were experiencing severe difficulties clear support structures for the future were sometimes put in place:

'A support plan and support structure is put in place for the child after the parent has attended the parenting programme. The officer will look at the child in terms of re-integration strategies into school and supporting them and then look at supporting the parent and then would go to meetings in school. You reach a review date where you feel that the support is no longer required. You feel that you have taken the process to a point where it is sustainable. We follow through at the end and ask the referrer to feed back to us about where the family is 3/4 months later and one thing that is noticed is whether the child has been closed to one service and not reopened by another service.' (Education Welfare Officer)

8.6 Evaluation of parenting programmes

Of the 47 LEAs (31%) responding to a question about programme evaluation, 30 (64%) indicated that they had a formal evaluation mechanism in place. 23 LEAs (15%) responded to a further question about the type of evaluation that was undertaken. 7 reported that questionnaires were used (5%), 12 reported self-evaluation by parents and facilitators (8%), while 4 reported that parents attending the course evaluated it but did not specify how this was done (3%). 119 of the participating programmes indicated that they had formal evaluation mechanisms in place (93%). Figure 2 indicates the types of evaluation strategies in place. The most common was self-evaluation by parents and facilitators (68 programmes, 53%). 18 providers (14%) indicated that different types of evaluation were adopted for different types of programmes.

Figure 2: Types of evaluation adopted by parenting programmes
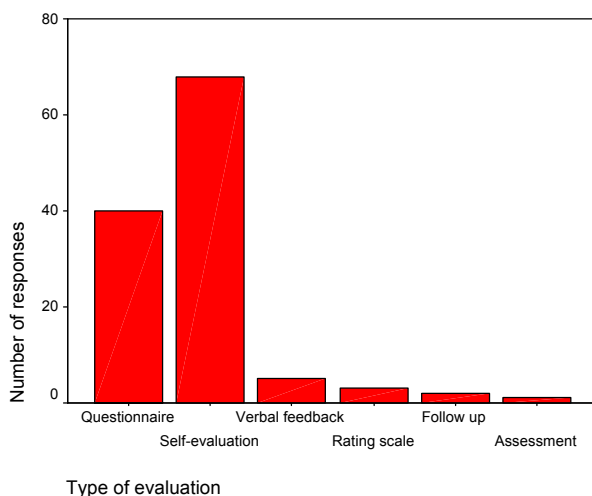
Some providers used before and after measures to assess levels of change in parents but this was relatively rare, for example:

'Parents complete the Parent Stress Scale at the beginning and end of the course. They also complete the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire at the beginning and end of the course. Both these measures are used to identify and evaluate changes in behaviours. Parents also complete a course satisfaction evaluation form.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Some parents experienced difficulties with literacy and this made written evaluation difficult. Some providers completed assessments during home visits prior to and

following attendance at the programme. Reported improvements in relationships and family functioning were sometimes as great as 44%.

Providers were asked whether they reported the outcome of the evaluation to the LEA. 28 providers (22%) indicated that they did. Where programmes were not run by LEAs there was limited communication about the impact of the programmes on parents. Some LEAs received copies of the evaluations direct from the programme providers but in some cases course evaluation was not systematically followed up.

In most cases providers did not monitor the effects of parents attending a programme on their children. Where parents were referred to a programme by the LEA because of pupil's problems with attendance LEAs tended to monitor pupil attendance. 30 LEAs (20%) responded to the question about the monitoring of school attendance of the children of the parents who were attending the programmes. Of these, 24 indicated that they did monitor attendance (16%). However, Education Welfare teams did not usually examine exclusion data as their focus was attendance, although in some cases the Behaviour Support Team provided feedback.

The quality of the teaching was not usually formally assessed, although there were some exceptions. Where programmes were run through LEA services, for instance, Adult Education there was normally an appraisal system for tutors. Where courses were accredited other quality assurance mechanisms were often in place. Some national providers of programmes offered peer supervision to facilitators.

What was lacking was systematic evaluation of the long term impact of the programmes on parents, families and children, particularly in relation to educational outcomes. Most LEAs and providers restricted their evaluations to the effects reported by parents.

8.7 Perceived problems in relation to the delivery of parenting programmes

Those providing parenting programmes were given the opportunity to report any difficulties that they had experienced in the delivery of programmes. The findings are reported in Table 6. The most common difficulties related to the provision of crèche facilities (35%), venues (25%), funding (25%), transport (17%), and recruiting parents (15%).

Table 6: Difficulties reported by providers of parenting programmes

Difficulties reported	Number	Percentage of participating sample
Providing crèche facilities	45	35%
Venue or finding venue	32	25%
Funding	30	23%
Transport	22	17%
Recruiting parents	19	15%
Lack of time to run programmes	17	13%
Commitment of staff once trained	11	9%
Attendance/drop out	11	9%
Difficulties in meeting the demand	9	7%
Interpreters and translation	4	3%
Difficulties in the minimum numbers required	4	3%
Lack of support from schools	4	3%
Co-ordinating multi-agencies	3	2%
Parents creating difficulties	2	2%
Finding appropriate times to suit all parents	2	2%
Coping with the numbers of referrals	1	1%
Engaging minority ethnic groups	1	1%
Other difficulties	21	16%

8.8 Staff training

Staff were recruited from a variety of backgrounds. Those working within education where work directly involved children as well as parents tended to be Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers, or Educational Social Workers. Parent group leaders came from a wide range of backgrounds including family therapists, school nurses, nursery nurses, school teaching assistants, health visitors, and ex head teachers. Some had an education background. Some staff had been recruited following their own attendance at a parenting programme and had no previous related experience. Many programme facilitators were part time and hourly paid which contributed to the insecurity of the system. Some programme providers reported that parenting work was often seen as a low grade occupation with low status. Because much of the work was part time or hourly paid there was also a tendency for staff to change and if this occurred in the middle of a programme it could be very disruptive. Despite this many programmes reported no difficulties in recruiting staff. Those programmes run under the auspices of the LEA were more often staffed by full time staff, the parenting programme work being a relatively small part of their duties. There was a recognition that if programmes were to be available more widely, for example, in every school that more facilitators would need to be trained. Some providers perceived that the way forward was training professionals, who already worked with parents in a variety of ways, to run parenting groups as part of their jobs. This might include home-school link workers, pastoral care teachers, school nurses, and learning support assistants.

In the survey, 109 programme providers (85%) indicated that all of their staff were trained in the model being used in their programme. 33 programmes (26%) indicated that their staff had a training qualification. Training was undertaken in a range of ways depending on the nature of the programme. In some cases, newly recruited facilitators were parents who had themselves attended a programme in the past.

In one LEA, the parenting programme had been facilitated by home school liaison workers, however, the LEA were training their first cohort of school staff facilitators. The first part of the training focused on the skills needed when running groups. This lasted for six days and participants had opportunities to develop and practise skills in group facilitation. The second part of the training explored the content of the course. This lasted for 2-3 days.

In another area, three psychologists were on the team, social workers, counsellors, and members of the behaviour support team. All had received training to be facilitators. There was an initial training course of three days. The course was run for the District Council and participants attended from surrounding counties. Prior to that participants were expected to have attended a parenting programme as a parent, to have attended workshops and have co-facilitated. Once participants hade completed the course there was a further accreditation process.

While most providers had their own training packages, some encouraged facilitators to take advantage of additional training opportunities, for instance looking at attachment issues, parents and teenagers, neuro-linguistic programming, solution-focused brief therapy.

Some programmes required that facilitators were supervised. These programmes ran training on supervision and provided supervision groups. This was seen as critical. Supervision was not always compulsory but it was made clear that people needed it – parents bring challenging work. Where programmes insisted on facilitators being supervised there was often insufficient funding for this to be undertaken.

Training was sometimes accredited. Many facilitators who ran programmes were already beyond the level of qualification that this would provide but for parents who had completed a programme themselves and went on to facilitate other groups this was often a valuable qualification. Currently, there are no nationally recognised qualifications for those providing parenting programmes.

8.9 Summary

Most respondents in the survey indicated that programmes were delivered in community centres, although some were delivered in schools. School based programmes, particularly at primary level, were welcomed by parents and staff. Transport problems were minimal, links between home and school were increased and there was increased potential for monitoring the educational impact on children, although there were sometimes difficulties with accommodation.

Programmes varied in their length, timing and duration. It may be the total number of hours spent working together which is important rather than the number of sessions per se. In addition, parents with greater needs at the start of a programme needed longer to change their ways of thinking and develop their skills than those whose needs were initially fewer. Some LEAs provided a telephone helpline to support parents while some providers insisted that families with serious difficulties had ongoing support from other agencies while they were attending a programme.

The provision for follow up sessions varied between programmes but all providers encouraged parents to develop their own self-help groups which would continue after the programme came to an end. Parents indicated a need for follow up work to the programmes and ongoing support. The self-help groups were very successful, although there were sometimes difficulties with venues, transport and the provision of crèche facilities.

Most providers undertook systematic evaluation of the programmes through parent questionnaires in the final session. These provided positive indications of the outcomes. Some programmes went beyond this and assessed the perceived impact on the behaviour of the children. Most did not. There is a need for systematic evaluation of both the long-term impact on parents and the impact on children. Unless programmes were run by LEAs, they had no direct control over the way parenting programmes operated or their quality. While many providers had evaluation systems in place the information derived from these was not always fed back to the LEA. Systematic monitoring of the quality of programmes is necessary.

Staff were recruited from a wide range of backgrounds. Many were hourly paid despite the fact that many were highly qualified. Training was a requirement for all facilitators but its extent and depth varied depending on the particular programme being implemented. Some training was accredited. Currently, there is no nationally recognised qualification framework for working with parents.

Chapter 9

Impact of programmes on parents and families

This chapter describes the impact of the programmes on parents and families. It begins with a description of the types of data on which the findings are based followed by detailed analyses of the questionnaire data, example case studies and parents' and providers' perceptions of the impact of the programmes.

9.1 The sample

The impact of the programmes visited on parents and families was assessed through parents completing questionnaires pre- and post-programme. Interviews were also undertaken with parents and providers. 52 parents were interviewed. In addition, 33 programme providers or facilitators, 20 teachers or LEA personnel who were involved in the programmes in some way or with children whose parents were attending, and 12 children were interviewed. 142 parents from 20 programmes responded to the pre-programme questionnaire, 73 (51%) from 17 programmes to the post-programme questionnaire. The lower level of responding to the post-programme questionnaire was due to the absence of some parents from the sessions where it was administered and the reluctance of some providers to ask parents to complete this questionnaire in addition to their own evaluation questionnaires. As the parents completing the post programme questionnaire are likely to be those who were most enthusiastic about the programme the findings must be interpreted with caution.

Two programme providers submitted to the research team summaries of their own evaluations. As the statements were different from the research questionnaires the data could not be subsumed into the same analyses, however the findings from these evaluations support those reported below.

For the sample of parents responding to the questionnaire, the age range of the children was very wide - from 1.9 years to 22 years. 86% of responding parents were female and 14% male. 96% reported that English was their first language. 73% were married or living with a partner, 27% were single or not living with a partner. 93% were White British. The remaining 7% included small percentages of Irish, Other White Background, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, African. Only 2% were attending as the result of a parenting order, 26% had been referred by an agency, while 72% were attending in a totally voluntary capacity. 19% of the sample were in full time paid employment, 28% were employed part-time. 5% were unemployed and looking for work, 44% stayed at home to look after the family, 2% reported being unable to work and 2% fell into an 'other' category.

9.2 Parents expectations of the programmes

The majority of the parents (78%) were looking forward to the programme and believed that it would be helpful for them (81%). The specific focus of their aims in attending the programme was to improve their child's behaviour at home (79%). They were less concerned with their child's behaviour at school (37%) and few rated attendance as an important issue (23%). Overall, they were looking for the programme to offer them support in their daily interactions with their child through increasing their confidence (88%), improving communication (87%), handling arguments (94%), setting boundaries (85%), and establishing discipline (75%). 83% were looking forward to talking to other parents. 66% reported that it would be easy for them to attend the programme (See Table 7 for details).

Table 7: Parents' expectations of the programme

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am looking forward to the programme	33% (41)	45% (57)	18% (23)	4% (5)	
I think the parenting programme will be helpful to me	29% (37)	52% (66)	17% (22)	2% (2)	
I am looking for support to feel more confident in dealing with my child	31% (39)	57% (71)	6% (8)	5% (6)	1% (1)
I am looking for support with communicating with my child	19% (24)	68% (84)	8% (10)	4% (5)	1% (1)
I am looking for support with handling arguments with my child	32% (39)	62% (77)	2% (2)	4% (5)	1% (1)
I am looking for support with setting boundaries for my child	24% (29)	61% (75)	8% (10)	7% (8)	1% (1)
I am looking for support with disciplining my child	20% (23)	55% (67)	9% (11)	11% (13)	2% (2)
I am looking for support to improve my child's attendance at school	9% (11)	14% (17)	8% (10)	33% (39)	35% (42)
I am looking for support to improve my child's behaviour at school	16% (20)	21% (26)	11% (13)	33% (40)	19% (23)
I am looking for support to improve my child's behaviour at home	28% (33)	51% (61)	7% (8)	13% (16)	2% (2)
I am looking forward to talking to other parents	28% (35)	55% (70)	14% (18)	3% (4)	
It will be easy for me to attend the parenting programme	23% (29)	43% (54)	24% (30)	9% (12)	2% (2)

Figures in brackets indicate the number of parents responding

9.3 The extent to which parents' expectations were met

The extent to which parents' expectations were met was assessed through the post-programme questionnaire. This was completed by 73 parents. They responded that the programme had met their expectations. 97% indicated that they had enjoyed the programme and that the programme had been helpful. 90% indicated that the programme had helped them feel more confident in dealing with their child, 96% indicated increased confidence in communicating with their child, 88% increased confidence in handling arguments, 80% in setting boundaries, and 79% in disciplining their child. 83% reported that the programme had been successful in improving their child's behaviour at home. Although only a small proportion of parents had indicated that they were looking for support in improving their child's behaviour and attendance at school following participation in the programme, 52% felt more confident in improving their child's attendance at school and 58% in improving school behaviour. Overall, 85% of responding parents indicated that it had been easy for them to attend the programme (see Table 8 for details).

Table 8: Parents' evaluations of the parenting programme that they attended

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoyed the parenting programme	67% (49)	30% (22)	3% (2)		
The parenting programme was helpful to me	56% (41)	41% (30)	3% (2)		
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident in dealing with my child	49% (36)	41% (30)	10% (7)		
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident in communicating with my child	49% (35)	47% (34)	4% (3)		
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident with handling arguments with my child	44% (32)	44% (32)	11% (8)		
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident in setting boundaries with my child	41% (29)	39% (28)	18% (13)	1% (1)	
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident in disciplining my child	37% (26)	42% (30)	20% (14)	1% (1)	
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident to improve my child's attendance at school	24% (13)	28% (15)	24% (13)	11% (6)	13% (7)
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident to improve my child's behaviour at school	18% (11)	40% 24)	25% (15)	10% (6)	7% (4)
The parenting programme has helped me feel more confident about improving my child's behaviour at home	42% (30)	41% (29)	14% (10)	1% (1)	1% (1)
It was easy for me to attend the parenting programme	55% (39)	30% (21)	6% (4)	9% (6)	1% (1)

Parents were extremely positive about working with other parents. Almost 98% indicated that they enjoyed talking with other parents. (see Figure 3)

Figure 3: Parents' responses to the perceived value of the group work

Post - I enjoyed talking with other parents
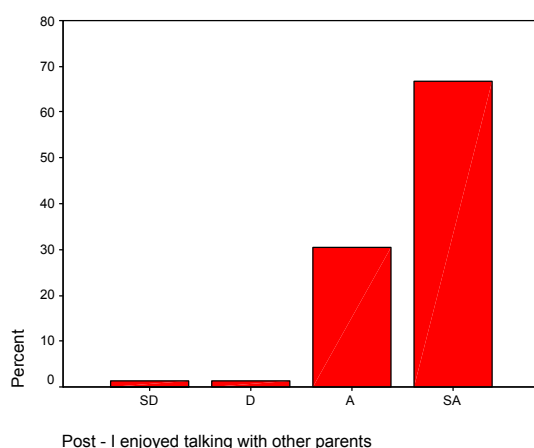
This was supported by the data from the interviews. The mutual support that the parents offered to each other was highly valued, reported as encouraging parents to be honest about their difficulties and, crucially, made the parents realise that they were not alone. There were other benefits of the group work:

'Very often parents comment that they have enjoyed the sessions, that the support

group offers a chance to chill out and have fun – the parents themselves have been surprised by this. This is particularly the case since they recognise that parents in the group are experiencing the same issues. Often single parents internalise the problems they are having and blow them out of all proportion. One of the positive spin offs of the group has been that sharing problems and realising that they are not in isolation has encouraged parents to continue to attend.' (Facilitator)

Many of the parents were reported to have difficulties expressing their emotions and attendance at a programme provided them with a vocabulary which enabled them to express how they felt. By the end of the programme most parents were much more aware of their own feelings and that of their children and had a vocabulary for expressing feelings. This had a positive impact on their relationships. Attending a programme offered immediate rewards, partly because it enhanced self-esteem, but also because the quality of family life improved. The social interactions and friendships made were also rewarding.

9.4 Changes in behaviour resulting from parents' attendance at and engagement with programmes

Analysis of the responses to the pre and post-programme questionnaires provided an indication of the extent to which parents' behaviour had changed. Parents indicated their responses to statements on a scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating strong agreement. The data reported are the mean averages and the standard deviations (SDs). A mean of 4 or above indicates a high level of agreement with the statement, a mean of 2 or below a high level of disagreement. The analysis is restricted to the 73 cases where parents completed questionnaires before and after completing the programme. A series of Wilcoxon Matched Pairs tests were undertaken to establish if these differences could have occurred by chance. There were statistically significant reported changes in behaviour in relation to all but two statements relating to parental behaviour. Highly significant findings occurred in relation to reductions in parents losing their temper with their child and criticising their child. There were also highly significant increases in understanding of their child's behaviour, trusting their child to behaviour responsibly, being able to set ground rules and often telling their child that he/she mattered to them. The details are reported in Table 9. Some caution is needed in interpreting the findings as they are based on self-report.

The data from the interviews supported that from the questionnaires indicating other changes in parental behaviour, for example:

'Being consistent. I found I wasn't being particularly consistent, bowing down to a bit of nagging from the children over certain things and sometimes you tend to give in a little bit for an easier life. Now I do stick to being consistent, if I say no that means no. I don't give in under pressure.' (Parent)

A range of statements explored parents' handling of arguments. Comparison of the pre and post-programme questionnaire responses indicated highly statistically significant change in the extent to which parents argued with their child, threatened to hit their child, shouted at their child, said 'nasty' things during an argument, and 'stomped off' during an argument. There was change in the parents' capacity to communicate effectively. Parents and children were more able to talk and solve problems without argument, and when arguments occurred more parents were able to talk calmly with their child. (see Table 10 for details).

Table 9: Changes in parents' behaviour as a result of engagement with the programme

	Pre-programme Mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
I spend a lot of time talking with my child (55)	3.82	.96	4.09	.7	.012
I often praise my child (54)	3.98	.97	4.33	.8	.011
I often tell my child that he/she matters to me (54)	4.09	.97	4.33	.8	.005
I often tell my child that I care for him/her (54)	4.33	.75	4.38	.65	NS
I often criticise my child (55)	2.98	1	2.56	.95	.006
I often lose my temper with my child (54)	3.39	.94	2.61	.87	.0001
I understand why my child behaves as he/she does (55)	2.98	1.09	3.54	.91	.0001
I know how my child is feeling (54)	3.18	.99	3.51	.84	.019
I trust my child (53)	3.58	.96	3.69	.72	NS
I trust my child to behave responsibly (53)	3.2	1.02	3.5	.82	.007
I am able to set ground rules for my child (56)	3.28	1.09	3.82	.69	.001

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

These changes impacted on the relationship between parent and child:

'I am not highly strung anymore. I don't do as much screaming and shouting as I used to. We are a lot happier as a mother and daughter than we were.' (Mother)

Table 10: Changes in parent/child argument behaviours

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
My child and I argue a lot (56)	3.37	1.14	2.62	.94	.0001
My child and I don't seem to be able to talk with each other without arguing (55)	2.5	1.16	2	.9	.003
When we have an argument I refuse to talk about it (51)	2.13	1	2.17	.95	NS
When we have an argument I shout at my child (54)	3.74	1.01	2.9	1.25	.0001
When we have an argument I say nasty things to my child (54)	2.52	1.25	1.98	.87	.002
When we have an argument I stomp off	2.27	1.03	1.87	.84	.003
When I have an argument I threaten to hit my child (57)	2.36	1.2	1.77	.73	.0001
When we have an argument I threaten to throw something at my child (56)	1.5	.68	1.48	.54	NS
I am able to solve problems with my child without having an argument (56)	2.74	.95	3.27	.83	.001
When we have an argument I am able to talk calmly with my child (55)	2.83	.94	3.49	.72	.0001

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

Other typical changes noted by one of the parenting programmes visited during the research which routinely asks parents to outline three changes made as a result of attending the course included issues relating to:

- Who owns the problem, i.e. what belongs to me and what belongs to my child;
- Being more aware of themselves in their role as managers of children – 'I'm now more in control of what I say and how I say it and of what I do';
- Involving the children in discussion, problem solving and planning;
- Using strategies to buy time for thinking through responses rather than having to react immediately;
- A sense of being the adult – 'I am responsible for my children' - about setting boundaries, about NOT being reactive, and being more reflective as a parent;
- Encouraging children to take responsibility for themselves – 'I don't have to be a doormat and do everything for my children';
- Managing confrontation better;
- Spending more time talking with the children;
- Being calmer.

9.5 Changes in parent/child relationships

A number of statements related to the child's responses to the changes in the parent's behaviour. There were highly significant changes in the extent to which children did as they were asked, pushed parents to breaking point, and listened to their parents. Parents reported that their child respected them more, was more able to listen to their point of view and understood how they felt (see Table 11 for details).

Table 11: Reported changes in the child's responses as a result of the parent attending a programme

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
My child does as I ask (52)	2.52	.89	3.09	.87	.0001
My child doesn't listen to what I say (55)	3.2	.99	2.76	.83	.008
My child does whatever he/she wants no matter what I say (56)	3	1.22	2.5	.99	.004
My child pushes me to breaking point (54)	3.41	1.22	2.64	1.08	.0001
I feel that my child respects me (55)	2.85	1.09	3.38	.97	.0001
My child understands how I am feeling (54)	3	.99	3.33	.91	.007
My child is able to listen to my point of view (55)	3.16	.89	3.56	.85	.003

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

There were highly statistically significant changes in parents' reported ability to cope with their child's behaviour. There were no statistically significant changes in coping with attendance at school but the pre-programme responses were already on average very high. There was a highly significant increase in parents reporting that they knew where to turn for help (see Table 12 for details).

Table 12: Reported changes in the parents' ability to cope as a result of the parent attending a programme

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
I know where to turn for help with my child (52)	2.76	1.06	3.73	.84	.0001
Over the last month I have coped well with my child's behaviour (55)	3.03	1.15	4	.63	.0001
Over the last month I have coped well with my child's attendance at school (50)	3.98	1.07	4.24	.82	NS

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

Programme providers themselves noted that participation was successful in engendering change particularly in relation to the parents' confidence.

'The parent's confidence increases. They are able to access some services and some places they have not been able to before. Parents are empowered to take more control of their lives and also have more control with their children. They are possibly more relaxed about handling inappropriate behaviours. We hope that the parent and the child recognise the importance of education.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

There was evidence from the interviews that parents were able to present their views in a more reasoned manner in a range of situations, for example:

'The Head is convinced that the programme has had a huge impact on parents. For instance, there was a meeting at the Junior School recently about some difficulties and the parents who had attended the course were not shouting, they were being very measured – in contrast to being very aggressive.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

There were also reports that parents engaged more positively with teachers following attendance at a parenting programme.

The extent of change following attendance at a parenting programme varied between parents and much depended on their starting point. The following case illustrates this:

'I can think of one person particularly, who had done a parent group before and got on really badly. She felt she had failed the course. She had a really chaotic family and lived on her own. Getting her kids out of the house in the morning was a real struggle. By the end of the course, she had changed in that she was able to listen. In the group initially she was unable to listen to the other parents, she was all over the place, looking out of the window, shouting at the kids in the playground, quite extreme behaviour amongst her peers. By the end she could listen, she had calmed down. So she might not have been implementing all the tools in the programme but she had shifted. That was great for her.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

One positive outcome reported by providers but not explored in the questionnaires was an increase in parental self-esteem, for instance:

'Parents' self-esteem increases. They become more assertive, they become more in charge of themselves and in charge of their children. They blossom and become more confident.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Attendance at the programme also made seeking support acceptable. As one provider reported:

'If parents go on parenting courses when their children are little and they talk to other parents it can build an expectation that it is OK to ask for help. So that they don't get to the point of no return when the children are older.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

For some parents the provision of child care engendered the realisation that other people could look after their child successfully opening up employment possibilities. Programme providers and facilitators reported that for some parents the extent of change was such that they were considering taking up employment working with children. Others were going on to take computer or first aid courses. One mother had progressed from voluntary helping in the school, to becoming a programme assistant and subsequently a parent governor. She was moving on to enroll on a netball coaching course, which would enable her to supervise after school activities for pupils. A number of parents were reported as going on to train as facilitators themselves having first led a follow up support group. For some parents this was life changing:

'We have a training for trainers course - parents supporting parents. We run that for 10 weeks for a group of parents who have done the course. They then go on to support other parents. One parent has become a volunteer for behind closed doors, around domestic violence and another parent has gone to work as a volunteer for Homestart – supporting other parents in the home.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

9.6 Impact on different parent groups

Parenting programme providers reported that participants came from a very wide range of backgrounds. In some cases they had very serious problems, while in other cases parents simply wanted to improve their skills and be reassured that they were undertaking their parenting duties appropriately. Providers reported that the mix of parents enhanced the quality of the interactions in the group work. Boxes 1- 6 provide examples of the impact of the programmes on different types of parents with different needs. The names of those interviewed in these case studies have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Some foster carers had attended the programmes. For instance, one, who had been a foster carer for the past 14 years and had already received training in dealing with challenging behaviour, was participating in a programme as she felt in need of support. She was currently fostering a 13 year old boy, who had been transferred to another school because of difficult behaviour. The programme had served to refresh strategies that she already knew, e.g. looking for little things to praise, boosted her self-esteem and given her the confidence to carry on.

One provider who had undertaken work in a private school concluded that parents overall had a great deal in common whatever their background.

'After about week five they all admitted smacking their children. Some of them were very distanced from their children and weren't connected – one parent actually sent the nanny. Emotionally some were very barren in the same way as highly deprived families. These parents were much more aggressive than other groups, more judgmental' (Parenting Programme Provider).

Box 1

Therapeutic impact of a one-to-one programme on a single parent mother
This vignette describes the life changing impact of a one-to-one programme on a single mother with mental health problems.
Jane had had a number of personal mental health problems, which she had attempted to block out for many years. When her youngest child started school she had little sense of what to do all day and would sit just watching the clock. The child required support in school from the Behaviour and Education Support Team (BEST) and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services became involved. As part of the Behaviour Improvement Programme, the mother worked through the parenting programme with the BEST counselling psychologist at her own pace over a number of months while her son worked with the BEST in school. Jane's self-awareness developed considerably and she learnt to touch her children. Following the success of the one-to-one work in addressing her own problems she will now attend the group programme to focus on her children's needs - one has ADHD and the other learning difficulties. She is starting to become less dependent on CAMHS professionals and has begun doing voluntary work at the local community centre. The programme has helped her to ignore some of her children's behaviours: 'My two just fight for attention so learning to ignore some of their shouting has made things easier.' There has also been a positive impact on her own prospects. 'It's possible that I may go on to be a facilitator. I'm also hoping to start college in September to do an access course so that I can study psychology.'

Inevitably, the starting point of different groups of parents means that the progress that they make will be different. As one provider reported:

'Parents whose lives are reasonably ordered and who have been getting by, improve on their strategies and the ways in which the families function together. Families who are really struggling start in a different place and end up in a different place. They still move though. So a family who is really desperate might come to the programme for 10 weeks, they might just about have learnt about praise and how to look after themselves better. So in terms of a strategies checklist, they wouldn't be doing everything but there would have been change'. (Parenting Programme Provider)

Some parents are unable to cope with group work and have individual tutoring (see Box 1). Programmes also have to adapt their practices for working with specific groups. For instance, some Asian women cannot be in the same group as men. Teenage mothers may also need programmes specifically tailored to their needs.

Box 2

Married mother of four young children two of whom were experiencing behaviour problems
This vignette describes some strategies learned by the participant and the benefits that the programme brought to the whole family. In particular, Paula describes how she is more aware of her son's problems at school and can help him address them.
'I heard about the programme from a lot of other people. When my son started nursery the teacher asked me if I would like to do it. I said yes because my children are quite close together, they are aged 2, 4, 6 and 8 and sometimes it is difficult to manage their behaviour. I get a lot of arguing and fighting. It was my boys I had most trouble with but we're doing really well now and I really think it has helped me to cope better with myself because I used to find myself shouting all the time. I haven't said it yet in the group but last year I had Social Services round. Someone said that I was hitting my children, but I wasn't, it was my shouting. I felt embarrassed about that. Now and again I shout, but now I know different ways to deal with behaviour. I feel a lot more confident in myself. I did feel under pressure and sometimes I just felt like walking away because it does get to you at times. I treat them [the children] more as adults now and they appreciate that. There are still some troubles with fighting at school but Robert is starting to understand that it is better not to hit back but to go and tell a teacher. I never used to show interest in playtime but now I know that it is one of his problems so I ask him about it. He's also quite behind with his work. I don't say that to him but I'm trying to help him to catch up. It's difficult because my daughter is almost at the same standard so I do things separately with them. Robert was moved into a different class this year and has got on much better. Previously he had a bit of a reputation but this is changing. My husband is really trying as well. I tell him ideas about what we do in the group and he tries. Sometimes I go home and say this is what we're going to do now and as he's seen things working it's made a difference. My husband would like to do the course, just to find out what I'm doing. It's nice to know of other people in similar situations. A lot of the parents give you other ideas and I've tried some out and they work.

While, overall, the programmes reported success and satisfied parents there were some exceptions. In one case, the children had been taken into care and the parents came on the course as part of the court's proceedings. The children were not returned to their parents because of the extreme punishments inflicted by the father, which were based on treatment he had received from his father in his own upbringing. The mother had

been brought up through the care system and had never formed any real attachments. The parenting programme was described as 'too little, very much too late.' In another case, a mother with a compulsory attendance order only came to one session indicating that group work did not suit her.

Box 3

Mother advised to attend the course by the school because of the child's behaviour
This vignette describes the case of a mother who attended the programme on her own because her 9 year old son was giving cause for concern at school. She describes how the programme helped her to control her anger and see things from her son's perspective. It also raises the importance of bullying in affecting attendance at school.
'When I first went there I went there with anger in me actually thinking I don't know why I am doing this, I don't need to do this. I did it to keep the school happy, show that I am willing to do things to help my son. Some people had far worse problems than I did. The school nurse suggested it. She didn't force me at all, but said it was an option if I would like to do it. The course has helped me. I think for me not to get angry when John gets angry. I've learnt to stay calmer. I felt I was quite a good mother and it was him that had problems because it was other people upsetting him so it wasn't really our problem. But I have now realised that he gets very down, he sees himself as a victim all the time and that does not help matters and then he gets very angry. So I am trying to make him aware that he isn't always a victim like he thinks he is and that other people get called names and other people have things happen to them it is not just him. It's just as I say becoming aware that when there is a little squabble going on between him and his sister say I've always taken the side of his sister and it's not fair, she does wind him up you know. He actually said to me that when he plays with his friends, if he doesn't do what his friends want then they threaten to tell me and I will always take his friends' side. I realised that he had a point and I promised him that I wouldn't do that any more. I listen to him more. The programme just helped me to be more understanding about where my children are coming from, how they feel. I've actually taken time to sit and listen and understand where they are coming from rather than assume that I know. I don't know whether it's helped John. Now and again he loses his temper at home. I have not punished him for ages for losing his temper, although he has not done anything for ages, but I thought I have to start saying this is wrong, throwing things round your room, breaking things is wrong and you are going to have to be punished for it. He's been fine. He's been fantastic. He doesn't have an Individual Education Programme at school any more, he hasn't done this term because the teacher felt he didn't need it because his behaviour in school has improved so much. He had a day off on Tuesday because he banged his head and I had to take him to casualty. I let him off on Tuesday and Wednesday. He was screaming that he did not want to go back to school on Wednesday, because he will be bullied because he is always bullied.'

Box 4

Mother of child in a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties
This vignette describes the impact of attendance at a programme on a family with two children attending an EBD school.
Clare attended a parenting programme at her sons' EBD school and has returned to the programme periodically over a period of 3 years. She was anxious about attending the programme but felt that it would help to remove her sense of isolation. She approached Social Services about receiving support. The boys had no friends and she needed help in developing activities to keep them occupied and to help them learn to share things. The course gave her more confidence and the motivation to fight for what her children needed. She was given very practical advice and attending the meetings gave her confidence in articulating her views to teachers at her sons' school. Now she feels able to communicate with the school when she is not happy and she has become a source of support and advice for other parents. She is much calmer. Prior to attending the programme she was blaming herself for everything. She has learnt to ignore some behaviours, family arguments have reduced and the children are now more confident and outspoken about their problems. They do all of their homework and have made more friends at school. The father is now proud of the boys' behaviour. An interview with one of the children indicated that his behaviour problems had been resolved.

9.7 Impact on families

Some of the statements in the questionnaire were related to the impact on family life and leisure. There were statistically significant changes in the extent to which the child's difficulties were seen to interfere with home life and friendships and place a burden on the parent and family life (see Table 13 for details).

Table 13: Impact on life at home and leisure

	Pre-Programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-Programme Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
My child's difficulties interfere with home life (57)	3	1.54	2.7	1.36	.046
My child's difficulties interfere with friendships (58)	2.96	1.5	2.65	1.35	.035
My child's difficulties place a burden on me (57)	2.92	1.54	2.52	1.24	.014
My child's difficulties place a burden on family life (55)	3.13	1.54	2.8	1.22	.047

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

The impact on families was reinforced by the data from the interviews. For instance one provider reported:

'It hugely improves communication, it reduces stress, it enables families to enjoy each other's company more, cuts down on the really kind of annoying discipline fights, reduces violence in some families because they have more strategies, a lot of alternative tools, and much greater understanding, more patience.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

In some cases there were benefits in relation to other younger children in the family. For instance if a parent had been referred for issues relating to the school attendance of an older child there may not be an impact on that child but on younger children in the family.

The programmes helped some parents to work together in improving their children's behaviour. They learned not to let their children manipulate them. For instance, in one family with three girls aged 4, 7 and 9, the family used sticker charts and star charts to reward or praise them. Other families learned that rewards for good behaviour did not need to cost money.

'There are games that I can play with my children that don't cost money. It isn't about money; it is about the time that you spend with your children. My children were used to wrapping their father round their finger. They used to play each other off against one another. We've worked together to become much more consistent in the way we relate with our children. Before, they might ask me whether they could do something and I would say no. Then they would ask their father and he would say yes. Now, each of us will ask whether they have asked the other parent and what did they say.' (Mother)

Box 5

A single mother with 2 children developing strategies to manage her family

This vignette describes how a single mother learned to manage her children and enlisted the support of their father who did not live in the family home when he made visits.

'Basically, my two had got me pinned up against a wall. They were telling me what to do and they were bossing me around. Because I haven't got someone else to say, would you take them for five minutes, I was a 24/7 Mum and Dad and I needed a way around them so that we could all compromise and live together quietly not shouting, yelling. Before the programme I found that everything that came out of my mouth was negative and that I emphasised the negative and they were very negative. We're the complete opposite now. It has made a difference because they know that when I leave them in the mornings we are on a positive note. We do circle time before we go to bed, we do cold and prickly feelings about the day and warm and fuzzy. It's really made a difference. It's made bedtimes calmer. My son was being bullied for a long time and I didn't know. But now he comes out and says Hi Mummy, how has your day been. I've had a bad day today but I'll tell you when we get home. We'll come home and discuss it and then it's not referred to, it's sorted out. He's much more confident. He has no qualms about telling anyone if he's having a bad day and someone is picking on him. It's all about choices and about choices at home. I know that if I've got a pile of ironing and a choice of playing with Lynn then the ironing can wait. Otherwise she's bored and then I'll be yelling at her and that is what starts the attention seeking. So I've completely changed my home routine. I do my polishing and ironing in the evening while

watching TV which means that I'm not sitting down eating biscuits, so that's worked because I've lost weight. The father sees the children on Wednesday evening and on Sundays. He noticed I had started to change things and I had lots of criticism but I said to him 'You've got a choice. You can step through that doorway and do it my way, because it's working or don't bother.' I said my way works, I'm with them 24/7, you come in two days a week. You don't come in changing and disrupting my routine because it winds them up and I'm left with the wound up children. Amazingly, the other night I heard him putting my son to bed and he said I love you mate. I was chuffed. This is a guy who hardly has any emotions. Now he's more involved with the kids, he sits and does the spellings with my son. This has made a huge difference to the children. I haven't talked to him about the programme in-depth but I have told him of some of the changes that I've made and asked him to do the same. I think he's seen a difference in the way that they are responding to him. Before, as far as they were concerned Daddy was going to take them out and spend some money. That's all they were interested in. They're quite happy to go to the park now and nowhere near a shop. They're having quality time with Daddy and they are respecting him. They've compromised since they don't like watching football. My son said 'Well Dad, I'll watch half an hour of football with you if you watch half an hour of Power Rangers. Very, very slowly, it's working.'

Where both parents were not able to attend the programme ideas were often shared at home and strategies implemented to improve communication and behaviour (see Box 5 for an example). There were examples of making small practical changes that had a major impact, for instance:

'The whole family will be told at 5.40, that they will eat at 5.45, then clear away and the whole family will then sit and watch TV. The mother said it was wonderful, but it had never occurred to her that by changing the meal time it could solve what had become an entirely tense situation. (Parenting Programme Provider)

Sometimes the impact is on the wider family. For instance, some parents reported that their own parents' behaviour had changed.

'My mother is not horrible to me any more and telling me I am a bad mother. My mum really put me down, killed my self-esteem as a mother. I needed to sort out my mum before I could sort out my baby. They gave me a few scenarios to deal with that. On the whole it helped me and mum's relationship as well as my daughters. There have been big changes.'

Box 6

Parent and child attending parallel courses. This vignette describes the way that strategies developed by parent and child on complementary programmes led to change. The mother wanted to improve relationships with all of her children aged 4, 12, and 15 but particularly with one child. He did not want to attend the programme at first as he thought he would 'get the mickey taken out of him.' His mother wanted some help in dealing with situations. The programme changed her behaviour: 'I was ordering him to do things and now I am trying to reason with him a bit more. He was not good at following instructions, but I was piling them out. Not just one thing, but 2 or 3 things.' He reported noting some change in his mother's behaviour. 'She doesn't order me no more. Before she were shouting at me more and she is not anymore, not as much.' Progress is slow and sometimes old habits return but he enjoyed the programme and has now got a range of strategies for dealing with everyday situations. His attitudes and behaviour have changed to some extent and he reported that he now tries to think before he acts, although he reported needing to try harder.

9.8 Summary

To summarise, the programmes, overall, were reported by the parents who responded to the pre- and post-programme questionnaires and by those interviewed to have had a very positive impact on their behaviour. They were also reported as being enjoyable and helpful. They contributed to increased parental confidence in interacting with and understanding their children. Conflict at home was reduced and family life was calmer and happier. There were positive changes in the ways in which parents interacted with school staff and they reported being better able to support their child's behaviour and attendance at school. Parents' own self-esteem was enhanced and in some cases this led to engagement with further educational opportunities and employment. The extent of change depended on the starting point of the parents and how far they needed to

develop their skills. For some parents attendance at a single programme was insufficient and ongoing support was needed.

Chapter 10

Impact of programmes on children

This chapter reports the impact of the programme on children. It examines the impact on behaviour and attendance at school and behaviour at home. It also explores perceptions of the long term impact of the parenting programmes. The data presented are derived from the questionnaires completed by parents pre and post-programme and the interviews undertaken with parents, children, parenting programme providers and teachers. Example case studies are given in Boxes 7 – 11.

10.1 Behaviour and attendance at school

As we saw in the previous chapter, most of the parents attending the parenting programmes visited were not centrally concerned with issues of behaviour at school or attendance. Their focus was largely on the home and many of the children had no reported problems with attendance at school and were not at risk of exclusion. There were also fewer reported difficulties in behaviour at school than at home. It is therefore not surprising that there were no statistically significant changes in pre and post-programme responses in relation to statements about behaviour at school, exclusions and attendance. There were statistically significant changes reported in behaviour at home and in other environments. There was also a significant change in relation to the extent to which parents saw their child as obeying adults (see Table 14 for details). This change might be expected to have an impact in a wide range of situations. The data from the interviews indicated that the children perceived that their parents were firmer, and more consistent. This led to greater obedience and self-control of their own behaviour, for example:

'If I am out and my mum wants me back at 7, I am back by 7pm, I am back at that time. I have become my own person. I don't get pushed into things, I don't do what I don't want to. I don't get pushed by anybody'.

Table 14: Parents' perceptions of children's behaviour pre and post attendance at the parenting programme

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance level
My child has difficulties with behaviour in school (56)	2.71	1.37	2.48	1.36	NS
My child has difficulties with behaviour at home (58)	3.51	1.27	3.12	1.21	.007
My child has difficulties with behaviour when not at home or school (53)	2.92	1.26	2.49	1.12	.003
My child is sometimes excluded from school for problems related to behaviour (54)	1.74	1.26	1.76	1.21	NS
My child has difficulties with attending school regularly (51)	1.72	1.18	1.92	1.18	NS
My child has difficulty attending school on time (57)	2	1.21	1.86	1.14	NS
My child usually obeys adults (56)	3.29	1.02	3.5	.83	.038

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

Ten parents reported that their child had been excluded from school in the last term. There was no change in this number between the pre and post questionnaire analysis. Forty two parents responded to a question about the extent of absence from school of

their child. Overall there was a change from 3.3 days reported absence from school during the term prior to the programme to 2 days following the programme.

Box 7

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Compulsory attendance order

This vignette describes the impact of a compulsory attendance order for a single mother relating to a child aged 13 years and how the school has adapted procedures to assist the child in attending.

The parent was a single mother with two adolescent children aged 13 and 15 years and a 4 month old baby. The two older children had both experienced attendance problems and a compulsory attendance order had led to the mother going to the programme. She reported that the programme had been helpful in enabling her to discuss issues with others and generate new ideas. As a result of this the attendance of the 13 year old for whom the order was made had been 100% for the four weeks prior to the research. She found the programme more supportive than she had been expecting and found that the skills that she had developed were useful. Her older child experienced medical problems and she wished that she had done the course earlier in order to support him. She is now more confident about getting the children to school. She has become more organised in the mornings so that her son is up and ready to leave the house in time for school and has adopted a system of rewards. He is now on time. He has some difficulties with his form tutor and now registers with his Learning Mentor. He recently told his mother: 'You know what mum, I think school is becoming part of my routine'. She is pleased about this as he is quite clever and she wants to support him in doing what he wants.

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Where parents were attending parenting programmes related to compulsory orders or where they had been referred by Education Welfare Services it was possible to access actual attendance data. Where this was not the case parents had to be willing to divulge the name of their child's school to enable contact to be made to access attendance and exclusion data and to interview teachers. Most parents were not willing to provide this information. Where schools were contacted, unless the parenting programme was school based, teachers had no knowledge of the parents' engagement with the programme and were not specifically monitoring the child's behaviour or attendance. The data were therefore limited in scope. However, the evidence of improvement in attendance in individual cases was supported by attendance data from 12 children whose parents were attending programmes which had a specifically educational focus. Attendance increased from an average of 81% in the Autumn term of 2003 to 87% in the Spring term of 2004. This difference was statistically significant.

Evidence from Education Welfare Officers about the impact of parenting programmes on behaviour and attendance at school gave indications that where these were the focus of the programme or the parent's participation in a programme there could be a positive impact. However, the differences were not always seen immediately. Attendance at a programme sometimes enabled other agencies to be called in or enabled parents to identify why there were problems and to address them. The impact was greater if the children were under 11. It was harder to change behaviour in older children, although in some individual cases there were dramatic improvements, for example:

'There are some pupils who are school refusers. In one case, one of the daughters whose parent is on the programme is now going into school and sitting in the library and working. She is not meeting up with her peers or taking part in lessons but she is actually going into school, which is worth a lot.' (Facilitator)

Where the programmes were school based and pupils and their parents were participating in separate groups attendance was reported as improving:

'I can't say whether there has been any impact on behaviour. We haven't done any follow up on it. There have been no exclusions. Follow up will have to be done in the programme situation, looking at behaviour before and after which we have not got. There was an improvement in behaviour in the sessions the children attended. Attendance did improve.' (Education Welfare Officer)

Box 8

> **Improvement in behaviour and attendance**
>
> This vignette describes improvement in behaviour and attendance as a result of a mother's attendance at a programme
>
> Cathy is married and has 3 children aged 5, 8 and 13 years. She was having problems with her 8 year old son. She joined in the programme in the second week as a friend was attending and suggested she came. 'I just thought if something would help then I would try it. I suppose it is logical anyway but it gave the impetus to put things into practice, rather than to get frustrated with them and shout at them to actually look at the problem properly and think and do something about it. I am not as strict as I should be. Their dad is more strict than I am. He's at work all day, so they get away with more with me usually. It made me more disciplined and able to stick to things. When you say you are going to do something and to actually do it. My main problem when I started was with Paul was that he would be swearing. It was a suggestion that someone else came up with about fining her children. If I hear him say things I fine him 50p and it is effective. Telling the children if they don't do something they will not get sweets, it is like sticks and carrots really. I've done this since the programme. I think his behaviour has improved. The kids have had problems with their attendance and that has been my fault because I used to work nights and sometimes didn't get them to school. But it has been much better recently anyway, they haven't had any time off, except through illness. I think their attendance is OK. I think they are quite positive about their school work. I don't really see them with their teachers. I'm sure they get on fine with their teachers. I don't shout as much, because they don't disobey as they used to. They do things they are supposed to do.'

Even where attendance did not improve there were perceived to be other benefits of the programmes.

'When there are problems with school, it generates such a lot of stress on the family. At the end of the programme, the child may not be back at school, but at least Mum and the boy, are communicating well, he is helping around the home and is a better citizen.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

Although the questionnaire data from the parents did not indicate any change in children's school behaviour, interviews with head teachers who had school based parenting programmes suggested that there had been improvement:

'Originally Michael would be very unsettled when in the programme and very inconsistent in the way in which he would sit at the table or apply himself to even the simplest and shortest of tasks. We did see that he quietened down and became more able and willing to attempt what was asked of him. That was very noticeable. His Dad did work in school with him at that time. In the Infants Dad gave a lot of time. He didn't just do the parenting course he came in every morning.' (Infant School Head Teacher)

There was evidence from individual parents that the programme had had an impact on behaviour, attendance and exclusions in some cases:

'When I started the course Jenny (aged 12) was bordering on being excluded from school. She was violent or abusive, kicking doors and screaming and shouting and constantly swearing. The swearing has decreased. The school has noticed a difference. Before Christmas they brought in the Educational Psychologist but two months into the course she has changed. She was not affectionate before the course but is now. She was truanting but by putting into practice the positive reinforcement at school and at home there has been a great improvement.' (Mother)

This example illustrates the importance of school and home working together.

Box 9

> **Parent and child attending parallel courses**
>
> This vignette describes the parallel attendance of mother and son at education focused programmes.
>
> The mother had 4 children aged 18 months, 12, 13, and 15 years. She received an invitation from the school and decided to try it. She felt that she was an average parent who lost her temper too much. She found it useful to listen to other people's ways of dealing with things and it gave her ideas about how to approach situations differently. '*It makes you think before you act. Take a step back before you act.*' She now takes time to think after the child has done something wrong, whereas before she would just react. She has had support for child care and transport to enable her to attend the programme but indicated that six weeks with only two hours a week was too short. It was particularly useful to meet other people and know that she was not alone in experiencing problems. She would have liked her partner to have attended the course but he worked shifts and was unavailable.

Her son attended a parallel programme, Although he initially felt nervous about the programme he enjoyed it because his friends were in the group. He reported noticing a difference in his mother's behaviour since the programme began. From his perspective school was boring but he described his behaviour as quite good, although not the best, and reported that he did his work.

10.2 Changes in bullying and fighting

There was a statistically significant change in the parents' perceptions of the extent to which their child was involved in fights and was picked on and bullied by other children. There was no statistically significant change in response to the statement about their child bullying other children. However, most parents disagreed that their child bullied others before attending the programme so the lack of change is perhaps not surprising (see Table 15 for details).

Table 15: Parents' perceptions of their child's involvement in bullying and fighting

	Pre-Programme Mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance levels
My child often bullies other children (54)	1.89	1	1.74	.82	NS
My child often gets involved in fights (56)	2.13	1.2	1.89	.88	.035
My child is picked on by other children (56)	2.96	1.22	2.69	1.26	.037
My child is bullied by other children (54)	2.83	1.19	2.5	1.16	.006

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

10.3 Changes in concentration and learning

Parents reported few changes in their children's concentration and learning over the period of the programme. The two statistically significant changes related to the extent to which their child became distracted and the extent to which they believed their child thought about things before taking action (see Table16 for details).

Table 16: Parents perceptions of children's concentration and learning

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance levels
My child has difficulties in concentrating at school (57)	2.98	1.32	3.02	1.27	NS
My child has difficulties concentrating at home (58)	3.03	1.32	2.89	1.15	NS
My child is easily distracted (56)	3.85	1.02	3.5	.99	.006
My child thinks about things before he/she does them (52)	2.8	1.01	3.17	1.02	.017
My child's difficulties interfere with his/her learning (58)	2.65	1.39	2.62	1.26	NS
My child's difficulties interfere with time spent at school (56)	2.46	1.39	2.41	1.3	NS
My child has a good attention span (56)	2.82	1.17	3	1.11	NS
My child works hard at things (54)	3.48	1	3.66	.97	NS

There were few changes in parents' perceptions of their child's emotional and physical well being pre and post-programme. There were statistically significant reductions in reported levels of distress in children because of their difficulties and in the extent to which they were restless. There was also a reported reduction in temper tantrums and feeling upset or miserable. These changes were accompanied by a reported increase in self-confidence (see Table 17 for details).

Table 17: Parents' assessment of their child's emotional and physical well being

	Pre-progamme mean	Standard Deviation	Post programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance levels
My child has emotional difficulties (57)	2.7	1.35	2.59	1.25	NS
My child becomes upset because of his/her difficulties (57)	3.05	1.41	2.64	1.27	.003
My child is restless and cannot stay still for long (56)	3.32	1.14	3.05	1.08	.027
My child fidgets all the time	2.91	1.2	2.96	1.1	NS
My child is nervous in new situations	3.05	1.14	3.26	1.1	NS
My child often feels unwell (56)	2.32	1.23	2.27	1.21	NS
My child has temper tantrums (56)	3.61	1.26	3.27	1.15	.02
My child is often upset or feeling miserable (56)	2.75	1.22	2.44	1.07	.03
My child is confident in him/her self (53)	3.13	1.14	3.37	1.07	.019
My child is often worried or anxious (55)	2.9	1.19	2.65	1	NS

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

For some children, the main outcome of their parents attending a programme seemed to be an increase in their confidence:

'She is a lot happier. A lot more placid a lot more confident. She has opened up a lot more because I have changed since the group. She has done better at school than she did before. I would say she is more confident in her school work. Before the course she knew what she was doing but she wouldn't push herself that bit further. She has gone up. She is in a special group now. She's well ahead of her class. She's doing really well. Her confidence has improved so she has got a lot more friends now than she did have before. She used to get upset a lot because her friends wouldn't play with her and then through the group I would say to her that there are going to be times where the other children won't want to play with you, they would want to play with the other children. It was easier to explain that to her, than before. She is more likely to go and talk to people whereas before she would just stand by me.' (Mother)

There were no statistically significant changes in relation to a range of statements regarding the level of the child's helping behaviour in relation to others, sharing with others and friendships. However, the responses to these statements pre-programme were generally positive (see Table 18). There was some evidence from the interviews that children became more sensitive to their parents' feelings:

'One mother used I statements like I don't like it when you don't clean the bathroom, it makes me feel upset. One son had been stopped dead by this and said, "I didn't know that you felt like that.' (Facilitator)'

Table 18: Parents perceptions of their child's level of altruism and friendships

	Pre-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Post-programme mean	Standard Deviation	Significance levels
My child is helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling unwell (55)	4.12	.81	4.1	.65	NS
My child is kind to younger children (57)	4.03	.86	4.14	.74	NS
My children volunteers to help other people (friends, teachers, parents) (56)	3.85	.86	3.8	.79	NS
My child is considerate of other people's feelings (56)	3.39	1.2	3.64	1.01	NS
My child is able to share things with others, e.g. games, food, pens (55)	3.67	1.01	3.67	1.04	NS
My child spends most of his/her time alone (56)	2.59	1.29	2.48	.93	NS
My child has at least one good friend (53)	3.94	.98	3.9	.98	NS
My child is liked by other children of his/her age (57)	3.74	1	3.72	.97	NS
My child prefers to spend time with people older than him/herself (54)	3.25	1.09	3.17	1.24	NS
My child's difficulties interfere with his/her leisure activities (57)	2.54	1.35	2.4	1.17	NS
My child prefers to spend time with adults (56)	2.84	.97	2.84	1.15	NS

Number of parents responding pre and post programme is indicated in brackets after the statement

10.4 Changes in behaviour at home

There was considerable evidence from the interviews of how children's behaviour had changed at home and how they recognised appropriate behaviour. Two examples are given below:

'A parent who started using the consequences principles and the time out idea reported that her son was in the other room shouting. She called out and went in there and he had disappeared. He had taken himself to the timeout zone, the bottom step in the house, in the hall with nothing to look at. He had taken time out to think about what he had done. He had started to do that on his own.' (Facilitator)

'*One mother had a young boy with learning difficulties. The mother has been backing off. The other night, he was being difficult with his sibling and normally this would have escalated into a big row. Instead, he grunted and then left the room.' (Facilitator)*

10.5 Programmes held in schools

Where the courses for parents and children were run in parallel and worked alongside each other the educational outcomes appeared stronger. At primary level, parents when attending school based programmes took their child to school. This showed to the child that they were taking an interest in the place where they were learning. They also appreciated it when their parents visited the school:

'*They quite enjoy knowing that their mums have been on site. It gives them a little bit of kudos. Their mum has been coming into their place and when their mum gets a certificate, they say 'That's my mum'. Children always love it when their mums are on site, because it is that sharing, we're all in the same place together.' (Primary Head Teacher)*

There were positive outcomes beyond an improvement in parenting skills:

'The children's self esteem is raised by seeing their mother on a course and receiving a certificate. One boy described how it was much more fun at home and how they talked a lot more. His mother was described as more confident generally, which impacted on her relationship with her son, but also in the way in which she was able to communicate with the staff about her son's behaviour issues. His behaviour and attendance both improved significantly.' (Facilitator)

Box 10

Behavioural and attention difficulties
This vignette describes how attending a parenting programme helped a family where the child had a range of learning and behaviour difficulties. Despite improvement at home there were still difficulties at school.
Both parents attended the course because of the behavioural difficulties of their 13 year old daughter. She has epilepsy, difficulties in peer relationships and her behaviour has been problematic recently. She recently accused her parents of abusing her and although her claims were disproved, Social Services suggested that her parents attend the parenting programme. Things have improved because the mother's perspective has changed. Kate is very good at pretending that she can't do things that she is fully capable of doing. Her parents have learned some strategies for being firm and offering her support but insisting that she does things herself. She is talking to them more and they've been trying to make more time to listen. When she had complained in the past they would ignore her, go and work on their computers and not give her any time. She was pleased that her parents were attending the programme and things have improved at home but there has been little impact at school. She is sometimes rude to teachers and does not behave well. The parenting course does not seem to have helped this.

Box 11

Both parents attending a programme as the result of a compulsory order
This vignette describes the impact of a compulsory order on the parents and the child.
The mother was in receipt of a compulsory order because one of her children was not attending school in 2002. Both parents attended the programme. The child who was the focus of the referral was then 14 and is now 16. There are two other children who are now 10 and 5 years. Having completed the course she then repeated it on a voluntary basis and is now a paid facilitator. Initially, she felt that her parenting skills were not good. The course has been effective in reducing the number of arguments she has with her son. She now listens to him more and the communication and listening skills she has learned have improved their relationship. His attendance at school has improved, although he attends the off-site unit two days a week. He has applied to go to College and his mother is very supportive of this.

10.6 Longer term impact

Parents were confident that the programmes that they had attended had had a major impact on their behaviour and that of their children which was likely to be sustained over time:

'*She knows now when I say something I mean it and that if I say that she is not going to get a bed time story then she won'. Before she kept on and she knew that in the end mummy would say yeh, OK fine.'* (Parent)

The materials handed out by the programmes provided a resource which could be referred to when necessary. Parents found these useful:

'It has helped me in myself and if I let that go it will all go back to pot and I will end up being a nervous wreck pulling my hair out. I kept all the information they gave us and it is just sometimes I forget and I think I will read back on it and think I could do it that way. They gave us a wide range of options we could have gone through. Every time I come up with a situation, even if I am looking after other people's kids, I stop and think how do I do this?' (Parent)

Those facilitating the programmes had mixed views about the extent to which they were effective in the long term. Some were less confident than the parents indicating that it was *'very difficult to assess'*. Others were more positive believing that the nature of the programme itself was such that it would continue to be enacted particularly if there were opportunities to refresh strategies. Others stressed that the natural rewards arising from implementing the strategies would ensure that they would continue to be implemented:

'Once a parent becomes empowered it normally goes on. You are providing strategies for their own self-preservation. Managing stress, how to say no, being assertive, you are giving strategies for coping with life.' (Parenting Programme Provider)

The long-term implementation and impact of the programme was seen to depend on the fragility of the families themselves. Where families had extreme difficulties these could sometimes provide such challenges that implementation of the parenting strategies was not a priority:

'It is going to depend on whatever life throws at the parents as well as at the children. The estate we're on is very volatile. One of the most disadvantaged wards in the borough. Levels of violence and crime are very high. People have got to cope with external factors, that have quite an effect on the emotions and that's when the behaviour starts to go. Hopefully through them meeting together they will be able to support each other and get through any possible blips in the future.' (Head teacher)

Some providers commented that the age of the child might be important. While parents may learn to manage the behaviour of young children, teenagers start to push different boundaries and some parents may find it difficult to manage these new, challenging behaviours. In these instances it was felt that attendance at a programme focusing on teenage behaviour would be helpful.

Summary

Overall, there was evidence that the attendance of parents at a parenting programme had an impact on the behaviour of children at home and a lesser one on behaviour and attendance at school. This may have been because most of the children were not experiencing difficulties at school prior to the parent attending the programme. Most parenting programmes did not have close links with schools. Most did not routinely monitor educational outcomes for children including behaviour, attendance, and exclusions. Where parents were attending on compulsory attendance orders, or had been referred by the Education Welfare Service attendance was monitored but such cases were in a minority. Most staff in school were unaware that a parent was attending a programme. Where programmes were held in schools at primary level, closer links developed between the parents and the school to the benefit of the child. The school was able to monitor changes in the child's behaviour and attendance, the parent became more comfortable in the school environment and when issues arose relating to behaviour was able to discuss them in a more reasoned way.

Chapter 11
Conclusions

11.1 Overall impact

The evidence from the research suggests that the parents who attended the parenting programmes valued them. They commented positively on the non-judgmental attitude of the facilitators, their professionalism and the importance of realising that they were not alone. They reported a positive impact on home life – improved communication in the family and reduced tension and stress. Everyone was calmer. Parents' self-esteem and confidence improved, they developed support networks and some went on to attend further courses, gaining qualifications and employment. In almost all cases parents' responses indicated change in their child's behaviour over the period that they were attending the programme.

11.2 Educational Impact

Although the data were limited, there was evidence of improved behaviour and attendance at school as a result of parents' attendance at parenting programmes. Where the child's problems had their roots in school related issues, e.g. bullying, poor relationships with some teachers, behaviour and attendance continued to give cause for concern. Improved parental control of children's behaviour will not alleviate situations where problems are located specifically in the school environment, for instance, in relation to inappropriate curricula, problems with peers, bullying. Where parents attended courses which were not based in school, head teachers and teachers were generally unaware of the parents' attendance, and there was no parallel monitoring of change in the pupil's attendance or behaviour at school level unless the Education Welfare Service were involved. If the aim of parenting programmes is to improve children's educational outcomes then programmes may be more successful if they are school based. This is particularly likely to be the case in primary schools. Where they are not school based there need to be closer links between schools and the parenting programme providers. This raises some issues of confidentiality for providers. Parents may not wish the school to know that they are attending a programme. However, if the intention is to impact on pupils' educational outcomes schools and parents need to work together. Ways need to be found of making this possible.

11.3 Systems and infrastructure

Overall the systems currently in place for co-ordinating and providing parenting programmes are fragile. Most areas do not have adequate provision and in many places providers supported by charitable organisations operate independently of each other. Links between LEAs and providers are on the whole not well established and in many cases communication is limited. There are some examples of existing good practice where there are well established networks providing information to the public about what is available and where voluntary and statutory bodies work well together. These may act as models for future development. Currently, availability of parenting programmes depends on the individual's location. Overall, demand outstrips provision.

11.4 Co-ordination

Over the country as a whole, responsibility for the provision of parenting programmes in relation to education lies with a wide range of personnel within LEAs most of whom have considerable responsibilities elsewhere. A small number of LEAs are in the process of appointing parenting co-ordinators. If each LEA is to develop a co-ordinated

approach to parenting programmes, providing easily accessible information for parents, and ensuring that a range of appropriate programmes are available locally, such appointments will need to become the norm rather than the exception.

11.5 Educational Focus

There are few parenting programmes which are specifically designed to address issues relating to education. Most parenting programme provision is of a more general nature. Increasingly LEAs are developing their own provision with a focus on educational outcomes rather than more generalised outcomes for family functioning. This provision is generally school based and in some cases parallel programmes are provided for pupils. Where provision is school based head teachers are supportive of it and it has been useful in providing a bridge between home and school which previously did not exist for some families. The attendance of the parents in school has facilitated improved communication and where difficulties have arisen with the child's behaviour after attending a parenting programme parents are able to respond in a more measured way to the issues and it is possible to make greater progress in addressing the problems. Where children are experiencing difficulties in school running parallel programmes for them and their parents may be beneficial.

11.6 Participants

In most areas programmes were available for parents of children of different ages. There was variability in the number of parents with whom programmes worked at any one time, the length of the sessions, their timing and their locality. Few dealt directly with educational issues. Overall, provision did not differ for parents who were attending compulsorily or voluntarily, both attended the same programmes, although there were a few exceptions. In general this worked well, although where parents were experiencing very severe difficulties this was not always appropriate and individual work was undertaken. Although programmes ran under the auspices of different providers, the content and methods adopted within sessions were broadly similar. Programmes attempted to provide parents with a range of strategies for managing their children's behaviour and the capacity to think about the impact of their actions.

11.7 Programme content

Although programmes worked under the auspices of different theoretical positions, in practice most programmes adopted an eclectic approach encouraging parents to manage their child's behaviour adopting behaviourist principles while concurrently enhancing their communication, emotional and social skills. With the exception of one-to one programmes, group work was central to programme delivery.

11.8 Follow up work

Parents indicated a need for follow up work to participation in a programme and ongoing support. Some programmes had built this into their provision. In other cases parents were encouraged to set up their own support groups. These were very successful, although there were sometimes difficulties in finding a venue where meetings could be held. Some parents, having co-ordinated a support group, went on to train as facilitators. Even when parents did not become engaged with the programmes in this way in the long term many became advocates for parenting programmes in their local community. This enthusiasm could be an important vehicle through which to engage the most needy parents in the community who may be the most reluctant to attend a programme.

11.9 Barriers to attendance

There were a number of barriers to attendance at parenting programmes, in particular those associated with transport and in arranging child care. If programmes for parents of young children were held in primary schools some of the transport difficulties might be alleviated although there would still be a need for crèche facilities. Some schools reported a lack of space for holding parenting programmes and follow up activities. Although in the literature drop out rates from parenting programmes are high, the programmes visited had low drop out rates. This was partly because they followed up non attendance and also because where parents were known to be experiencing family difficulties contact was made with them prior to their participation in the programme. This reduced their anxiety levels and gave providers an opportunity to assess the nature of the problems.

11.10 Staffing issues

Many staff facilitating parenting programmes were hourly paid, although some were highly qualified. Training was a requirement for all facilitators but its extent and depth varied depending on the particular programme being implemented. Some training was accredited. Currently, there is no nationally recognised qualification framework for working with parents. Providers reported that the key need was for facilitators to have appropriate skills and that this was more important than qualifications per se. Consideration needs to be given to the development of a qualifications framework, to include core competencies, which acknowledges prior learning and experience. This would contribute to raising the status of parenting education.

11.11 Funding issues

Funding for the programmes came from a variety of sources and was insecure in the long and short term. It was also inadequate to meet the need for programmes. This constituted a major difficulty for providers who indicated that if the provision of parenting programmes was to expand secure funding was essential.

11.12 Evaluation of programmes

Most providers undertook systematic evaluation of the programmes through parent questionnaires in the final session. These provided positive indications of the outcomes. Some programmes went beyond this and assessed the perceived impact on the behaviour of the children. Most did not. Unless programmes are directly linked with schools, programme providers have no knowledge of the impact on educational outcomes of the children and schools have no knowledge that the parent is attending a programme. Unless programmes are run by LEAs, they have no direct control over the way parenting programmes operate or their quality. While many providers have evaluation systems in place the information derived from these is not always fed back to the LEA. Closer links need to be made between LEAs and parenting programme providers to improve communication.

11.13 Compulsory orders

To date there have been relatively few compulsory parenting orders made relating to education. Parents tend to be referred on a voluntary basis. This may change as a result of the Anti-social Behaviour Act. Most LEAs currently do not have the capacity in available programmes to cater for an increase of parents on compulsory orders.

11.14 Recommendations

- There is a need for all Local Education Authorities to have a named person with responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of parenting programmes within the authority and for ensuring that that provision is of a high quality.

- Where parenting programmes have an educational focus, in order to foster better communication between parents and the school and enable closer monitoring of the impact on children, it may be beneficial to hold them in schools. This is particularly the case where programmes are aimed at primary school children. If an increase in the number of parents attending such programmes is anticipated most primary schools will need to offer programmes so that they are easily accessible. It may also be beneficial to hold parallel programmes for pupils. Overall, better communication needs to be developed between parents and schools about children's behaviour problems which bridges the home-school divide.

- Systems need to be put in place to monitor children's attendance and behaviour when parents attend programmes. Providers indicated that this had implications for confidentiality and that many parents did not want the staff in their child's school to know that they were attending a programme. If programmes become more widely available and all parents are encouraged to attend, the stigma attached to attending a programme may disappear making this a less sensitive issue. Schools might also consider having a key contact with responsibility for parenting issues and providing training for school staff in developing relationships with parents. This would facilitate home and school working more closely together. There is also a need to evaluate the long term impact of parenting programmes on children's behaviour at home, school and in the community.

- LEAs need to ensure that programmes are available for the parents of pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils and that appropriate crèche facilities and transport are available to support parents in attending programmes.

- Strategies for engaging the most needy parents in parenting programmes need to be developed. These may utilise the enthusiasm of parents in the community who have already attended programmes. In addition programmes need to have consistent policies for following up parents who drop out.

- Where parents have been issued with compulsory orders or have been referred voluntarily, contact should be made with them prior to the running of the programme to reduce any anxiety and optimise the likelihood of their attending.

- Opportunities for follow up activities need to be made available. If this is through self-support groups appropriate venues need to be made available and consideration given to the provision of crèche facilities and transport.

- There is a need to adopt common standards for parenting education as outlined by the National Parenting Education Support Forum. A national qualifications framework, to include core competencies, which acknowledges prior learning and experience needs to be developed. Modules addressing the skills and knowledge required to facilitate parenting programmes, which could be taken by staff already engaged in working with parents and children, could provide initial training and continuing professional development and provide an effective means of expanding provision.

- Secure long term funding is required if parenting programmes are to be in a position to meet possible demand following the implementation of the Anti-social Behaviour Act.

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Appendix 1

Programmes visited

Programme 1

Within the LEA parenting programmes for parents with primary school children are provided by Home School Liaison Workers, who are based at the Primary PRU. The programme offered, Family Workshops, was written within the LEA and draws on material from Webster-Stratton and Familywise. Family Workshops is a structured course that runs for six sessions, each lasting two hours. All sessions involve practical exercises, problem solving and discussion. Areas covered include life as a parent, stress, listening and talking, the use of "I" messages, boundaries and setting limits, praise and reward. Family Workshops take place in schools during school hours and are requested by the schools. The programme is open access. Schools are asked to encourage parents to attend if they have spoken about difficulties with their child, however, parents are not told to go. The Goodman Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire is used at the beginning and end of the programme. There is also a questionnaire that explores relationships. For parents who attend the Family Workshops, the facilitators provide a lot of information about other options and courses, including information about holiday play schemes, since it is recognised that support is really important. In addition, schools are encouraged to offer a top-up session for parents in the term after the initial programme.

Programme 2

The Stepping Stones Programme is facilitated by Home School Liaison Workers who are based at the Secondary PRU and part of the Behaviour Support Team. The Behaviour Support Team works with schools to establish programmes in specific schools, hence the venue for the programme constantly changes. The eight-week programme focuses on issues around children's behaviour and how to work as a parent. It is seen as a participative programme rather than directed and facilitators look at solutions to problems rather than instructing. Stepping Stones draws on material from Webster-Stratton, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, What Can a Parent Do and Living with Teenagers. Areas covered include child development, praise and encouragement, boundary setting, consequences and life after children. The majority of parents attend on a voluntary basis. However, the mixture of self-referrals and ordered parents is welcomed since this encompasses parents with a range of experience and backgrounds that is seen as valuable in the group work. Prior to the programme the facilitators carry out a home visit and parents are invited to sign up to the eight-week commitment before the course starts. Parents complete the Parent Stress Scale and the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire at the beginning and end of the course. Both these measures are used to identify and evaluate changes in behaviour.

Programme 3

The Parent-Talk programme was written by the co-ordinator and follows a broadly humanistic, parent-centred approach, which respects the rights of both parent and young person. The programme was influenced by Family Caring Trust materials, Transactional Analysis and Solution Focused Brief Therapy. Traditional parenting skills and communication skills are included and there is a lot of work trying to enhance parents' self-esteem. Discipline problems are not discussed until week six when they consider boundaries. The remainder of the programme is around negotiating boundaries. Participants engage in discussion groups, video-activities, role-play activities and exercises to carry out at home. The programme has a core of nine weeks, with three additional sessions offered. These extra sessions are planned to suit the needs of each group of parents and might be spread over a period of time. Prior to the

programme, time is spent engaging parents by home visits and telephone support. All courses have a mixture of parents ordered to attend and those attending voluntarily, with referrals coming from across the county. Parents complete a formal evaluation at the beginning and end of the course. It is seen as critical that facilitators attend two sessions of supervision during the programme.

Programme 4

This programme runs at a Family Centre and adopts the Family Caring Trust material as the base. The programme has been running for eight years with each course lasting for seven weeks. The sessions are interactive and involve much discussion and handouts. All parents attend voluntarily, although if it is apparent in the Stay and Play sessions run at the Family Centre that a parent is having some difficulties then they might be encouraged to attend. There is a lot of communication with most of the parents before the course because they are already attending the centre. A crèche runs alongside the programme and it is seen as critical that the children have a positive experience in the crèche. Most of the participants are mothers since the course runs during the day at the centre. However, a group for fathers run on a Saturday worked well. A group also runs to support parents with children who have special needs. In some instances the facilitators have referred parents on for more specialised help from the Family Nurturing Network.

Programme 5

The Family Links Nurturing Programme is followed drawing on material from the book *The Parenting Puzzle.* The ten-week programme, which lasts for two hours each week, is school-based with all parents attending voluntarily. The programme caters for ten parents on each course. The school, which hosts the programme, also runs the Nurturing Programme for pupils. All school staff have received training for this, particularly focusing on emotional literacy, and the pupils follow a ten-week programme throughout the year which is repeated each term. At each repetition the pupils explore issues taking a deeper approach. That the Nurturing Programme is run for pupils within the school means that there are strong links with the Nurturing Programme that is run for parents. This means that teachers can encourage parents to go on the programme from the premise that this is something that is already happening in school. There is a small drop out rate. The programme is based on four main ideas, called the Four Constructs: self-awareness and self-esteem, appropriate expectations, empathy and positive discipline. One of the key elements of the programme is to look at feelings that drive behaviour and to encourage parents to think about their own childhood and the impact that this has had on the way they parent their children. Weekly evaluations of the seminar are held and there are log forms about changes in the family during weeks 5 to 9. All facilitators are required to and receive training.

Programme 6

This Pre-Teens programme draws on the Family Caring Trust materials but the focus of each session is on the issues that the parents bring. The book provides the theory but the practical develops around what the parents bring since the facilitators work psychodynamically and focus on what is in the room. The programme lasts for six weeks and has a very low drop out rate. It runs on a termly basis. Anyone not attending would be followed up and these generally return. All referrals within this district come from the Parenting Co-ordinator who sifts through referrals and decides the most appropriate programme for parents to follow. Parents often self-refer, although there are good referral links with schools, GPs, Social Services, and Behaviour Support. Key themes, which arise within the groups, include issues about levels of independence, problem-solving, anger management, respect, discipline from the parents' perspective and milestones in adolescence. A huge number of parents go on to attend a workshop for further support after their initial course. This is run by the same organisation. All facilitators are required to and receive training and are offered

supervision at the end of the programme. In addition, there are annual training days. The facilitators are trained professionals including psychologists, social workers, counsellors and members of the behaviour support team.

Programme 7

The programme is based in a primary school for parents with children attending that school and follows the Family Links Nurturing Programme. The material for the programme is from the book *The Parenting Puzzle* – written by Family Links. The course has ten sessions, which take place during the school day, and looks at giving praise, family rules, self-esteem, choices and consequences, using "I" statements, nurturing ourselves, children's development, sexual issues, problem-solving and taking stock. There are no real difficulties with recruiting parents to the programme, although in addition to those parents voluntarily signing up, the Head will target and encourage some parents to attend, whom it is felt would benefit. Perhaps unusually, a number of the parents, nearly all mothers, have attended the course twice. The first course helped address some of their issues and the second course enabled them to consolidate some of the ideas and reflect more clearly on the parenting of their children. In addition, during the second course they act as buddies/mentors for the new parents to the group. The school is fortunate in that Sure Start fund a crèche, which is viewed as essential. In addition, Sure Start has provided funding for board games for the parents to play with their family. The school practices positive behaviour management, which links well with the aims of the Nurturing Programme.

Programme 8

This parenting programme is based in a community centre and draws in a range of people. Recruitment is through the advertising within the community and also the local vicar, who facilitates, encourages her congregation to attend. The Family Links Nurturing Programme is followed and runs during the evenings for ten sessions. The material for the programme is from the book *The Parenting Puzzle* – written by Family Links. The programme looks at giving praise, family rules, self-esteem, choices and consequences, using "I" statements, nurturing ourselves, children's development, sexual issues, problem-solving and taking stock. The programme is based on four ideas, called the Four Constructs: self-awareness and self-esteem, appropriate expectations, empathy and positive discipline. All participants attend voluntarily but of interest is the profile of people who attend the course. This included grandparents, parents and people who are not parents but work with children e.g. a teacher and a youth worker. This meant that there were many different viewpoints within the group, which makes for interesting discussions. After completing the programme many of the participants go on to other courses. This is assisted by the fact that the community centre has UK Online and hence many participants go on to take part in computer courses. The facilitators have at least two supervision sessions during the course.

Programme 9

A multi disciplinary team wrote this programme (Confident Parents Confident Kids) in 1997 including: NSPCC, Social Services, a Health Visitor, a teacher and an Educational Psychologist. The Educational Psychology Service took responsibility for the training. The programme consists of eight weekly sessions each lasting for less than 2 hours. These focus on the myth of the 'Perfect Parent', the ABCs of managing behaviour, praise and rewards, child's play, reducing difficult behaviour, managing more serious difficulties and looking after yourself. There is a follow up session, which occurs 5 or 6 weeks after the course has finished. The programme is for parents with children between the ages of 18 months and 8 years. Parents generally volunteer to attend the programme and self-refer, but referrals are received from Social Services and Health Visitors. Schools also refer parents with children with attendance and behaviour issues. Evaluations are carried out at the end of every session with a simple dartboard and at

the end of the programme there is a full questionnaire evaluation which parents complete.   All facilitators receive training.

Programme 10
This programme (Supporting Parents of Teenagers) was a multi–agency initiative between the County Council Education Department, the County Council Social Services Department, the local YOT and the local NHS Trust. The eight-week course is based on an eclectic model and each session runs for 2 hours. Areas explored include teenage development, parenting styles including ABC and making changes, communication skills in relation to non-verbal communication and active listening, conflict between parent and teenager, problem solving, negotiating and compromising, responsibility and independence, setting boundaries, taking responsibility and promoting independence, enjoying being a parent and looking after yourself. The course is for parents with children between the ages of 10 and 17 years and programmes are generally held in community venues. Referrals come from any agency in contact with parents of teenagers and parents are also able to self-refer. It is seen as important that parents want to attend and commit to attending all eight sessions. The parents complete the pre course questionnaire during a home visit before the programme starts. A post course questionnaire is also completed at the end of the course. In addition, weekly evaluations are carried out whereby parents rate how enjoyable or useful a session was. Facilitators receive training for two days.

Programme 11
Educational Psychology and Behaviour Support Services wrote this six-week programme jointly. It is based on an Assertive Discipline model with each session lasting for 1 hour.   The first two sessions are mainly teaching about the method and the following three sessions are based around things that the parents ask for help with. The final session is used to set up a support group. The programme explores issues relating to routine mealtimes, bedtimes, homework, getting children to do what the parents have asked them to do, building relationships between the adult and the child and looking at how these impact on the way the children behave. The programme generally runs for between 4 and 12 parents who have children of primary school age. Classes are school based in Foundation stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. Schools request parenting courses and open the training to any of their parents. Parents who are identified as having difficulties with their children are encouraged to attend. Parents attend the programme on a voluntary basis and may self-refer. Referrals are also accepted from Social Services, YOT and EWS. Parents complete a formal evaluation at the end of the course. The training of the facilitators is carried out through shadowing, either with an Educational Psychologist or a member of the Behaviour Support Team.

Programme 12
The Adult College provide the 'Right Start' behaviour course. It caters for up to 15 parents with sessions taking place in schools. Any parent with a child attending the school can attend the course, although the course was initially targeted at parents with children between 3 and 7 years. Parents are encouraged to self-refer although school staff may target parents who have asked for help and Social Services have also referred. Parents need to show a willingness to attend the course. The programme was based on the NCH training model, which incorporated ideas from Assertive Discipline. The course runs for six weeks with 2-hour sessions. Following an introductory session, which gives parents a flavour of the whole programme, the main areas of focus include identifying behaviour difficulties and prioritising, being a good enough parent, rules and having clear expectations, consequences and the reinforcement of behaviour, rewards and positive behaviour management. In addition to the main programme a workshop session follows about six weeks later where parents are able to come back and talk about how things are going and whether they want any

further support. Parents complete a self-assessment form at the start and end of the course. All tutors are trained and the course is modelled from one facilitator to another.

Programme 13
This programme is only for parents with children aged 10 years and over. The programme runs for eight weeks with each session lasting for 2 hours. The programme focuses on the needs of the parents with each programme being adapted to the needs of the individual parents. Key themes, which arise within the groups, include: building communication, building relationships, self–esteem, health and drugs issues and peer pressure. At present parents only attend on a compulsory basis and referrals currently are received from the Youth Offending Team and the courts.   When a referral is received the facilitator will make contact with the parent to arrange a home visit. Parents can come and drop in at the centre at any point and can also make telephone contact if needed. Travel expenses are paid when parents attend the programme. The programme is evaluated using pre and post questionnaires. In addition, the parents provide verbal feedback after every session. All staff delivering the programme are required to complete in-house training before taking on the role of facilitator.

Programme 14
The Education Welfare Officer and Youth Offending Team work together to co-facilitate the course. They use the LEA 'Let's Talk' parenting programme and have completed training given by the LEA Service in order to deliver this. The focus of the programme is on the use of reflective processes and also to build parent's confidence and self-esteem to deal with situations. The programme includes: getting to know each other, the parenting job and how the behaviour of parents can affect children, naming feelings, getting along together including ways of negotiating with children, developing compromises and getting to win solutions, understanding each other, developing the skills needed to create an atmosphere conductive to positive communication, making choices, setting an example and where do we go from here? The programme can be adapted depending on the needs of the parents in the group and runs termly with eight hourly sessions. Referrals come from YOT, EWS and Social Services only. A home visit is carried out before the course starts. Parents have weekly feedback sheets and the facilitators evaluate at the end of every session. The parents also complete a pre course questionnaire. The facilitators receive three days of training for the programme.

Programme 15
ESCAPE is a positive parenting programme, which adopts a problem solving approach. It looks at six key elements, which include: empathy – how do I feel as a parent and how is my teenager feeling, situation – looking at things which might occur, care and control – where responsibility lies, approach – how do we approach things as parents, positives – including experiences, rewards and bribes and empowerment. Parallel Lines, is a programme for the young people, which runs alongside the parents' sessions. It follows the same six elements of the parenting programme. Parents are invited to attend on a voluntary basis although voluntary and compulsory ordered parents attend the same group. Parents with children of all ages can attend the programme and courses are usually held in schools or community venues. Home visits are made before the course starts and within the programme there are two follow up sessions. One follow up session is usually carried out in the form of a home visit, where a family grid is completed. The training of the facilitators is carried out using a cascade model.

Programme 16
Parenting programmes are offered by the Parent Partnership Service. This programme, Managing Inappropriate Behaviour runs for ten weeks with sessions lasting for 1½ hours. The programme was written by the Education Welfare and Parent Partnership Services. The focus is on behaviour and attendance, although time is also spent on developing the confidence and self-esteem of the parents. Themes covered in the

programme include: attendance, rules, relationships and responsibilities, communication, positive behaviour and stress management, assertiveness, drugs, alcohol and sex, conflict resolution and action planning. The programme is flexible and, following on from a discussion with the parents in week one, is adapted to match their needs. Attendance on the programme is determined by the age of the child and generally the programme caters for between 10 and 15 parents. All parents attend on a voluntary basis. Parents are also targeted if their child is known to the service. Others who have referred include EWO, Social Services, Health Visitors, schools and SENCOs. The evaluation of the programme draws on verbal feedback from parents and parents also complete a questionnaire at the middle and end of the course. All parents are awarded a certificate for completing the course.

Programme 17
This six-week programme is for parents with primary age children who are under 10 years of age. Each session lasts for 2 hours and follows an eclectic approach in which the programme is adapted to the needs of the parents. Themes covered include: getting to know one another and looking at what we call misbehaviour, approaches to behaviour, ABC analysing behaviour, listening and talking with children. The final sessions includes a celebration and an overview of what has been covered. Parents usually attend the programme on a voluntary basis although Social Workers can suggest that parents attend the course. The training is carried out through shadowing another facilitator. The programme is evaluated using an Eyberg and Rosenberg self-esteem measure. At the end of the programme parents may ask about other courses to attend and the facilitators would then signpost them to another course relevant to their needs.

Programme 18
This twelve-week Webster-Stratton programme is based on a pyramid system that focuses on positive relationships and time and works on having a solid foundation. Each session lasts for 2 hours.   Throughout role modelling principles are used to look at illustrated examples of behaviour. This programme is for parents with children between the ages of 2 – 10 years and courses are held in schools or community venues. It is seen as important that childcare is offered for free. When the programme is run in the evening couples are encouraged to attend. Of note is that during attendance on the course the tutor makes contact with the parents through the week to monitor their progress. A 'buddy system' with another parent is also encouraged. Parents may self-refer and referrals are also received from Health Visitors, Social Services, School Health Practitioners, CAMHS, EWO, School staff, Child and Family Support Team, Probation, Midwife and Home Start. Tutors and parents complete an end of course evaluation in addition to weekly evaluations. The programme is also evaluated using the Eyberg and Rosenberg self-esteem measure. The Webster-Stratton course has a three-day training requirement.

Programme 19
Surviving Your Teenager runs for twelve weeks and draws on the behaviourist model and Solution Focused Therapy. The programme though is adapted according to the needs of the parents. Areas covered include: identifying behaviours – coping skills and feelings, targeted behaviour – different approaches, children's needs and feelings, assertiveness, communication, consequences, punishment and consistency, boundary setting, introducing their children to the group and saying something positive about your child and building parents' self-confidence. In the final celebration session parents are presented with certificates. Courses are run in schools or community venues for parents who have children between the ages of 9–17 years. Parents may self-refer and referrals are also received from Health Visitors, Social Services, School Health Practitioners, CAMHS, EWO, School staff, Child and Family Support Team, Probation,

Midwife and Home Start. The programme is evaluated using an Eyberg and Rosenberg self-esteem measure. Training is carried out through shadowing another facilitator.

Programme 20
The programme follows the Family Caring Trust model, but also incorporates other materials. This 7-week programme explores why your child behaves in the way they do. Issues addressed include: helping a child become more responsible for themselves, encouraging children, listening skills and how do we listen, communication problems, discipline in relation to setting boundaries, rules and consequences and talking things through together. The final session provides an opportunity for a review. Each programme caters for a maximum of 10 parents with attendance determined by the age of the child. Referrals are taken on an informal basis from Family Support professionals, including Social Services and Learning Mentors. Parents generally attend on a voluntary basis, although some parents have been actively encouraged to attend. There is an evaluation at the end of each session in addition to an end of course evaluation. Parents are also contacted 6 months after the completion of the programme for a further post-course evaluation. The tutors have adult training qualifications and skills for leading parenting programmes. This is a level 3 accredited course, which is delivered in house for the facilitators. In some cases parents have gone on to train to become a facilitator after completing a parenting programme.

Programme 21
The programme draws on the Family Caring Trust materials. This Teens programme is a 7-week programme and looks at: misbehaviour, listening, encouragement, managing conflict, discipline and the healthy family. Each group has a maximum of 10 parents and attendance is determined by the age of the child. Referrals are taken on an informal basis from Family Support professionals including Social Services and Learning Mentors. Most parents attend the group on a voluntary basis, although some parents have been actively encouraged to attend. There is an evaluation at the end of each session in addition to an end of course evaluation. There is a further post course evaluation 6 months after the completion of the programme. The tutors have adult training qualifications and skills for leading parenting programmes. This is a level 3 accredited course, which is delivered in house for the facilitators. In some cases parents have gone on to train to become a facilitator after completing a parenting programme.   Training courses are also provided for parenting group leaders.

Programme 22
Parenting Plus wrote this programme in conjunction with Educational Psychologists, the Primary Integration Team, a teacher and the Co-ordinator of Adult Education.   The programme for the younger children is based on the Webster-Stratton model.
The Coping with Kids programme, 'Getting it right', is for parents with children between the ages of 4–8 years old. This programme runs each term for ten weeks, with sessions lasting for 2 hours. The programme includes: understanding children's development, talking and playing together, knowing ourselves, raising self-esteem, setting boundaries, applying rewards and sanctions, dealing with your angry child and dealing with agencies. At the beginning of the course an individual education plan is completed which looks at short and long-term goals. This is addressed at the beginning, middle and end of the course, where an exit strategy is looked at. The course leads to Level 1 ONC accreditation. Referrals are received from: Social Services, YOT, EWS, Health, Young Persons' Centre (drugs), Teenage Pregnancy, GPs and CAMHS. Classes are usually held in the Sure Start buildings in the communities. All tutors need to have a City and Guilds 703 qualification in addition to attending a three-day training course for the Parenting Plus programme.

Programme 23

The Making Changes Parenting Programme is a joint initiative undertaken by the Education and Social Services Department to address problems that parents may be experiencing with their children. The programme lasts for eight weeks with 2 hourly sessions. The course covers: self-esteem, listening, communication, managing conflict in the family, negotiation, boundaries, using new skills and the importance of education. The final session enables parents to review what has been achieved and also to reflect on maintaining changes. Parents receive a pre and post course visit in their home. During the first visit an initial assessment is made and the post course visit provides an opportunity for evaluation. Referrals are received from Education, Health, the voluntary sector and YOT. Parents are generally referred on a voluntary basis, although there has been a compulsory referral. The facilitators have not undertaken facilitator training for the course, since they wrote the programme themselves, however they do bring experience from their existing roles. Training is offered to other people who purchase this parenting programme.

Appendix 2

Phase 1 interviews

Interview schedule for responsible LEA officer

1. LEA …………………………………………………………………………….

2. Name of contact …………………………………………………………………..

3. Title and responsibility …………………………………………………………….

General

4. Please list the organisations within the LEA that run parenting programmes that you are aware of (even if you don't refer parents to them)

Organisation offering parenting programmes within the LEA	Contact Name	Number of programmes you have referred parents to for each organisation	Number of parents you have referred	Type of parenting programme(s) the organisation offers	Age group of child programme targets (if specified)

5. For how many years have these programmes been run?

Referrals

6. What is the mechanism for referring parents to the parenting programmes, e.g. self-referral, LEA referral, school referral via LEA, etc.?

7. Are there specific programmes for those ordered to attend compared to those attending on a voluntary basis?

8. If you allocate parents to distinct programmes depending on whether they are attending voluntarily or compulsorily, please explain why?

9. If you don't allocate parents on this basis, please explain why.

Referrals by compulsory order – questions refer to the academic year 2002/03

10. How many parents have been issued a compulsory order by the courts as a result of prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 in the academic year 2002/03?

11. How many of these attended?

12. What was their gender? What was their ethnicity? Did they have any other defining characteristics, e.g. single parents?

13. How many parents dropped out?

14. Why did they drop out?

15. Were parents of different ages sent to different parenting programmes? If so, please explain the procedures.

Referrals on a voluntary basis – questions refer to the academic year 2002/03

16. How many parents have been referred on a voluntary basis in the academic year 2002/03?

17. How many parents have been referred specifically to help improve their child's attendance?

18. How many parents have been referred specifically to help improve their child's behaviour at school?

19. For what other reasons have parents been referred?

20. Is there any particular criteria upon which referrals are based?

21. How many parents referred on a voluntary basis attended?

22. What was their gender? What was their ethnicity? Did they have any other defining characteristics, e.g. single parents?

23. How many dropped out?

24. Why did they drop out?

25. Were parents of different ages sent to different parenting programmes? If so, please explain the procedures.

Structure and content of Programmes

26. Which approaches and teaching methods are used in the programmes? For instance, do they follow the Webster-Stratton model?

27. Are there any differences in the curriculum and organisation of programmes catering for parents of pupils with different types of problems, particularly behaviour and attendance?

28. What are the time scales involved in delivering different types of parenting programmes? Do they run for set periods of time, if so how many sessions?

29. How frequently do the programmes run?

30. When in the year do they start?

31. Do parenting programmes act as brokers to parents for other services? If so, what types of services?

Evaluation and impact of Programmes

32. Do you have a formal mechanism for the evaluation of parenting programmes? What is the mechanism?

33. If yes to question 30, which type of programmes have been most successful? In what ways?

34. Do you hold data on pupils of parents attending the programmes in order to record impact (e.g. data on attendance, exclusion, behaviour and attainment)?

35. From your perspective are there any difficulties experienced in relation to the parenting programmes?   If so, could you describe some of the main issues?

36. Where would you want to see improvements?

37. What quality assurance procedures do you operate in relation to parenting programmes, e.g. observation of teaching?

Funding

38. How are the different programmes funded e.g. Children's Fund, Behaviour Improvement Programme?

39. Are the funding arrangements effective?

40. Where would you want to see improvements in the funding arrangements?

41. Please use the space below for any other comments you wish to make.

Interview Schedule for those providing parenting programmes

1. LEA ……………………………………………………………………

2. Name of contact ……………………………………………………….

3. Title …………………………………………………………………….

4. Organisation ……………………………………………………………

General

5. How many different types of parenting programmes do you provide? Please give details of the different types.

6. How many parents do you cater for on each course?

7. Do you have single sex parenting programmes? If so, please give details.

8. Do programmes cater for parents of different ages? If so, please give details. e.g. teenage parents.

9. Are they split according to child age? Parent age? Type of problem?

10. What time of day are your parenting programmes held?

11. Where are they held?

12. How long have the parenting programmes been in operation?

Referrals

13. What is the mechanism for referring parents to the parenting programmes?

14. Do you have any specific criteria that must be met before you accept referrals?

15. Who refers parents to the programmes, e.g. self-referral, LEA referral, school referral via LEA, etc.?

16. Do LEAs refer parents of children to your programmes who have attendance or behavioural problems?

17. Are parents able to attend programmes on a voluntary basis? If so, are there specific programmes for those ordered to attend compared to those attending on a voluntary basis?

18. If you allocate parents to distinct programmes depending on whether they are attending voluntarily or compulsorily, please explain why. If you don't allocate parents on this basis, please explain why?

Referrals by compulsory order – questions refer to the academic year 2002-03

19. How many parents were referred to you on compulsory orders in the academic year 2002-03?

20. How many of these have been compulsory education-related orders (i.e. as a result of prosecution for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school)?

21. How many parents referred on compulsory orders have been referred by the LEA?

22. How many parents on education-related orders attended?

23. How many of those on other orders attended?

24. What was their gender? What was their ethnicity? Did they have any other defining characteristics, e.g. single parents?

25. How many of these parents dropped out?

26. Why did they drop out?

Referrals on a voluntary basis – questions refer to the academic year 2002-03

27. How many parents have been referred on a voluntary basis in the academic year 2002-03?

28. How many of these have been referred by the LEA?

29. Which other agencies make referrals on a voluntary basis?

30. For what reasons are referrals made?

31. How many parents referred on a voluntary basis attended?

32. What was their gender? What was their ethnicity? Did they have any other defining characteristics, e.g. single parents?

33. How many dropped out?

34. Why did they drop out?

Structure and content of Programmes

35. Which approaches and teaching methods are used in the programmes? For instance, do you follow the Webster-Stratton model?

36. Are there any differences in the curriculum and organisation of programmes catering for parents of pupils with different types of problems, particularly behaviour and attendance?

37. What are the time scales involved in delivering different types of parenting programmes? Do they run for set periods of time, if so how many sessions? When do the programmes start?

38. Do parenting programmes act as brokers to parents for other services? If so, what types of services?

Evaluation and impact of Programmes

39. Do you have any mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of your courses? If so, please describe them.

40. Are different types of parenting programmes evaluated in different ways? If so, could you explain how?

41. If you answered yes to question 39, which types of programmes have been most successful? In what way have they been successful?

42. Do you have readily available data for monitoring the progress in school of the children of the parents attending the programmes, e.g. attendance, exclusions, behaviour, attainment? If so, how do you use this data?

43. Do you report back to the LEA on impact after parents have completed the programme? If so, what form does this reporting take?

44. Are there any difficulties experienced in providing the programmes? If so, please describe some of the main issues.

45. How might the provision for the programmes be improved?

46. Are there sufficient programmes to satisfy demand? If not, please explain.

47. What appears to be working particularly well in the programmes?

48. Does this apply across different types of parents?

Funding

49. How are the different programmes funded e.g. Children's Fund, Behaviour Improvement Programme?

50. How effective are the funding arrangements?

Training

51. Are those teaching the programmes trained to do so? Is it a requirement that staff receive training before taking the programmes?

52. If so what form does this training take? Does it lead to any particular qualifications?

Further information

53. Please use the space below to add any comments that you wish to make.

Phase 2 interviews

Interview schedule for teachers/programme assistants

Questions will be made specific to the individual child in each instance.

1. Are you generally aware when parents attend a parenting programme? Does this vary according to whether the parent is attending due to a compulsory order or voluntarily?

2. Do you know what the parenting programme consists of?

3. What is the perceived impact of the parenting programme on the behaviour of the children whose parents are participating?

4. Can you give any specific examples of changes in behaviour?

5. If there has been some improvement in behaviour, do you think that this will be sustainable?

6. What is the perceived impact of the parenting programme on the attendance of the children whose parents are participating?

7. Can you give any examples of changes in attendance?

8. If there has been some improvement in attendance, do you think that this will be sustainable?

9. To what extent is the parenting programme successful for supporting all parents?

10. Are there particular groups of parents that benefit more than others? Why do you think this is?

11. Are there particular groups of pupils that benefit more than others? Why do you think this is?

12. Are they particular groups of pupils for whom the parenting programme seems less successful? If so, why do you think this is?

13. Are you aware of what the parents thought about the parenting programme?

14. To what extent does the parenting programme appear to be successful in assisting parents to support the academic development of their children?

15. Have you noticed any specific changes in this?

16. To what extent does the parenting programme appear to be successful in assisting parents to support the personal development of their children?

17. Have you noticed any specific changes in this?

18. Are you aware of any difficulties with the parenting programme?

19. Are there any instances where the parenting programme has been unsuccessful? If so, why do you think this is?

20. Would there be aspects of the parenting programme that you would wish to change? If so, why?

21. Have particular aspects of the parenting programmes been especially successful? If so, why do you think that is?

22. To what extent is the parenting programme likely to be successful in the longer term in improving the attendance of pupils?

23. To what extent is the parenting programme likely to be successful in the longer term in improving the behaviour of pupils?

24. Are there any other positive outcomes for pupils whose parents have attended a parenting programme?

25. What factors do you consider may be important in promoting success for the parenting programme in the longer term?

Interview Schedule for Parents

1. Would you tell me about your general feelings about attending the course? Do you have a sense of being a good or poor parent in relation to your children?

2. Did you and your partner attend the programme?

3. What was your expectation of the programme?

4. What was your experience of the parenting programme?

5. Why did you attend?

       If compulsory – follow up and ask how they felt about that?

       If voluntarily ask what/who encouraged them to attend and why?

6. Do you think that the parenting programme was useful in helping you to improve your parenting skills? Could you give an example?

7. Were there particular skills that you felt you needed help with? Could you give an example?

8. Do you think that the parenting programme helped you in making changes in your behaviour in relation to your child? Could you give an example?

9. Overall, how helpful do you think the parenting programme was?

10. Did the parenting programme meet your needs? In what way?

11. Did you experience any difficulties with the parenting programme, for instance:

       Was it easy to get there?

       Did you like the accommodation?

       Did you feel that the facilitators listened to you?

       Did you feel that the facilitators understood your difficulties?

       Were there any difficulties in relation to the other parents?

       Were there any difficulties with the size and make-up of the group?

12. Are there any ways in which you think the parenting programme could be improved? If so, why?

13. Where there any unexpected benefits from attending the parenting programme? (It might be in terms of making friends, sharing problems, meeting other people).

       Could you give an example?

11. Do you think that you have changed your attitudes and behaviour towards your child? Could you say a little about this?

12. Do you think that changes in your attitudes and behaviour have had an impact on your child's behaviour?

13. Have changes in your attitudes and behaviour made a difference to your child's self-esteem or confidence?

14. Have changes in your attitudes and behaviour made a difference to your child's attendance at school?

15. Have changes in your attitudes and behaviour made a difference to your child's approach to his/her school work?

16. Have you noticed any other differences in your child? (This might be in terms of friends, getting on with teachers.)

17. What are your hopes for your child in the future?

18. Do you think that the changes you have made in your behaviour towards your child will be maintained over the next year? If not, why is this and would it help to have further support? If so, what?

20. Do you think that the changes you have made in your parenting skills towards your child will be maintained over the next year? If not, why is this and would it help to have further support? If so, what?

19. Has there been an impact on your other children or perhaps any changes in the family? Try to draw out the impact on their partner and also issues relating to the non-resident parent.

20. Would you have wished your partner to attend? What difference do you think this might have made?

21. Has this always been the case or has it changed since you went on the parenting programme?

22. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

LEA Interview schedule to be used for exploring LEA management of programmes

1. Could you tell me something of the historical perspective of parenting programmes within the LEA?

2. Do you think parenting programmes are effective?

3. Why do you refer parents to parenting programmes?

4. Do you refer one or both parents?

5. What is the level of provision for parenting programmes with the LEA?

6. Are there particular providers that you use?

7. Do you refer parents specifically to different programmes? If so, could you explain why?

8. Does this vary according to whether the parent is on a compulsory order as opposed to when they attend voluntarily?

9. How do the referral mechanisms operate? Are these effective?

10. How is communication maintained with the providers of parenting programmes?

11. Are there any difficulties in communicating with the providers of parenting programmes?

12. How aware are you of what the different parenting providers offer?

13. Are evaluation mechanisms set up between the LEA and the providers of parenting programmes? Are these effective? How is quality assurance monitored?

14. How is information conveyed to parents within the LEA about the level of provision that is offered? Is this effective?

15. How to you encourage parents to attend parenting programmes? Are there any difficulties with this?

16. Are different groups of parents more difficult to engage? How do you engage hard to reach parents?

17. Do you find that many of the parents need additional support from other agencies?

18. How effective are the links with other agencies, for instance, social services and CAMHS?

19. How involved are parents in the contributing to the evaluation of different programmes? For instance, is there a parenting forum?

20. What are the funding arrangements within the LEA for parenting programmes? Is this effective?

21. Given the new powers in the Anti-social Behaviour Act, how will this impact of the level of provision within the LEA? For instance, will this provide difficulties in relation to provision, funding, location or facilitators?

22. Are there any changes in the type of service that you offer that are going to be made in the future?

23. What would help the LEA to have more control?

Interview schedule for other LEA personnel or those working closely with the affected pupils (e.g. BEST, EWO)

1. What is the nature of your role for pupils whose parents are attending the parenting programme?

2. What are the types of difficulties experienced by the pupils whose parents are attending the parenting programme?

3. What is the perceived impact of the parenting programme on the behaviour of the children whose parents are participating?

4. Can you give any specific examples of changes in behaviour?

5. If there has been some improvement in behaviour, do you think that this will be sustainable?

6. What is the perceived impact of the parenting programme on the attendance of the children whose parents are participating?

7. Can you give any examples of changes in attendance?

8. If there has been some improvement in attendance, do you think that this will be sustainable?

9. To what extent is the parenting programme successful for supporting all parents?

10. Are there particular groups of parents that benefit more than others? Why do you think this is?

11. Are there particular groups of pupils that benefit more than others? Why do you think this is?

12. Are there particular groups of pupils for whom the parenting programme seems less successful? If so, why do you think this is?

13. Are you aware of what the parents thought about the parenting programme? Did this vary according to different groups of parents?

14. What is the impact on the families of those attending the parenting programme?

15. Are there any instances where the parenting programme has been unsuccessful? If so, why do you think this is?

16. Would there be aspects of the parenting programme that you would wish to change? If so, why?

17. Have particular aspects of the parenting programmes been especially successful? If so, why do you think that is?

Interview schedule for those involved in running the parenting programmes

1. Would you give a brief overview of the parenting programme?

2. What specific model/approach is adopted? Do you adapt the model/approach at all? Why did you choose that particular approach?

3. What types of difficulties does the parenting programme address?

4. Do you have parents attending on a voluntary basis as well as on a compulsory order? If so, how well do you think this works?

5. Would you prefer to see both groups of parents separately? If so, why?

6. How much communication do you have with parents before the parenting programme begins?

7. Is there any follow up work after parents have attended the programme?

8. What do you think the impact is on the families attending the parenting programmes? Could you give an example?

9. Are there particular aspects of the programme that have a major impact on parents' attitudes towards their children?

10. Are there particular aspects of the programme that have a major impact on parents' behaviour towards their children?

11. Have you found that for parents attending the parenting programme that other issues arise which can then be met by other agencies? Could you give an example?

12. What is the impact of the parenting programme on the behaviour of the children whose parents are participating?

13. What is the impact of the parenting programme on the attendance of the children whose parents are participating?

14. Does the parenting programme work well for different types of parents? If so, please describe.

15. What is your perception of the likelihood of long-term changes in parents' behaviour?

16. Is this the same for all parents? If not, please explain.

17. What are some of the difficulties or obstacles in running the programme?

18. Are there any ways in which the programme could be improved?

19. Which aspects of the programme appear to be working particularly well?

20. Are there any other perceived outcomes either positive or negative?

21. Would you tell me about your previous experience and the training that you have received to be a facilitator? How long was it, is it accredited? Are there opportunities for further training?

Interview schedule for pupils

1. Are you aware that your parents have attended the NAME parenting programme?

2. Do you know why that was? Try to explore whether this was for compulsory or prosecution issues.

3. If so, follow up whether it was for behaviour or attendance and the nature of their difficulties.

   If not, then ask about attendance and behaviour and any difficulties experienced at school.

4. Do you think that there have been any changes in the way your parents' treat you since they attended the programme?

5. Could you describe any differences that you have noticed?

6. Do you think that the change in your parents' attitude towards you has helped you? For instance, has it helped you at school and at home?

7. Are there other changes in your parent's behaviour towards you that would help you? Could you describe them and say why this might help.

8. Have you acted any differently at school since your parents attended the programme?

9. Are you aware of any differences in your behaviour at home since your parents attending the programme?

10. Have there been any changes in your attendance since your parents attended the programme?

11. a) If attendance has improved then ask about the impact of returning to school on their schoolwork

11. b) If attendance has improved then ask about the impact of returning to school on their social life.

OR

12. a) If attendance has not improved then ask about the impact of this on their schoolwork

12. b) If attendance has not improved then ask about the impact of this on their social life

13. What happens at school at the moment? Do you like school? Do you go?

14. Do you get any help at school at the moment? For instance an EWO, learning mentor, teaching assistant et al?

15. What sort of help do you get?

16. Do you find this useful?

17. Would you like more help? If so, what?

18. How helpful are your parents in encouraging you to attend school all the time?

19. Do your parents encourage you to behave well at school?

20. What plans do you have for the future?

21. Did you notice anything else when your parents attended the parenting programmes?

22. Do you think they have changed?

23. Do you think you have changed?

Evaluation of Parenting Programmes – Follow up interview for parents who do not attend or have dropped out of the programme

1. Why did you feel unable to attend/ continue attending the parenting programme? Was it because:
- the centre was not easy to get to;
- there were problems with child care;
- there were costs involved with getting to the parenting programme;
- there were difficulties with transport;
- the programmes addressed issues that were too sensitive for me.
- you did not feel confident with the group;
- you felt that you were not getting enough out of the programme;
- was there another reason?

2. How many sessions did you attend?

3. Were there any aspects/ or particular sessions of the programme you enjoyed? If so, why?

4. Were there any aspects/ or particular sessions of the programme that you disliked? If so, why?

5. Was the programme useful or helpful for you?

6. Did you find the facilitators of the programme helpful? If so, can you please explain how?

7. What would you have liked to be included on the parenting programme?

8. Do you feel anything could have been done to prevent you from dropping out of the parenting programme?

9. How did you come to be involved with the parenting programme? Did you attend the programme on a voluntary basis/ or your own initiative? Were you encouraged to attend by the school or EWO? Are you attending as the result of a parenting order? Is there another reason?

10. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Evaluation of Parenting Programmes – Pre course

On behalf of the DfES, a team of researchers from the Institute of Education, University of London, is carrying out research into different parenting programmes. As part of this evaluation your views are being sought on the impact of parenting programmes. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, it is just important for you to be as honest as you can.

All responses will be confidential and only the researchers will see your answers. It would be very helpful if you would provide your name since we would like to ask you some further questions when you have completed the parenting programme. Once you have completed the questionnaire would you put it in the envelope provided and hand it to the person taking the programme.

Thank you for your help.

Name: **Age in years:**

Child's name: **Child's age in years:**

Are you male or female?

Male		Female	

Is English your first language?

Yes		No	

Would you please tick the box that describes your marital status

Married or living with a partner		Single or not living with a partner	

Would you please tick the box that describes your ethnic origin

White British		White Irish		Other White background			
Mixed White and Black Caribbean		Mixed White and Black African		Mixed White and Asian		Other Mixed background	
Indian		Pakistani		Bangladeshi		Other Asian background	
Caribbean		African		Other Black background			
Chinese		Other ethnic group		Not stated			

Would you please tick the box that best describes what you

In full time paid employment		In part time paid employment	
Unemployed and looking for work		In full time education or training	
Unable to work		Looking after home and family	
Something else			

Would you tick the box that describes why are you involved in the parenting programme? (Tick all that apply)

I received a parenting order		I volunteered to come	
I was referred by someone (e.g. health visitor, social services, school or doctor)			

The parenting programme

Please indicate your thoughts about the parenting programme by ticking the appropriate box.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I am looking forward to the parenting programme					
2	I think the parenting programme will be helpful to me					
3	I am looking for support to feel more confident in dealing with my child					
4	I am looking for support with communicating with my child					
5	I am looking for support with handling arguments with my child					
6	I am looking for support with setting boundaries with my child					
7	I am looking for support with disciplining my child					
8	I am looking for support to improve my child's attendance at school					
9	I am looking for support to improve my child's behaviour at school					
10	I am looking for support to improve my child's behaviour at home					
11	I am looking forward to talking with other parents					
12	It will be easy for me to attend the parenting programme					

13. Is there anything else that you are expecting from the programme?

14. Do you have any concerns about attending the parenting programme?

35Questions about your child's behaviour and attendance

Please indicate your thoughts about your child's behaviour and attendance over the last **two terms**. The questions cover a wide age range of children, but please try to respond as best as you can by ticking the appropriate box.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	My child has difficulties with behaviour in school					
2	My child has difficulties with behaviour at home					
3	My child has difficulties with behaviour when not at school or home					
4	My child is sometimes excluded from school for problems related to behaviour					
5	My child has difficulties with attending school regularly					
6	My child has difficulties with attending school on time					
7	My child has difficulties with concentrating at school					
8	My child has difficulties with concentrating at home					
9	My child has emotional difficulties					
10	My child becomes upset because of his/her difficulties					
11	My child's difficulties interfere with home life					
12	My child's difficulties interfere with friendships					
13	My child's difficulties interfere with time spent at school					
14	My child's difficulties interfere with his/her learning					
15	My child's difficulties interfere with his/his leisure activities					
16	My child's difficulties place a burden on me					
17	My child's difficulties place a burden on family life					
18	My child is considerate of other people's feelings					
19	My child is restless and cannot stay still for long					
20	My child often feels unwell					
21	My child is able to share things with others e.g. games, food, pens					
22	My child has temper tantrums					

23	My child spends most of his/her time alone					
24	My child usually obeys adults					
25	My child is often worried or anxious					
26	My child is helpful if someone is hurt, upset, or feeling unwell					
27	My child fidgets all the time					
28	My child has at least one good friend					
29	My child often bullies other children					
30	My child often gets involved in fights					
31	My child is often upset or feeling miserable					
32	My child is liked by other children of his/her age					
33	My child is easily distracted					
34	My child is confident in himself/herself					
35	My child is nervous in new situations					
36	My child is kind to younger children					
37	My child is picked on by other children					
38	My child is bullied by other children					
39	My child volunteers to help other people (friends, teachers, parents)					
40	My child thinks about things before he/she does them					
41	My child prefers to spend time with people older than himself/herself					
42	My child prefers to spend time with adults					
43	My child has a good attention span					
44	My child works hard at things					

45. How many days was your child absent from school in the last term?   ....

46. Was you child excluded from school during the last term?   ....

If so, for how many days was your child excluded from school?   ....

Questions about your relationship with your child

Please indicate your thoughts about your current relationship with your child by ticking the appropriate box. As before the questions cover a wide age range of children, so just do your best to respond.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I spend a lot of time talking with my child					
2	My child is able to listen to my point of view					
3	My child understands how I am feeling					
4	My child and I argue a lot					
5	My child and I don't seem able to talk with each other without arguing					
6	My child often goes out without me					
7	When my child goes out without me I know where he/she is					
8	When my child goes out without me I know what he/she is doing					
9	When my child goes out without me I know who he/she is with					
10	When my child goes out without me I know what time he/she will be back					
11	I often praise my child					
12	I often tell my child that she/he matters to me					
13	I often tell my child that I care for her/him					
14	I often criticise my child					
15	I often lose my temper with my child					
15	When we have an argument I am able to talk calmly with my child					
16	When we have an argument I refuse to talk about it					
17	When we have an argument I shout at my child					
18	When we have an argument I say nasty things to my child					
19	When we have an argument I stomp off					
20	When we have an argument I threaten to hit my child					

21	When we have an argument I threaten to throw something at my child					
22	In the past I threw something at my child when we had an argument					
23	I understand why my child behaves as he/she does					
24	I am able to set ground rules for my child					
25	My child does as I ask					
26	I am able to solve problems with my child without having an argument					
27	I feel that my child respects me					
28	My child doesn't listen to what I say					
29	My child does whatever he/she wants, no matter what I say					
30	My child pushes me to breaking point					
31	I know how my child is feeling					
32	I trust my child					
33	I trust my child to behave responsibly					
34	I know where to turn for help with my child					
35	Over the last month I have coped well with my child's behaviour					
36	Over the last month I have coped well with my child's attendance at school					

37. Please add any other comments that you would like to make.