Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The well-being of children in the UK is being compromised with large numbers of children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This is a significant issue for society since the long term consequences of these problems include impaired educational development, later adult mental health problems, early entry into crime and high social and financial costs. Since parents are fundamental to their children's development there has been considerable interest in the development of programmes that support the parent role including those that are intended to enhance the understanding and skills of parents through direct training. There is now considerable evidence to suggest that such programmes do have benefits in improving antisocial behaviour in children and the psychological and social functioning of parents. However there is a need to examine the effectiveness of such programmes in the real world as opposed to optimal conditions and also to provide evidence for the use of non-UK programmes in this country.

This report presents the evidence of the evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP). The PEIP was a DCSF funded programme over the period September 2006 – March 2008 at a cost of £7.6 million in DCSF grant payments to LAs. PEIP funded 18 local authorities (LAs) to implement one of three selected parenting programmes with parents of children aged 8 – 13 years: Incredible Years, Triple P and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, selected as having a sound evidence base for their effectiveness. The main aim of the study was to explore the roll out of these three programmes on a large scale across a substantial number of LAs: to examine parent and child outcomes, cost-effectiveness and the processes that optimise (or impair) the delivery of parenting programmes.

This is the final report of the evaluation; details of interim reports are provided at the end of the Executive Summary. It provides an overview of the whole study but focuses mainly on two strands: the outcome data on the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of PEIP and the process data exploring how and why the PEIP has achieved the results that it has. Three interim reports provide fuller information on earlier phases of the study.

Main Findings

- The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder has been successful in rolling out three evidence-based parenting programmes across 18 LAs with high levels of positive gains for parents and their children.
- The PEIP increased the pool of trained facilitators: approximately 1100 additional trained staff.
- PEIP provided parenting training for 3575 parents on 425 courses of which 338 courses finished by the end of the PEIP and 87 were continuing.
- Parental course completion rate was good and similar across programmes: 73% of parents overall.
- The training was very successful as measured by improvements in the parents' mental well-being, their parenting skills, their sense of being a parent, and also in the behaviour of the child about whom they were concerned.
- The three programmes produced comparable outcomes on all measures of improvement.
- Cost effectiveness varied greatly between LAs using the same programme indicating the importance of local policy and organisational factors.
- Cost effectiveness also varied between the three programmes: the average cost per parent completing was £2955, with Incredible Years courses being the most costly.

Detailed findings

General Outcome
- There was universal enthusiasm for the project from all groups involved in terms of the success of the roll out and the outcomes.
- The outcome measures suggest that the programmes had very positive effects on the parents' mental well-being; their perceptions of themselves as a parent and their parenting skills; and their perceptions of their children's behaviour.

Programme Differences
- Although the three programmes all include a focus on parenting, based upon social learning theory, they differ in:
  - length of sessions;
  - length of courses;
  - intensity of focus on parenting;

- their specific training methods;
- the style of training;
- additional issues included (e.g. culture, violence, parental mental health problems and relationship difficulties);
- and the system context; only Triple P specify an integrated intervention system.

- All three programmes provided similar facilitator training programmes and specified supervision and accreditation procedures, with the Incredible Years being the most elaborate.

- All programmes have considered or are in the process of considering the extent to which their training meets the National Occupational Standards for work with parents.

Management of Roll-out

- Although DSCF were perceived as supportive and helpful, the set up timescales were seen as unrealistic and not allowing enough time for the complex organisational task.

- There were wide variations in how long it took local authorities to be in a position to run their first groups and in a small number of LAs very few had finished by the time the project ended. Delays resulted from the recruitment and training of facilitators, setting up the infrastructure, and identifying and recruiting parents. Implementation was particularly delayed in areas that did not already have established systems and an existing pool of facilitators. In addition some LAs extended the training of facilitators, so delaying implementation.

- The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder was successful in rolling out these three programmes (Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities) on a large scale, across 18 local authorities with comparable benefits from each programme.

- The scale and complexity of the roll out resulted in a number of operational challenges including:
  - the realisation that setting up was a longer process than expected;
  - the limiting effects of the short timescale of the pilot;
  - the need fully to engage managers of facilitators drawn from local authority departments;
  - the late recognition that coordination was crucial and the importance of setting up the coordinator/operational lead role as quickly as possible;
  - difficulties associated with arranging training for facilitators;

- o and supervision issues.

- A problem particular to the Incredible Years sites was the decision to put together a course specifically for the PEIP in order to meet the needs of the age group (8-13 years) and likely problems to be encountered. Changes to the course, DVD material, manuals and handouts caused some concern, increased the length of the course and delayed facilitator training.

- However, this particular issue amongst others illustrated the need, emphasised by the programme leads, for consultation between programme leads and central and local government before beginning the project, in order to ensure a clear understanding of what implementation involved and to avoid unrealistic expectations (e.g. of time-scales, training and supervision issues and numbers to be trained).

Facilitators

- Each programme managed to train a reasonable number of facilitators with by far the most training done by Triple P whose facilitators had frequently trained on a number of different intervention levels, formats and groups. Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities trained 356 facilitators; Incredible Years trained approximately 300; Triple P trained 430.

- Facilitators were recruited from a wide range of professional backgrounds across all sectors. However, a number of areas successfully included parents without relevant qualifications, and in one Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities and one Triple P local authority parents were highly valued as facilitators.

- Facilitators were in general very positive about all three programmes, including the quality and relevance of the training they received, the processes of co-facilitation, and the outcomes.

- Issues raised by facilitators and operational leads as problematic included:
  - o the amount of work involved in preparing facilitator materials;
  - o the amount of training involved beyond the initial training;
  - o accessing training quickly since in the case of Triple P it involved trainers from Australia;
  - o keeping facilitators' motivation going when their day jobs crowded in on their time;
  - o the amount of time facilitators need to plan their programme;
  - o that facilitators were put forward without sufficient consideration given to whether they were the best candidates to deliver the programme;

- o and that facilitators had insufficient information in advance about what would be involved in the role.
- Although most local authorities were satisfied with the numbers of facilitators recruited and trained and the way in which this was done, none expected to have the capacity to train significant numbers of new facilitators following the end of the PEIP programme. Most facilitators were expected to remain in post, yet there were concerns in some authorities about not having enough to continue, because of high demand for courses, managers' reluctance to release workers from their usual roles, and loss of staff through natural wastage.

Facilitator Supervision
- The majority of facilitators were satisfied with the level of support provided.
  - o All local authorities using the Incredible Years programme had regular supervision from accredited mentors with additional supervision from local sources.
  - o The situation was more varied for SFSC and Triple P in quality, level and type.
  - o This included peer supervision, which was seen as of varying usefulness and effectiveness, supervision from line managers, which was mostly doubted in value because of their lack of specialist expertise and support from programme leads, which was usually valued.
  - o However, some facilitators had received no one-to-one support and had difficulties accessing supervision at all.
  - o Supervision frequency was higher in Incredible Years than the other programmes, but there were questions about whether there were the resources to maintain it at this level.
- Supervision was less of an issue for operational leads, although they had concerns about its unusual time requirement, not being equipped to deal with the issues arising themselves and the need for supervision crossing professional boundaries.

Parent Recruitment and Course Allocation
- Parent recruitment methods were diverse:
  - o through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)only;
  - o self-referral advertised through road shows, local press, schools, libraries, various centres and web sites;
  - o courts and professionals throughout the agencies.

- There appeared to be two major methods of deciding whether a parenting course was appropriate, either by frontline workers, who in some cases were given training to do this, or by the use of a central coordinator. It was unclear however to what extent parents were involved in this decision making, but the process of matching was in some cases linked to the Common Assessment Framework.

Parenting Courses and Participants

- The number of parenting courses completed by the end of March 31st 2008 was 338: Incredible Years ran 70; Triple P: 185; SFSC: 83; in addition 87 courses were still underway: Incredible Years (6), Triple P (45), SFSC (36).
- The number of parents who started was 3575 overall: Incredible Years 721; Triple P: 1418, SFSC: 1436.
- Differences in numbers of parenting groups and numbers of parents trained reflected the different programmes but there were also local variations including in particular LAs, for example, substantial delays in starting the PEIP and a decision to add extra training for the facilitators to improve their preparation.
- Differences in numbers of groups conducted during the PEIP using the different programmes also reflected the different number of sessions required to deliver each programme.
- The completion rate overall was 73% and very similar for each of the programmes: 72% Incredible Years, 70% Triple P and 76% SFSC..
- Recruitment of fathers was low (12% of the participants were male) and only two groups had been run specifically for fathers. All local authorities were aware of this as a problem and related it to: timing of courses, "parent" seen as meaning "mother", the lack of male facilitators and suitable venues.
- Otherwise programmes were targeted appropriately. At the start of the parenting courses:
    - parental mental well-being was significantly lower than expected from norms;
    - the majority of the children were judged by their parents attending the courses to show very high levels of emotional and behavioural problems (62% classified in the clinical range on the SDQ compared to the national expectation of 10%);
    - the majority of parents had not continued their education beyond 16 years and earned less than £200 per week, although recruitment was from the whole socioeconomic range;

- o courses had been accessed by a wide range of minority ethnic groups who comprised 23.9% of the total (76.1% were White British).
- o the mean age of the children was 9.2 years with 64% in the target 8-13 year age band, although the range was 1 to 18 years;
- o two-third were boys and 17.7% of the children overall had statements of special educational needs, about six times higher than the population as a whole.

Programme Fidelity

- In general there was clear awareness of the need to maintain programme fidelity amongst facilitators. Changes were made to courses, but mostly within the guidelines.
- Facilitator satisfaction with materials was generally high, although there were criticisms of American English, predominance of Australian culture shown, wordiness and complexity of language, and high literacy demands.
- Literacy challenge was generally addressed by facilitators adapting their language as necessary, adapting transparencies and other written materials and providing help with literacy. As a consequence these were not major issues as far as parents were concerned.
- Courses were tailored to some extent in terms of time:
  - o For Incredible Years this involved lengthening some topics as allowed in the guidelines, but cutting others.
  - o For Triple P and SFSC, there were difficulties fitting the content into the time available and sessions were for example lengthened by facilitators being available before and after sessions, and contacting parents if they missed sessions.
  - o There were some problems with telephone contacts and at least one Triple P facilitator replaced them with face-to-face sessions.
  - o Rites of passage as a topic was often cited as problematic in Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities; as a result the emphasis given to it was reduced or it was omitted.
  - o The response to role play varied in parents, and was associated with both increased and decreased use by some facilitators.

Course Outcomes

- All courses were effective in improving parental mental well-being, parenting behaviour, parental efficacy and satisfaction as measured by self-report, with moderate to large effect sizes on all 7 measures.

- The parenting courses were effective in producing statistically highly significant improvements in the parents' perceptions of the emotional and behavioural functioning of the children on all scales of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire with effect sizes in the small to moderate range.

- The percentage of children rated in the clinical range on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Total Difficulties score reduced from 58% to 33%.

- In spite of the differences in the characteristics of the three programmes, they were all equally effective in terms of the majority of outcomes.

- Changes the parents reported included being calmer with their children, more confident in parenting, and giving more time to talking and listening to their children. They thought their relationship with their children had improved, as well as their behaviour, well-being, self-esteem and interest in school, although this was not universally the case.

- Parents overall were extremely favourable in their evaluation of all three programmes; they valued the content, the group experience, the qualities of and relationship built up with the facilitators and the practicality of child care, refreshments and transport. Some parents, however, suggested that their course was too short and too intense.

- Since social support and community building is such an important issue, the extent to which parents continued to meet after their course was explored. Although three local authorities had encouraged and enabled this (e.g. by providing rooms in schools) and it was apparent that some parents might have formed lasting friendships, operational leads were generally unclear about the extent to which this happened.

Cost effectiveness

- The average cost of a PEIP parenting group was £17961. The average cost of an Incredible Years group was comparatively high reflecting the small number of such groups held during the PEIP;

- The average cost of engaging a parent on a PEIP course was £2135 while the cost per parent completing a course was £2955 because drop out increased the unit cost. The cost per parent who completed an Incredible Years course was high compared

with the other two programme types, reflecting the comparatively small number of groups delivered;

- *   Differences in cost effectiveness within programme types (i.e. between LAs using the same programme) were equally as large as differences between each programme type. This intra-programme variation was related to differences in the number of groups delivered and the size of those groups, differences that were more likely to be associated with the effectiveness of the team delivering a programme (management, prior experience etc.) and the social context within which they sought to deliver PEIP (the level of need within the LA) rather than with differences in the content of programme itself.

- *   Some intra-programme differences were due to local context (e.g. the number of previously trained facilitators) and/or local policy decisions (e.g. to provide additional training for facilitators).

- *   Inter-programme variation was related to the number of sessions needed to run each programme and the consequent practical effect of organising groups during the period of the PEIP.

- •   The estimated cost-effectiveness of PEIP was less (that is the costs relative to outputs was higher) than estimates of earlier studies but it is likely that such earlier studies only consider incremental or marginal cost and did not take account of the full costs of providing parenting programmes.

Extended Schools

- •   In terms of the extended schools agenda, although there was variability, some schools were very positive about parenting programmes and were involved in the identification of families, the provision of premises and staff as facilitators. Non-teaching staff such as PSAs and learning mentors were seen as particularly useful in recruiting and engaging parents

- •   Facilitators saw considerable gains for schools, children and families from working in schools, but this depended upon the welcoming and helpful attitudes of relevant staff. Barriers were practical (e.g. inappropriate space allocation, school shut down in holidays, Ofsted inspections) and attitudinal (e.g. tensions between educating children vs. parents and standards vs. inclusion).

The Future

- Most authorities will continue to work with their allocated PEIP programme, but with the addition of a range of other programmes, in order to take account of different levels of need.

- A major concern was with sustainability once the DCSF funding came to an end.

- The PEIP programme seems to have been an important ingredient in the development/revision of local authorities' Parenting Strategy, presumably because of its being one of the most important developments in this area.

- In terms of continuation of the PEIP programme once it came to an end, a third of the local authorities were not fully decided, but the majority intended to use a core team, perhaps with additions. They were going to do this with a combination of approaches including: facilitation by PEIP trained people within their existing roles; using the voluntary sector; within the extended schools services or children's centres; and via a core team of parent support staff.

Main recommendations

- Systematic parenting support should be rolled out across the UK.

- In terms of *outcomes* for this particular group (i.e. 8-13 year olds likely to be antisocial) any of the three programmes used in the project may be selected as they show comparable effectiveness.

Specific recommendations

- Local Authorities should also consider the *cost effectiveness* of the programmes as the present study indicates that these vary, with Incredible Years the most expensive.

- LAs should also recognise that a substantial element of the cost effectiveness of the delivery of *any* programme is within their control: this concerns issues of organisation, planning and implementation.

- Given the multiple differences between the three programmes yet the same outcomes, it follows that other home grown courses might be equally effective, and priority should be given to the search for and evaluation of alternatives.

- Extended schools have the potential to play an important role in the delivery of parenting support including parenting programmes.

- The search for alternatives should focus on support that is based upon broader and more explicit models of parenting than are available currently and evaluative research should be concerned to explore process as much as outcome.

- The notion of fidelity which is considered so important by programme leads might need serious thought given the fact that similar outcomes are produced by very different programmes.

- Local authorities should know that rolling out such programmes is time consuming and complex; they should therefore include in their plans: consultation with programme developers at the earliest opportunity; a designated local and knowledgeable programme coordinator; and engagement and training of the managers of staff recruited as facilitators.

- Recruitment of facilitators is crucial and needs to be done carefully, yet more attention needs to be given to making selection criteria appropriate and explicit. Since parents can be effective, research is needed to explore the personal qualities and interpersonal skills needed to be effective as a facilitator and not just to base this on previous experience and qualifications.

- Facilitator training requires time and care and should involve clear and detailed accreditation procedures.

- Knowledge of parenting and how to support this should be embedded in all parts of children's services and it is suggested that this would be helped by facilitators being recruited from and working within all service areas.

- Facilitators should be given the time and resources to run parenting courses and this should always include ongoing and regular supervision from people who have the knowledge and training to provide it.

- Parents should be recruited for parenting programmes by all means possible, not through single services. Decisions should be made in partnership with parents, preferably by practitioners with whom they already have a relationship and who they trust.

- All personnel should be trained to identify families with problems, to engage them, and to provide first level support, and to decide intervention requirements in partnership with them.

- The provision of parenting courses should be appropriate to the developmental stage and needs of children and families and set within an elaborate and coordinated system of care in which there are a range of support options and not just parenting courses.

- Particular attention should be given to involving and recruiting fathers onto support programmes, taking into account a growing knowledge of how this should be done.

- Care should be taken to engage and retain families once recruited onto courses. Funded crèche provision is essential to this and on-going contact with parents between sessions where necessary, as well as transport facilities and refreshments.
- Explicit attention should be given to the building of social support and community building with systematic policy put in place to aid the continued mutual support of groups once formal courses have come to an end.
- Systems for maintaining the benefits of parenting programmes beyond the period of the courses should be developed.

Previous Reports

Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Parent early intervention pathfinder 1st interim report.* Coventry: University of Warwick, CEDAR. (14pp).

Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder 2nd Interim report. DCSF-RW035.* London: DCSF. (59pp). http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW035.pdf

Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder: Additional study of the involvement of extended schools DCSF-RW035.* (50pp). London: DCSF. http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW036.pdf

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the Parent Early Intervention Pathfinder

The Parent Early Intervention Pathfinder was an initiative to fund local authorities (LAs) to implement one of three selected parenting programmes: Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. The three programmes were selected by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) following a review of available programmes (Moran, Ghate & van der Merwe, 2004).

The Pathfinder funded 18 LAs (6 per programme) located across England as the core group. In addition, two non-funded comparison LAs were invited to be included in the study. The programme started in the summer of 2006 and ended on 31 March 2008. The Pathfinder was designed to provide parenting programmes in order to change the behaviour of parents and therefore to influence positively the behaviour of the children. The Pathfinder was designed to focus on parents of children aged 8-13 years, although it was recognized by DCSF that the benefits of improved parenting may influence younger and older siblings in the family.

1.2 Background

The well-being of children in the UK is being compromised (UNICEF, 2007) with large numbers of children in the population experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (e.g. Attride-Stirling, Davis, Markless, et al, 2001; Meltzer, Gatward, Goodman & Ford, 2000). This is a significant issue for society, since the long term consequences of these problems include impaired educational development, later adult mental health problems (e.g. Broidy, et al, 2003; Robins & Rutter, 1990), early entry into crime (e.g. Carswell, Maughan, Davis, et al, 2004) and high social and financial costs (Scott, Knapp, Henderson & Maughan, 2001). Given the high prevalence of such problems and the failure of traditional services to cope with this need (e.g. Audit Commission, 1999), there is an urgent requirement for change incorporating increased and well targeted resources in the early years with preventive and promotional approaches involving appropriately trained staff and effective methods.

Since parents are fundamental to their children's development, there has been considerable interest in the development of programmes that support the parent role, including those that are intended to enhance the understanding and skills of parents through direct training (e.g.

Pugh, De'Ath & Smith, 1994). The UK government has indicated its commitment to the importance of prevention and support for parenting for a number of years through, for example, establishing the Family and Parenting Institute, the development of the Sure Start agenda, the Parenting Fund and On Track. More recently through its Respect Action Plan (2006) it has made a commitment to the further development of a number of parenting services, with an emphasis on those families deemed to need most help to develop and maintain their parenting role. For example, the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners was set up in 2007 to help the appropriate development of the children's workforce to meet the needs of parents. Considerable effort is being put into the development and evaluation of a home visiting programme beginning in pregnancy and based on the Nurse-Family Partnership programme from the USA (e.g. Olds, Henderson, Chamberlin, et al, 1986). The role of Parent Support Adviser is being developed and piloted in schools in twenty local authorities around England to identify parents, whose children might go on to develop significant problems, and to support them in ways that might prevent further difficulties (Lindsay et al, 2007). The Parent Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP), the subject of this report, was set up to consider the wide scale implementation of parenting programmes in local authority areas.

Many parenting programmes have been developed in the last forty years focusing on a range of outcomes including the academic, cognitive, behavioural, emotional and social development of children (e.g. Pugh et al, 1994). Parent training was given impetus by behavioural models of child treatment derived from learning and social learning theories and applied particularly to antisocial behaviour (e.g. Patterson & Gullion, 1968). Harsh and inconsistent parenting is associated with antisocial behaviour and, although this may not necessarily be causal, Patterson (1982) showed that parenting can have a causal role in strengthening and maintaining it.

An important question concerns the evidence for these various programmes. Evidence-based practice has become accepted wisdom in recent years as a means of guiding individual practice and service design (Cottrell, 2007) and research methods have become increasingly more rigorous for deciding effectiveness. There is now considerable evidence to suggest that such programmes do have benefits in relation to improving antisocial behaviour in children (e.g. Barlow & Stewart-Brown, 2000, 2001; Brestan & Eyberg, 1998; Moran, Ghate & van der Merwe, 2004) and psychological and social functioning of parents (Barlow et al, 2002). However, many of the possible interventions have not been evaluated for their effectiveness in every day, real world service situations as opposed to their efficacy under optimal conditions (Weisz & Grey, 2007). Much of the research has been conducted

outside of the UK and evaluation is limited by small scale studies and lack of evidence for generalisability (e.g. Moran, et al, 2004). Moran et al. (2004) suggest a number of questions still to be answered including those to do with recruitment and retention. Many process and system issues remain to be fully explored, including the more general question of exactly "what works for whom under what circumstances". There is currently inadequate evidence to direct the large scale implementation of such interventions and this is particularly important given the argument (e.g. Spencer, 2003) that parenting is socially patterned and embedded (e.g. based upon inequality and lack of child friendliness) and that it will require more than individual programmes to reduce the prevalence of anti-social behaviour across the population.

These are fundamental issues of concern for a government which seeks to fund parenting programmes on a large scale within the UK. The present Parent Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP) project therefore provides an opportunity to explore some of these, since the aim was to roll out three different parenting programmes, each of which was to be implemented within six different local authority areas. The three programmes selected by the DCSF were the Incredible Years (e.g. Webster-Stratton & Hancock, 1998), Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (Steele, Marigna, Tello & Johnston, 2000) and Triple P (e.g. Sanders, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 2003).

The Incredible Years programme has clear evidence for its efficacy from studies in the USA (e.g. Brestan & Eyberg, 1998) and it has also been evaluated in four randomized controlled trials in the UK (Scott et al., 2001; Patterson et al., 2002; Gardner et al., 2006; Hutchings et al., 2007). These studies involved parents of children aged 2-9 with conduct problems recruited from a variety of sources including child and adolescent mental health services, a voluntary agency, GP practices and Sure Start centres. However, the programme has not been evaluated in relation to the older group of children (8-13 years) involved in the Pathfinder.

Triple P is somewhat different to the other programmes in that it is a complex system of intervention grouped into five levels reflecting change in intensity and content of intervention with increasing need. It is very much based upon social learning principles and has been evaluated in multiple studies, including randomized controlled trials, most of which have been conducted in Australia, where it was developed (for reviews see Sanders & Dadds, 1993; Sanders et al, 2003). The results indicate that Triple P has significant and clinically meaningful benefits for children and families maintained over time at the different intervention levels and for a range of families, including those with difficulties that put

children at increased risk for problems (e.g. parental mental health and relationship problems).

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities was designed for and predominantly used with minority ethnic groups. There is evidence of effectiveness in that families were shown to increase their level of activity and discussion together, to increase positive discipline and communication strategies with their children, decrease negative discipline and communication and improve child and parent competence in a large pre- to post-assessment in the UK (Wilding & Barton, 2007). However, the programme has not been evaluated by way of a randomized controlled trial in the USA, where it was developed, or in the UK.

The current study is an interesting opportunity to consider the usefulness and effectiveness of parenting programmes in a real world context and to explore their implementation on a large scale. Much of the research in this area has been on outcome evaluation of individual programmes, or what Weisz and Gray (2007) call serial efficacy trials. In contrast the study described in this report provides a unique opportunity to compare directly the outcomes of the three different programmes, which may be considered similar in intent and in competition for the available market. However, the study will also explore issues of implementation in terms of the organization required to set up the programmes, the recruitment and training of programme leaders or facilitators, the recruitment and retention of families, the processes they go through and their evaluation of the intervention and implementation fidelity.

1.3   The Study

1.3.1   Aims and design

The aim of the study of the Parent Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP) was to examine the effectiveness of three evidence-based parenting programmes, selected by the DCSF, in the context of a large scale roll out across England. Although the DCSF had selected these programmes because there was at least some evidence that they had positive effects, the intention here was to see how well the programmes could be implemented on a wider scale, what processes enabled this, whether their effectiveness could be maintained under such a less controlled situation, and what the relative costs are across the different programmes and local authorities.

This issue of scale is important, as is the issue of the generalisability of positive findings when an intervention is implemented not by the originator, nor under highly controlled

conditions in a research study. Roll out itself brings with it important questions. For example, will fidelity be maintained? The scientific basis for a programme's effectiveness is provided by the original and any subsequent, carefully implemented research studies. However, to be useful on a wider scale it is necessary for fidelity to be maintained under less controlled conditions.

Secondly, the scale of a roll out is also a key factor. A programme developer may be able to guide and control further use of the intervention if it is rolled out on a small scale. This is an important stage in development. But what happens when the scale is substantially greater and direct control diminishes? Various steps need to be taken to maximise the likelihood of fidelity of implementation under these new conditions.

Thirdly, there is the less tangible factor concerning the shift from the developer to a number of others who will now implement the programme. Original developers have a commitment and dedication arising from the programme being their own work, but what happens when those implementing it are local practitioners and somewhat removed from the originator? Here also there is a need to take account of this effect when rolling out a programme.

These issues are central to policy development. Highly successful programmes are only useful to policy makers if there is also evidence that they can be rolled out on a large scale. In the present case this requires implementation across (potentially all) local authorities (LAs) in England. LAs vary greatly in their demographics, organisational structures, resources and priorities. The task of central government in a development such as the PEIP is to examine whether an evidence-based programme can maintain its effects even under these much more varied conditions.

When examining roll out there are three related but distinct issues to address. First, will the effects expected on the basis of the research evidence be maintained? In the present case this question concerns the replication of the benefits of each programme on appropriate outcome measures. Second, what are the factors that facilitate or inhibit the successful implementation of the programme in this larger scale? This second question requires different kinds of data. Here the focus is on the processes involved and the support structures, including organisation factors. The third factor of interest to policymakers concerns the cost and cost effectiveness of the programme(s). For example, a programme may maintain its positive impact when rolled out but costs may increase, or decrease.

These different strands require different methodological approaches. The examination of effects requires the use of standardised measures which can be applied consistently and analysed statistically. The process issues, however, require qualitative methods exploring with key people what happened and even more importantly *how* and *why*, in their view, these events occurred. Hence, complex programme implementation requires a *combined methods* approach in order to obtain a comprehensive, triangulated perspective.

The present study was designed with these factors in mind. The original aim, as stated by DCSF, was to include a *comparative* element concerning two factors: the developmental status of the LA and the impact of the additional funding provided by the PEIP. This led to a design whereby 15 LAs (5 per Programme) were selected as the main focus; three LAs (one per Programme) were selected as a comparison group on the basis of a judgement that their work on parenting support/training was less developed. This was an interesting and potentially useful idea but our initial work revealed that the original judgments of LA ranking in this factor were not sufficiently robust. Consequently, it was not valid to separate the 18 into the two groups of 15 and three.

Second, the inclusion of three unfunded comparison LAs was also a potentially useful design element. However, this also ran into difficulties very early on. One LA declined to take part. The other two LAs had no reason to allocate resources to being part of an evaluation study. They received no financial incentive. Despite this, we received support from one of these LAs in particular but this did not allow the full implementation of the use of this unfunded comparison group design. For example, only one of these LAs returned any of the parent level questionnaires. Consequently, the data from these two LAs have been more limited and largely qualitative. Nevertheless, they did play a useful part as the development of the parenting policies, for example, could usefully be explored as a comparison, because these LAs had to undertake this process without the benefit of a funded Programme (See Appendix 3, Vignette 7).

The final design of this evaluation, therefore, essentially comprises two major elements: a study of the *roll out* of three evidence-based parenting programmes across 18 LAs in England and a comparative study of the roll out of the three programmes each implemented in six LAs.

In the summer of 2007 the DCSF commissioned an extension to the study in order to explore the relationship between the PEIP and extended schools. This study focussed on the views of strategic leads, facilitators and headteachers.

1.3.2   The sample

Local authorities

The main sample comprised 18 local authorities (LAs). These were selected by the DCSF
on the basis of bids to be included in the Pathfinder. The LAs were spread throughout
England and included urban and rural authorities. Each of these LAs was allocated funds in
order to support the implementation of one of the three Programmes selected by the DCSF.
The DCSF determined which Programme each LA was required to implement, using the
LA's expressed preferences and past experience as a guide.

In addition, two LAs were selected by the DCSF but received no financial support. As
discussed above, these provided an unfunded comparison group (See Appendix 3, Vignette
7).

In order to maintain confidentiality each LA was allocated two codes. One code, is used in
Section 4 (cost effectiveness) where LAs are grouped by programme; a different code,
randomly allocated, is used throughout the rest of the report.

Interviewees

Interviews were held over the period of the study with key persons. Four rounds of
interviews were held to capture the setting up of the PEIP (September 2006 – February
2007); the initial period of implementation (Phase 2: June-October 2007); the engagement of
PEIP with schools/extended schools (Phase 3: September – October 2007); and the final
period of the Pathfinder (Phase 4: November 2007 – February 2008) - Table 1.1.

Table 1.1   Interviewees by phase of the study

	Phase			
	1	2	3	4
Strategic lead	20	18	19	17
Operational lead		21		18
Facilitators		94	38	73
Parents				81
Head teachers			24	

The strategic lead in each LA was a senior officer with responsibilities that included the PEIP and the parenting strategy.

Operational leads had day-to-day management responsibilities for the implementation of the PEIP. Most LAs had a single operational lead but a small number had two. Their titles varied, often being called 'coordinators' or 'project managers'.

Each LA was invited to identify 5-10 facilitators to take part in the study. This was to take into account an expected drop out from the sample for the various reasons common to such a large scale study – difficulties in making contact, illness, moving jobs etc. over the study. Contact was maintained with these facilitators over the course of the project.

Parents were proposed by the LAs' operational leads who were asked for between 5 and 8 parents. Because they were to be interviewed either alone or in groups (see Procedure) this target range allowed for local circumstances (e.g. access to parent groups for interviews) to allow for a target of 5 parents per LA.

Head teachers were identified by operational leads with specific reference to their experience of PEIP in the context of extended schools as this formed a specific element of the evaluation, added to the original design, in autumn 2007.

In addition, interviews were held with representatives of each programme at the start of the PEIP. A follow up questionnaire and email correspondence was held in February 2007 to enable representatives from each Programme to report any changes to their Programme that had occurred over the period of the PEIP.

1.3.3. Measures

Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were developed over the period of the PEIP to explore key themes relevant at that stage. Each comprised main questions supplemented by probes to explore issues that were not raised spontaneously by the main questions. This method provides a balance between the benefits of a relatively informal 'conversation' which encourages flow and the need to ensure consistent coverage of the themes under investigation at the time.

Parent questionnaires

Four established instruments were selected for completion by parents at the start and end of their parenting group. This allows comparisons to be made, in particular to examine any changes over this period. The four instruments were selected after examination of the measures typically used or recommended by the three programmes in their normal operation. This selection was undertaken following discussions with the programme leads and was intended to limit the impact of the national evaluation on the programme implementation. The four measures were as follows.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)[1] This is a 25 item measure of the parent's views of the behaviour of the target child. Each item has a 3-point scale. It comprises four scales that assess levels of problems: Emotional symptoms, Conduct problems, Hyperactivity, and Peer Problems. These can be summed to produce a Total difficulties score. In addition, the SDQ has questions concerning the impact of the child's behaviour.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)[2] This is a 14 item 5-point scale which assesses mental well-being. It includes items such as 'I've been feeling useful', 'I've been feeling good about myself'. This scale was selected as it is worded positively: its focus is positive (well-being) rather than illness-oriented (e.g. depression).

The Parenting Scale[3] This is a 13 item 7-point scale which examines two dimensions of parenting, Laxness and Over-reactivity, each comprising six items. The 13th item on monitoring contributes only to the total score.

Being a Parent[4] This is an adaptation by Johnston & Mash (1989) of the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman,1978), which assesses parenting self-esteem. The 16 items assess Parenting Satisfaction, an affective dimension reflecting parenting frustration, anxiety, and motivation, and Parenting Efficacy, an instrumental dimension reflecting competence, problem-solving ability, and capability in the parenting role

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[1] http://www.sdqinfo.com/b1.html
[2] Tennant, R., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2006). *Monitoring positive mental health in Scotland: validating the Affectometer 2 scale and developing the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale for the UK.* Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland
[3] Irvine, A.B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., & Ary, D.V. (1999). The value of the P*arenting Scale* for measuring the discipline practices of parents of middle school children. *Behavioural Research and Therapy, 37*, 127-142
[4] Johnston, C. & Mash, E.J. (1989). A measure of parenting satisfaction and efficacy *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 18*, 171.

(Johnston & Mash, 1989). Parents are asked to respond to a series of statements about parenting, indicating their agreement or disagreement. Each item is measured on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 6 (Strongly disagree).

These four scales were incorporated into both the pre-course and post-course booklets for completion by parents. In addition, the Pre-course booklet included demographic questions including gender, ethnicity and level of education. The post-course booklet included a 10 item 'How was your group' scale; nine items were scored on 4-point scales and one on a 3-point scale. This was constructed for the evaluation.

LA data

Data were collected from LAs on the number of groups run, the numbers of parents starting each group and the numbers of parents completing each group. These data allowed calculations of course completion/drop out rates. Data were also collected from LAs and each programme on the number of facilitators trained.

1.3.4 Procedure

Interviews

The initial interviews with strategic leads, operational leads and facilitators were face to face. This was partly to aid the development of a relationship between the researcher and the interviewee which would support engagement during the project. In addition, this allowed the interviewee to ask questions about the study and be assured of confidentiality by a researcher with whom they were in conversation. Finally, this method also allowed the complexities of the first interviews to be addressed. During later interviews with these participants a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews was conducted.

Head teacher interviews were conducted face-to-face or by telephone in accord with the interviewee's wishes. Parent interviews were held under three conditions: individual face-to-face, individual by phone or group interview with other parents. In the latter case the parents were part of the same parenting group and so were known to each other.

Questionnaires

A pre-course booklet and post-course booklet were developed to incorporate the measures described above. Each was 7 pages long plus front cover. Parents were asked to include their name and signature to allow their pre-course and post-course booklet data to be matched. An information sheet was provided for each parent together with guidance to the facilitator who would give out and collect in the booklets. Parents were assured of confidentiality and that no person would be identified.

Local authorities were invited to specify the number of booklets required. In practice this led to a gross over-estimate of the numbers needed indicating a substantial over-estimate of the parents expected to be included in the groups.

Each LA was sent the appropriate booklets together with a form for each facilitator to list the number of parents in the group and those who completed the booklet. As part of their normal operation the three programmes used measures such as those selected for the evaluation to provide information that might be used by the facilitator in working with parents. Consequently, permission was given to facilitators to photocopy each booklet for discussion with the parent concerned but otherwise the booklets were confidential. The facilitators were asked to place the booklets and group list in a reply paid envelope for return to CEDAR.

1.4   The focus of the report

Over the period of the study, three other reports have been produced. The first provides information on the early phase, September 2006 to February 2007, of the PEIP; the second reports on PEIP during the period June – October 2007 when the PEIP was established; the third reports the relationship between PEIP and extended schools, work carried out over the period September to October 2007. Information for these earlier reports is summarised in Section 2, along with a new section on training.

Section 3 presents the evidence derived from the quantitative data derived from the parent booklets. This includes information on the parents attending the groups and analyses of the pre- and post-course questionnaires. Also included are the data from LAs reporting the numbers of groups run and parents who attended and dropped out.

Section 4 presents the cost effectiveness analysis for the PEIP.

Section 5 presents the qualitative data derived from interviews over the final phase of the study (October 2007 to February 2008).

Section 6 presents a discussion of the results and their implications.

Section 7 presents a summary of findings and recommendations.

2.   THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE PATHFINDER

In this Section we summarise the evidence for the evaluation of PEIP in its early stages. This covers the period when LAs were establishing their infrastructure and teams, were appointing and arranging for the training of facilitators, and those facilitators were just beginning to put their new learning into practice. As these results have been made available in three earlier reports[5,6, 7] this Section will present a summary of that work followed by a substantive section on training.

2.1   Setting up PEIP

PEIP was set up by the DCSF during the summer of 2006 with a start date of September 1st. The strategic leads interviewed in the early months reported that this had been carried out at great speed and with a sense of urgency. They had needed to construct their bids, have them scrutinised and accepted and then set up the necessary systems. This presented difficulties given the complexity involved.

> *"The timescales were slightly unrealistic given that it was to be a partnership and we have extraordinarily effective partnerships across the board, including a Parenting Education Strategy with three specific task groups and we struggled to get a partnership bid in, because no time to meet with people, only two weeks to consult with them and come up with what we were being asked to do. And just coming up to the school holidays."* (LA6-S)

However, as seasoned LA officers, this was not a new experience.

> *"OK. It wasn't the worst I've experienced of central government."* (LA3-S)

Furthermore, these LA officers were generally positive about the support and helpfulness of the DCSF team managing the project.

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[5] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Parent early intervention pathfinder 1st interim report.* Coventry: University of Warwick, CEDAR. (14pp).

[6] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder 2nd Interim report. DCSF-RW035.* London: DCSF. (59pp).
     http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW035.pdf

[7] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder: Additional study of the involvement of extended schools DCSF-RW035.* (50pp). London: DCSF.
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW036.pdf

LAs had different criteria for their expressed preferences for one of the Programmes. In some cases they sought to consolidate previous work, while in others they wanted to extend their options. Not all had their preference accepted but this was not seen as problematic. There was more concern to ensure that local circumstances were taken into account.

The local circumstances seen as important by interviewees varied widely. Urban or rural settings; poverty and disadvantage; pockets of drug and alcohol abuse and early pregnancy; and specific minority ethnic populations all reflected the wide variety of LA locations and characteristics. In some LAs, Travellers were identified as a particular focus while in others a minority ethnic population might raise important issues for delivery of language or particular cultural factors, including those relating to gender. Experience of delivery in other languages was reported.

The LAs were building upon a range of initiatives addressing the needs of parents. This experience had raised the issue fundamental to the Pathfinder namely *early intervention*. This was conceptualized as a preventative strategy: intervening at a time when children were relatively young would, it was hoped, prevent later, more problematic anti-social behaviour. Earlier projects (e.g. Sure Start) were in this tradition, and indeed this is a long-standing policy orientation in health and education, but it is grounded in the requirement that the intervention is effective. By using three programmes for which evidence of effectiveness already existed the LAs hoped to have positive outcomes. Also, 'early' in the PEIP context referred to the stage of development of children's problematic behaviour rather than chronological age. In the context of parenting programmes the focus on 8 – 13 years is not 'early'.

This raised the issue of the status of the children in the potential cohort, in particular their place on a continuum of increasingly problematic behaviour. In some cases the LAs were able to select different variants of the programme in order to address different children. Some LAs noted that the 8-13 age group had received less coverage in the past and so welcomed this initiative, while others argued that the focus should be on children younger than 8 years.

The recruitment and training of facilitators was a major challenge. Some LAs had very ambitious aspirations for the numbers of facilitators to be appointed and trained. LAs often built on an existing resource of trained staff but the scale of PEIP meant that a large number of additional staff required training. Each Programme has its own training programme (see

Section 2.2) and the numbers involved put a major strain on the resources of the Programmes. One significant result was that implementation of the PEIP was delayed by the need to train the facilitators, a task that took a number of months because of the limited training resources.

LAs had different models of facilitator recruitment which had to interact with the different requirements of the Programme. For example, the three Programmes differ in terms of the level of prior experience expected before training. This also affected their willingness to consider parents for training (i.e. parents without a professional training) – see Section 2.4.

Two LAs, however, actively sought to involve parents as facilitators and many stressed that their main criteria concerned personal qualities including ability to empathise, being non-judgmental and approachable, and an awareness of the communities from which the parents would come.

Our first Interim Report summarised the key findings at this stage as follows:

- The setting up of the Pathfinder was carried out in a short period at a difficult time, which limited LAs' ability to consult and deliver a bid based on work with relevant parties. However, LAs accepted that working with these constraints was common practice.

- LAs generally were able to use the programme they chose, although some would have liked access to more than one programme to address different needs.

- LAs' preferences were informed by previous experience and their understandings of the foci of each of the programmes.

- LAs' plans for implementation took account of several different factors reflecting local needs including specific communities (geography and ethnicity), specific needs (e.g. drug abuse, crime or early pregnancy) and past experience of programmes.

- LAs welcomed a focus on early intervention and considered there was a gap in provision which the Pathfinder, with a focus on children aged 8-13 years, would fill.

- While initial time pressures were seen as problematic, LAs were positive about the responses of the DCSF to issues to optimize delivery and, where appropriate, take note of the LAs' concerns.

- Finance, including the timing of initial payments and limitations on carry over, were a concern for LAs.

- Recruitment had generally been delayed and the final number of facilitators is not clear.

- LAs were undertaking recruitment across a wide range of professional backgrounds, favouring a focus on personal characteristics such as empathy and listening rather than professional qualifications.

- Programmes differed in their willingness to use parents or non-professionals as facilitators.

- Training facilitators was a major challenge in terms of
  o The logistics of a limited number of trainers
  o The time taken to undertake recruitment

- Support post-training was built into programmes and was intended, by LAs, to be made available.

- The number of parents likely to be trained was unclear but was intended to be about 100-300 per LA.

- LAs were positive, enthusiastic and optimistic that the Pathfinder will be a success and that its benefits can be sustained.

2.2 'Settling In'

Once LA systems had been set up and facilitators had been trained the PEIP proper could begin. In some LAs this happened early during the Pathfinder as they already had well established systems and a pool of facilitators. In many cases, however, the running of

groups did not start until well into 2007. The next stage of the evaluation, therefore, was also delayed to match this and took place during the period June – October 2007.

At this time we focused on the running of groups, including; engagement of parents; the facilitators' views of their training and of the course materials; support for facilitators; and strategic issues including the development of the LA's parenting strategy.

2.2.1 The parenting groups: early stages

Even as late as June 2007 and beyond, not all facilitators had actually run a group. Various factors were mentioned, but the result was that by the end of the 2006-7 school year there were widely different degrees of progress. In some cases the difficulties concerned the LA's delay in setting up the infrastructure or of finding parents for the groups. In other cases, however, the problem concerned the Programme itself. The Incredible Years programme had good evidence of its efficacy, but the PEIP was aimed at an older age range (8-13 years) for which there was no evidence base. The Programme team, therefore, decided to develop a variant (see Section 2.4). This delayed training for facilitators. Furthermore, this also led to a lengthening of the Incredible Years programme, so limiting the number that could be run. The indications at this point, therefore, were that the three programmes could have different outcomes in terms of numbers of groups run and hence of parents helped.

Despite those early difficulties the facilitators who had run groups were very enthusiastic and positive. There was a very strong sense among these facilitators, across all three programmes, that the groups would be successful, for example:

> *'For me I feel that Triple P is such a universal programme that it's so varied, I mean there's so many bolt-ons that we can access that we would be able to meet quite a variety of needs within the community.'* (LA9/F4)

> *'I think the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities programme itself is fantastic. My only gripe is with the way the materials are presented. I love the way it gets parents to think of the bigger picture, not just a process of discipline, but rites of passage too – it made me stop and think and I think it's good too for parents to stop and think about why they do the things they do and where they learnt things themselves…I particularly liked the spiritual component'* (LA2/F7).

"Incredible Years is the best thing we've ever done in all my years, one of the most effective things in getting to the biggest group of parents all at once and having such amazing effects on the whole family, it seems to me.' (LA11/F10)

Facilitators, supported by the LAs' operational leads, were developing effective means to engage parents to *attend* the course and then to *stay* the course. Also, they needed to ensure parents were actually engaged *while attending* the course. A wide range of strategies were being developed to support parents, notably the most needy and/or vulnerable. A variety of means were needed as there was a wide variation among the parents, reflecting the provenance of their coming to the group, which ranged from the willing and keen to the 'sent'. Overall, a high level of engagement was reported – four out of five facilitators saw parents as a whole as engaged or very engaged (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1   Facilitators' ratings of parents' engagement during the course

Very engaged	Engaged	Mixed response	Hard to keep engaged	Very hard to keep engaged
31	15	11	1	1

N= 59

2.2.2   Course Materials

There was a high level of positive regard for the course materials; almost nine out of ten facilitators regarded these as suitable or very suitable (Table 2.2). Concerns focused on the costs involved and the match with the English context – two programmes are American (Incredible Years and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities) and the other Australian (Triple P).

Table 2.2   Facilitators' views of the suitability of the programme materials

Very suitable	Suitable	Not particularly suitable	Not at all suitable
21	31	6	1

N= 59

Facilitators expressed concerns about language and representations of standards of living. The following quotation highlights both the concern about relevance of the material and also that the facilitators had found ways of presenting them positively:

> *'The families that we work with are predominantly from estates and some of the videos might not always be reflective of the lifestyles…… there is quite a lot of problem-solving which shows a mother and a father and your 2.4 children idea of a family where, on that course, there was only one family that fit that. The others were single parents or blended families. So in some of the problem-solving [work] the women were like, 'Well, I'd have told him to bugger off! He wouldn't speak to me like that!' But as tools the videos are fantastic to use as talking points so they are suitable for that. I think they could do with updating. Some of them are a bit old-fashioned and then sometimes the parents get a bit distracted by the haircuts and you've got to bring them back on track and say, 'We're looking at the point, not what's going on in the background'. So a bit of updating would be good on them but I know that's a huge expense.'* (LA14/F5)

Nevertheless, the content of the programmes and their theoretical underpinnings were widely admired:

> *'….the basis is sound, it brings into play things that no other courses I have run have.'* (LA19/F5).

> *'The theory behind it, I was sold on straight away.'* (LA14/F7)

> *'I think the structure of the programme …. Being able to highlight specific behaviours … it's a more strict framework in which to operate and I think that's been beneficial.'* (LA18/F6)

Although there were concerns about the literacy demands, the manuals and support materials were also well regarded.

> *'The parent manuals are really good and the parents are very proud of them'* (LA6/F6)

The parent booklets were also praised:

'They use the books as a bible, they take ownership of them and what I did was give everybody a folder with a pencil with their books so that they went away feeling that it was for them to keep and hold and put together and put their worksheets in at home and they all came back with the folders and the books with post-it notes and scribbles all over them and things like that and you're thinking "I've never seen this before, this is amazing!"' (LA9/F4)

2.2.3 Training

The facilitators were overwhelmingly positive about the relevance of their training: 95% considered it very relevant or relevant with over half (53%) rating it very relevant (Table 2.3). These data present a strong endorsement of the training as the facilitators made these judgements on relevance once they had experienced facilitating or co-facilitating a group, unlike the situation where such scales are completed at the end of the training itself.

Table 2.3   Facilitators' views on the relevance of their training

Very relevant	Relevant	Not particularly relevant	Not at all relevant
35	28	2	1

N = 66

Examples of the positive views are exemplified in these quotations:

One facilitator commented that she:

'really enjoyed the week's training and being a parent myself with a young child, I benefited a lot. I still use the manual myself at home…...it did change a lot of my own personal parenting skills' (LA20/F9).

A strategic lead in the same LA provided a wider perspective that was also positive:

'*The feedback about the training has been fantastic: I mean, there's been lots of informal feedback from the schools, from the staff who went who've talked to the head teachers or whoever about how good it was'* (LA20/S).

2.2.4 Facilitators and Co-facilitators

The parenting groups typically had more than one facilitator. In such an approach it is essential that the two (or three) co-facilitators gel. This was the situation here with over 95% of facilitators reporting that the dynamics with their co-facilitators had worked well or very well – indeed four out of five gave the higher rating (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4   Facilitators' ratings of the dynamic between themselves and co-facilitators

Very well	Well	Not particularly well	Not at all well
40	9	2	0

N = 51

Because LAs had different systems – and the Programme also had different requirements – co-facilitators could come from the same service or, in another LA, from very different settings. Furthermore, the involvement of parents as co-facilitators brought in an additional factor. Interestingly, those professional facilitators who had worked with parent facilitators were positive. The main factors identified to aid effective collaboration included good planning and personality characteristics.

2.2.5 Support and supervision

Support of facilitators is an important element in parent training programmes. This can be of two main types. First, there is the support of a line manager. This is often practical and deals with the normal running of the job. However, in the helping professions there is recognition of the need for a different form of support, one which allows the worker to deal with emotionally challenging work. This is often called supervision but different terms are used, leading to a degree of confusion. Supervision in this context is important as the facilitators were working with parents whose reason for attending the groups was to attempt to deal with significant challenges to their ability as a parent. As clearly demonstrated by the child data (Section 3) the children who were the focus of these parents' concerns typically had a high level of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Parents attending these groups can be challenging and emotionally draining because of the challenges and difficulties they are themselves dealing with.

At this time we found that the facilitators felt that they were receiving good support from their manager (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5   Facilitators' ratings of their manager's support

Very supportive	Supportive	Not particularly supportive	Not at all supportive
31	18	5	1

N = 55

Facilitators were less likely, however, to receive supervision as indicated in Table 2.6 - note less than half those reporting their manager's support were in receipt of supervision. When this did occur it was beneficial.

Table 2.6   Facilitators' ratings of the helpfulness of supervision they had received

Very helpful	Helpful	Not particularly helpful	Not at all helpful
12	8	2	2

N = 24

The nature of support differed. Some facilitators (e.g. educational and clinical psychologists) received support as part of their day to day work and could utilise this support for their PEIP work. Supervision was also available from the relevant PEIP programme as part of follow up after initial training. (Appendix 1). Such supervision also provides the opportunity to maintain fidelity of programme implementation. This was valued where it occurred but the limited resources affected availability.

2.2.6   Strategic issues

At this time (June – October 2007) LAs' main concern was the development of the parenting strategy and the place of PEIP within this. Some LAs were undergoing structural changes which were variously described as 'very unsettled', 'not helping' and, as one strategic lead noted 'we are at a very painful part of a necessary process'. On the other hand, there were

positive elements and strategic leads could see how, for example, developing locality structures could help the parenting strategy and PEIP in particular.

A related issue concerns the number of parenting interventions that an LA should include in its strategy. This should be, at least in part, a reflection of the balance between universal and targeted provision as programmes have different purposes and foci. With respect to the focus of PEIP there is still a question for LAs, however. There are different histories across the 20 PEIP LAs (including the unfunded comparisons) with some having developed services using one or more of the three PEIP programmes prior to PEIP, plus other programmes. Should an LA focus on one programme for its targeted provision or invest in several? There are benefits in diversity but also challenges, not least in the training and purchasing of resources, coupled with a greater complexity.

This could lead to tension, for example, if an LA had a locally developed scheme, as exemplified by this quotation:

> *The phrase that you hear, is "are you saying that our own stuff is not as good as [Programme]" And that is quite difficult because the PEIP, and, in our case, the [Programme], comes with a massive, international evidence base, which, of course, our home grown stuff, doesn't have'.* (LA9/S)

In other cases there was evidence of a stronger, coherent relationship between PEIP and the overall strategy. This partly depended upon the prior history of the LA with respect to parent support, but it was also argued to be a function of the balance between different elements in the parenting strategy. One strategic lead argued that having a 'total package' of parent support had been a key element in implementing PEIP.

2.2.7 Impact and sustainability

The highly positive view of the success of the Programme was found among strategic and operational leads as well as facilitators. This was not uncritical praise but was evident across the PEIP. Furthermore, and as explained in Section 2.3, there were beneficial engagements with schools, especially extended schools.

> *'I think actually, although it is early days, the impact has been huge […] and I think one of things I've noticed is the relationships with us and schools was really getting*

better as well. Schools really wanted to look at this programme and I think that's really good'. (LA19/O1)

Sustainability, however, was a concern. As the PEIP was DCSF funded there were worries about what would happen after the Pathfinder ended. There was a strong commitment to continue but would there be financial support available?

2.2.8 Summary

By the summer of 2007 the PEIP had, in theory, been in operation a year. In practice, the actual running of parenting groups had been underway for a much shorter time. This was due to the need to set up the infrastructure and train facilitators. Nevertheless, by this time there was a strongly positive attitude which was common across all LAs and hence across all three Programmes. This evidence for their opinions was largely impressionistic but no less powerful for that. Facilitators were experiencing the positive changes in parents attending their groups. There were a number of operational difficulties but in many respects, across the PEIP as a whole, the roll out was progressing well. The main concern was the sustainability post March 2008. Future funding was unknown and therefore a concern.

2.3   PEIP and extended schools

During September and October 2007 we undertook an additional study of the extent of extended schools' involvement with PEIP[8]. The development of extended schools is a major policy initiative within education. It was already apparent that across the LAs PEIP had links with schools. An important issue therefore was the extent of this developing relationship and the degree to which it led to mutual benefits to the schools and the delivery of parenting programmes.

2.3.1 PEIP engagement with extended schools

Extended schools are seen by the government as a key development to enable the delivery of Every Child Matters. In its publication *Extended Schools: Building on Experience* (DCFS, 2007) the Department for Children, Schools and Families reports that there were already

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[8] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder: Additional study of the involvement of extended schools DCSF-RW035.* (50pp). London: DCSF. http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW036.pdf

5000 schools offering an extended range of services. Research to date has indicated the range of services being developed (Chamberlain et al, 2006) and there is some evidence for the extended schools initiative (Cummings et al, 2006) supported by Ofsted's study (Ofsted, 2006). Parenting support is one of the extended services that should be accessible in or through schools by 2010. Parenting programmes are one means of providing such support. Local authorities have a responsibility to develop a strategy for parenting support. The PEIP, therefore, is an important initiative which allows examination of how schools are developing extended services.

Nationally, the development of the extended schools agenda has been variable and this was true also of the 18 PEIP LAs and the unfunded comparison LAs. However, there were many examples of positive developments. Schools were having a role in the delivery of PEIP, providing premises and also staff as facilitators. Schools were also important in the identification of families.

> *'Many [schools], very favourably, took on the concept of identifying parents who they could see were maybe having difficulties, through the behaviour of the children in the school. In some areas, it was the schools who got most of the families who then actually took part in the programme'.* (LA3/S)

This involvement was rated positively by PEIP facilitators (Table 2.7)

Table 2.7   Facilitators' ratings of school's involvement in identifying parents for groups

Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Good deal
3	11	15	9

N = 38

Schools' existing systems were also useful, for example, newsletters and other mailings. Non-teaching staff including learning mentors and parent support advisers (PSAs) were important resources for identifying parents and encouraging them to join a group.[9] Despite the general positive citations there were also some difficulties. One strategic lead observed

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[9] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S., Davis, L., Davis, H., Evans, R., Stewart-Brown, S., Strand, S., & Hasluck, C. (2007). *Parent support adviser pilot: First interim report from the evaluation DCSF-RW020.* London: DCSF. 56pp

that schools, as opposed to extended schools, were more 'precious' about wanting the Pathfinder course to be run in their schools for their parents only.

PEIP courses were run in a range of premises but schools were a popular location.

> '*I can use [school name] as an example. They've given us the library. The staff are immensely supportive. They've provided tea and coffee and drinks. It's been great.'* (LA10/S).

Some had doubts – would the parents have negative feelings about school? However, overall the benefits of the school location outweighed these concerns. For example, school is a community resource and has no connotations associated with its being only for those with difficulties. The facilities provided, including crèches and kitchens, were also important particularly where groups included snacks into their operations.

The use of school staff as facilitators was common. Many schools saw this as part of their role, particularly those developing as extended schools. Their remit went beyond specifically defined pupils to include the wider community. However, the practical impact of school staff facilitating groups could lead to problems, for example the need to cover for that time or else lose that resource for the period that the group was running.

Not only head teachers but school governors also were generally supportive of the development of the Pathfinder:

> '*the school governors are totally supportive of this. To turn the room from a dining room into a community room, is a major, major piece of work, and the governors were very keen and very supportive of this. It is part of the principles and the fundamental ethos of our school'*. (LA1/H)

Indeed, a head teacher's report to the governing body led to one governor attending the course herself.

2.3.2   Factors enabling schools/extended schools to support PEIP

Head teachers were central to success. Their demonstrable commitment was a key factor. Also, their practical knowledge, knowing the parents and children, were important. The

ethos of extended schools was beneficial and they were more likely to recognise the complementary benefits of engagement.

> *'The extended schools certainly recognise the value of parenting work to complement what is happening in school and what they are providing for the children'.* (LA14/S)

Commitment from the start was also important: '*The advantage for extended schools is that they are already 100% committed to developing work with parents and have done a lot of thinking because of their commitment to being an extended school'.* (LA2/S) Indeed, a longer term commitment to build upon was also important.

Beyond the school itself the active support of the LA was also seen as important, including strategic planning.

Facilitators identified a substantial number of benefits of working with extended schools:

Families gain:
- from being able to build stronger relationships with their child/ren
- from the skills they gain around communicating with teachers in school (when this is a part of the Pathfinder course)

Schools gain:
- from improved relationships with the parents who have become used to coming in to school and being seen in school and whose attitudes towards teachers have become more positive
- being helped to meet the parenting support part of the Extended Schools core offer
- the contribution the courses make to meeting the targets of the Healthy Schools agenda
- from a knock-on positive effect on the children's behaviour
- by being able to offer the Pathfinder group as another way of supporting their families

Parenting support groups benefit because:
- Schools have access to the largest number of parents
- School staff know their families and were perceived to be very good at identifying suitable parents to attend
- School buildings are community based and convenient for parents

- School venues are (usually) provided free of charge
- Teachers can reinforce the messages with the children of these parents and also support the parents too, thus providing consistence between home and school
- It is easier to access childcare in a school venue, especially an extended school
- The mainstream venue is non-stigmatising and enables the group to be offered at universal level (even if recruitment is also targeted)
- Extended schools enable the groups to run after school for parents who work during the day
- The parents recruited to in-school groups tend to live in the area and therefore are able to provide mutual support for each other during and after the course
- Word of mouth from one parent to another explaining what the benefits for the course were was a powerful way of recruiting for the next course

Overall, facilitators were of the view that whether a school is extended or not, the really important factor is a welcoming ethos in school, and a flexible and helpful attitude to accommodating the needs of the programme among all school staff whose involvement in any way is needed. '*It's the quality of leadership that's key*' (LA3/F8).

2.3.3. Barriers that inhibit schools extended schools from supporting the PEIP

Two main types of barriers or inhibitors were identified by strategic leads: practical and attitudinal. The practical difficulties included inappropriate venues for example where the space allocated which might not be suitable for one of several reasons including a lack of privacy. Another was finance as some head teachers stressed that their first priority was to fund their pupils' education – a benefit of extended schools is the wider brief validating expenditure on parents. Other practical problems included the nature of the school year and its shut down for holidays and the impact of major events such as an Ofsted inspection.

Attitudinal problems included the long-standing tension between education as focussing on intellectual or social development. Furthermore, this was accentuated here with concerns by some teachers that their job was to relate to parents as parents of a pupil, not to engage in their education. The tensions arising from competing government agendas (e.g. standards v inclusion) were also important sources of difficulty.

2.3.4 How did PEIP support schools to meet their objectives?

Within the extended schools agenda, support for parents is an important theme. Consequently, PEIP assists a school in addressing one of its tasks, as part of its *core offer*.

> *'The core offer involves parenting support. [The Pathfinder course] is not the only way of supporting parents on offer, obviously, but it's an important one.'* (LA8/S)

The 'core offer' referred to here concerns the DCSF expectations set out in *Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for all* (DfES, 2005) which specifies 'parenting groups, using structured manual-based parenting programmes' (p 12). The programmes used in the PEIP were also considered to be important in meeting this requirement because of their evidence base. Strategic leads referred to their programme being 'tried and tested' and how this was beneficial, not only in itself, but because it helped to persuade schools of the benefits of parent support.

The purpose of PEIP is not only to assist parents to develop their parenting skills but also to have an indirect beneficial impact on the behavioural, emotional and social development of their children. Consequently PEIP has a role to play in helping schools meet the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Looking to the future, head teachers, facilitators and strategic leads all saw further, positive developments in the inter-relationship between PEIP and the school, particularly extended schools. Furthermore, head teachers were already planning ahead to the future development of their parenting programme post- March 2008.

2.4   Comparison of Aspects of the Three Parenting Programmes

As part of the evaluation a comparison was done of the characteristics of the three programmes in terms of their organisation and content. This included the parenting courses as well as the training of people to facilitate the groups with parents. This was done from the materials available on the courses and with the full co-operation of the programme leaders. The detailed table of comparison is contained in Appendix 1.

Since Triple P is a much more complex system than the other two programmes, the comparison has been conducted by considering the Level 4 Group Triple P, because this

was taken as the basic method for all the sites involved in Triple P. However, other aspects of the Triple P system were involved including group work focused on managing teenagers, individual work with families particularly at Level 4, and Level 5 Enhanced work for families with needs beyond parenting (e.g. parental psychosocial problems).

It was clear for all the programmes that a great deal of care and enormous work had gone into the development of the training and the materials to back this up. They were all originally developed outside the UK, although the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme was specifically adapted for the UK context by the Race Equality Foundation. Their parenting methods are all largely based upon behavioural principles and derived from social learning theory and show considerable similarity in relation to identifying behaviours to change, goal setting, reinforcement consequences, effects of attention, praise, ignoring, using behaviour charts and time out. However the parent training courses do differ in a number of ways. The most obvious differences are as follows:

- Triple P Level 4 Group programme is much shorter (i.e. approximately 13 hours including telephone contacts) than the other two (i.e. 34/36 hours). This is still true if parents are also exposed to the Level 5 Enhanced programme, but the difference is reduced somewhat with Triple P involving somewhere in the region of 25 hours contact.
- Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities has a somewhat different agenda to the other two and is much more concerned specifically about violence, drug and alcohol problems, family and community functioning, culture and children's development within this.
- However, although exact comparisons are difficult, Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities probably matches Triple P Level 4 Group programme in terms of the time spent specifically on parenting skills.
- On the other hand, the Incredible Years programme spends comparatively more time on parenting than the other programmes, with considerably more time explicitly given to the importance, nature and development of parent-child relationships.
- The Incredible Years programme was specifically designed for the Pathfinder and has not been previously evaluated. Essentially, material from the Advance programme was added to the basic parenting course to cover the management of parental psychosocial issues that were to be expected in the families targeted in this project. In effect, this makes it comparable in content to the Triple P Level 4 Group programme being used with the Enhanced programme.

- Individual session duration is longer in the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme than the other two (3 hours versus a maximum of 2 hours) and group size can be greater (maximum of 20 versus 12).
- There is some similarity in training methods across the programmes in so far as there are formal sessions, with discussion, observation, principle and skills training, and homework assignments. Nevertheless, the Incredible Years programme appears to be more collaborative in style than the other two, where presentations/lectures are more likely, and specifically uses discussion of video-vignettes as a principal method.

There are clear structures for training of facilitators in all three programmes. Perhaps the most noticeable differences between them are as follows:

- The training of facilitators has been done entirely by visitors from the USA in the case of Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities and from Australia for Triple P. In contrast, the Incredible Years training has been able to take advantage of pre-existing UK trainers and mentors.
- Selection of potential group leaders differs a little, in that Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities tends to specify personal qualities and not professional qualification, allowing parents without qualifications to be trained. The other two programmes recruit from professionals with specified qualifications and experience predominantly in the mental health field, without explicitly specifying personal qualities.
- All the programmes specify accreditation procedures and require facilitators to work under supervision, although Triple P and Incredible Years appear to have more explicit and elaborate guidelines than Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities.

At the end of the project, programme leaders were asked to comment on the implementation of their training:

2.4.1 Programme leaders' perspectives

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

The programme leader's impression was that in general implementation had gone very well across all sites. In spite of having to work extremely hard within a very short timescale, they

were able to train at least the number of facilitators intended, deliver additional day long skills development training for some local authorities, and all with very positive feedback. They trained approximately 356 facilitators; 24 in LA2, 20 in LA19, 72 in LA6, 48 in LA7, 96 in LA20 and 96 in LA12. The trained facilitators went on to deliver the planned numbers of programmes with the target group. Parental engagement and retention had been high and quality assurance procedures had been implemented.

The relationships between local authorities and the programme leader had been very productive. Liaison with LA leads had gone smoothly and had led to a well coordinated approach to implementation, by and large. This had depended to some extent on the initial stage of development of the authority in parenting provision, and whether Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities was already established in the authority, and what agency (voluntary or statutory) had the lead for the project. They found it generally easier to work with leads in statutory services in terms of degrees of flexibility and responsiveness to issues as they arose, since voluntary agencies had very tight budgets and little room for manoeuvre. There were particular problems when Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities had not been involved in writing the original proposal and incorrect assumptions about costs and implementation had been made, but these were generally dealt with.

A particular issue of concern was additional facilitator training and supervision. This was not available across all sites, because some authorities did not allocate funding for it. The programme leader considered that had this been centrally allocated or funded, implementation would have been better. It was also clear that there was considerable variation in knowledge and understanding across and within local authorities in relation to parent education, government policy and implementation issues.

The programme was delivered without major changes, although sessions were occasionally shortened to meet unforeseen circumstances and in one case the option was provided to increase the number of sessions because of restrictions on the length of child care that could be provided per session.

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities have clearly taken the National Occupational Standards for work with parents very seriously. They have already done this by:
- mapping how their facilitator training and the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme fitted with National Occupational Standards

- drawing attention of all trainees to the Standards
- directing trainees to further training to meet standards not addressed within Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities
- developing additional training specifically to help Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities facilitators improve their skills and competence in working with parents
- distributing a summary of the National Occupational Standards to all participants on their skills development training courses
- informing all facilitators that the National Occupational Standards are used as an ongoing method of assessment in terms of the quality assurance process attached to the programme, including the monitoring visits and certification process that new facilitators go through.

Future capacity for wide scale implementation of Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities within the UK has been improved and should be facilitated by, for example:
- the availability of more trainers from the USA
- 4-6 UK based trainers to be in place by Autumn 2008
- a flexible team of regional staff and associates
- an improved website
- dedicated phone lines for programme support
- a new pilot system for quality assurance.

The Incredible Years

The programme leader's views are that the project had gone very well. They trained approximately 300 group leaders (50 from each area). All areas were delivering high quality services and also planning for the continuation of the programme regardless of future funding. There were initial problems including: unrealistic expectations (e.g. about numbers of groups that could be delivered by inexperienced staff); varied knowledge and experience of the Incredible Years across local authorities; putting mentoring and training in place, developing leader skills and getting services running; deciding on the appropriate programme for the population being targeted; and a lack of understanding of fidelity issues to ensure that programmes were likely to be effective. However, these were overcome and implementation was judged to have gone well, because of: hard work from mentors allocated to each area; a willingness of local authorities to listen and collaborate; ongoing and consistent support from Carolyn Webster-Stratton and Lisa St George, in Seattle; and

funding for the coordinating role taken by Judy Hutchings. The role placed by Lisa St George and Carolyn Webster-Stratton was thought to be crucial in orchestrating the work for the Pathfinder; they had and will continue to have an overview of all training as a result of daily evaluations from all participants returned to Seattle at the end of each course.

There were changes to the programme during the project, partly because of a lack of prior consultation. Firstly, because of the absence of pre-existing mentors in four of the local authorities, a decision was made to compromise and allocate mentors from other authorities, in spite of the usual practice guideline that mentors should only work in their own area. Secondly, the assumption that the parenting programme training would involve the 12 session basic course was questioned at the beginning by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, on the grounds that the basic course was not designed for the older age group targeted within the Pathfinder and that the higher risk groups involved would require help with issues beyond parenting. Carolyn therefore put together a 17-18 session course specifically for the Pathfinder, compromising to some extent on the time needed to cover the content. The result was that this required extra training for the group leaders, but also that some courses took longer to complete than the intended 17-18 sessions and some were unable to finish before the end of the Pathfinder.

Some thought has been given to the National Occupational Standards by the Incredible Years group and a mapping exercise has been done within one of the Pathfinder local authority areas. Although it is suggested that the group leader training covers much of what the Standards require, details of the matching has not been seen.

Future implementation is clearly possible, because of the number of trainers and mentors now based in the UK and existing procedures. It was thought that their current capacity would be limited to supporting no more than about six local authorities at a time, although resources from the USA could be made available. It is suggested, however, by the programme leads that there should be:
- recruitment of group leaders within existing staff, not staff on short contracts, to ensure embedding the programme within services and sustainability
- prior consultation centrally and locally with the programme leads, with this based upon a questionnaire specifically developed for this purpose (i.e. the Agency Readiness Questionnaire)
- and planned coordination by an Incredible Years trainer as in the Pathfinder.

Triple P

The programme leader for Triple P was impressed by the way in which their programme had been rolled out within the Pathfinder sites and excited to see evidence of a population-based approach being disseminated. A total of 45 Triple P provider courses were conducted for 430 practitioners from the six local authorities. This represented 850 training places. The majority of courses were concerned with Level 4 work and included Group Triple P, Group Teen Triple P and Standard Triple P; this involved 34 courses and 629 (74%) participants. Ninety-four percent of the participants were female and had on average 8.4 years experience in parent consultation. The vast majority (at least 94%) were from professions across the range of agencies providing services to children and families; the biggest groups included support workers (33%), teachers (13%), social workers (13%) and nurses (9%). A high proportion (87%) of participants achieved accreditation and satisfaction with training was very high (97% satisfied or very satisfied).

No changes at all were required for the implementation of Triple P within the Pathfinder, reflecting the diversity of intervention levels and delivery modalities involved in the whole programme.

The programme leaders for Triple P have taken note of the National Occupational Standards for Working with Parents and are about to publish a document to provide a detailed mapping of their provider training against the Standards. This document suggests that Triple P takes account of most of the area covered by the Standards.

3.   OUTCOMES FROM THE PARENTING GROUPS

3.1   Introduction

This section presents the analyses of the group data. First, demographic data on the groups and the parents who attended the groups are presented (Section 3.2). Next (Section 3.3) we present the results of the four questionnaires completed by the parents at the start of their group training. These comprised measures of their child's behaviour (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, SDQ), the parent's own mental well-being (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale – WEMWBS) and two measures of parenting, the Parenting Scale and Being a Parent.

In Section 3.4 we present comparisons between the parents' scores on the pre- and post-group scales. These comparisons provide measures of improvement across these four domains. Key data are presented here; additional data are presented in Appendix 2.

3.2   The Parents

The number of parents who had started a group was substantial, N = 3575. Of these, 2768 were on courses that had finished by the end of the PEIP (31.3.08); the remaining courses continued after this time point ending at various times during the period April – July 2008. Of the 2768 parents who could have completed the course before the cut-off, 2009 actually completed, a completion rate of 73%, i.e. a drop out rate of 27% (see Section 4.4).

There was substantial variation between LAs in both number of groups run, and number of parents starting and completing (See Section 4.4). The following data are based on those parents that completed the pre-course booklet (N = 2207) and where booklets had been returned by 28.4.08.

Table 3.1   Number and percentage of parents by local authority

	N	Percent
LA1	297	13.5
LA2	88	4.0
LA3	52	2.4
LA4	57	2.6
LA5	91	4.1
LA6	61	2.8
LA7	72	3.3
LA8	76	3.4
LA9	26	1.2
LA10	177	8.0
LA11	71	3.2
LA12	65	2.9
LA14	83	3.8
LA15	262	11.9
LA16	43	1.9
LA17	366	16.6
LA18	269	12.2
LA19	51	2.3

N = 2207

Most of the parents were female (86.7%) with just 13.3% male. Most were the biological parent of the child about whom they were primarily concerned (91.2%) – Table 3.2.

Table 3.2   Parent Relationship to child

	%
Biological parent	91.2
Step parent	2.6
Parent's partner (living together)	1.9
Adoptive parent	0.6
Foster parent	1.4
Other	2.4

N = 2102

Note: The 'other' group in almost all cases was a grandparent.

Almost half (46.9%) of the parents had left school at 16 or earlier but 13.3% had attended university (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Parental education level

	%
Left school at 16 or earlier	46.9
Left school at 17 or 18	11.0
Attended FE college	24.0
Apprenticeship/trade	4.9
Attended university	13.3

N = 2008

One in eight parents (12.5%) did not specify the ethnic group to which they belonged. Of the others (*N* = 1932) 76.1%% were White British; the remaining 23.9% were spread across the range of minority ethnic groups (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Parents' ethnic group

	%
White British	76.1
White Irish	1.3
Traveller-Irish Heritage	0.1
Gypsy Roma	0.5
Any other white group	1.9
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	1.3
Mixed White and Black African	0.1
Mixed White and Asian	0.7
Any other mixed background	0.5
Indian	1.3
Pakistani	2.6
Bangladeshi	7.3
Any other Asian group	0.5
Black Caribbean	1.9
Black African	1.3
Any other Black group	0.3
Chinese	0.2
Other	2.0

N = 1932

Over half of the parents who responded to the questionnaire earned £200 or less each week (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5   Parents' weekly Income

	%
£150 or less	33.2
£150 to £200	19.1
£201 to £250	12.2
£251 to £300	8.7
£300 to £350	8.2
£350 or above	18.6

N = 1814

High proportions of the parents reported having sought help from one or more of a range of professionals within the past six months (Table 3.6). Over half (59%) had sought help from their family doctor, 19.9% from a social worker, 17.1% from a counsellor and 7.8% from a psychiatrist. In addition, 23.1% had sought help from a range of other professionals including teachers, health visitors, psychologists, family support workers, occupational therapists, police, and behaviour support teams.

Table 3.6   Percentage of parents who had sought help from a professional over the previous 6 months.

In the last six months have you sought help from any of the following	%
Family doctor	59.0
Social worker	19.9
Counsellor	17.1
Psychiatrist	7.8
Other professional	23.1

3.3   Parenting measures

Three questionnaires were administered providing five discrete scales related to parental mental well-being and parenting, and a total of seven measures when 'total scores' from two scales are included.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

The WEMWBS provides an indication of the mental well-being of the parents as they started their parenting group. It comprises 14 items. Scored from 1 (none of the time) through to 5 (all of the time). The scales proved highly reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93 for the 14 item scale). High scores represent greater mental well-being.

Normative data are available from Tennant et al (2007). The WEMWBS was completed by 1,749 respondents in the September 2006 wave of the Scottish Health Education Population Survey (HEPS) and the 2006 'Well? What do you think?' Scottish survey on attitudes to mental health, mental well being and mental health problems. The data from this population sample were normally distributed with a median score of 51 and an inter-quartile range of 45-56.

The results of the comparison of the parents in the PEIP sample and the normative sample are presented in two ways. Table 3.7 compares the percentiles and indicates that the median score for the PEIP parents was 43 (inter-quartile range 36-51) lower than that of the normative sample (median = 51, inter-quartile range 45-56). Thus 75% of the PEIP sample parents scored below the national median on mental well-being as they started their parenting groups.

Table 3.7   Percentile distribution of raw scores for national population sample and the PEIP sample for the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

Percentile	National sample	PEIP sample
5th	-	26
10th	-	29
25th (lower quartile)	45	36
50th (Median)	51	43
75th (upper quartile)	56	51
90th	-	58
95th	-	62
N	1749	1397

The data are also reported in Figure 3.1 where the medians and inter-quartile ranges (i.e. between 25% and 75% of the sample) are shown.

Figure 3.1: Comparison of median and inter-quartile range for scores on the WEMWBS: PEIP versus population data
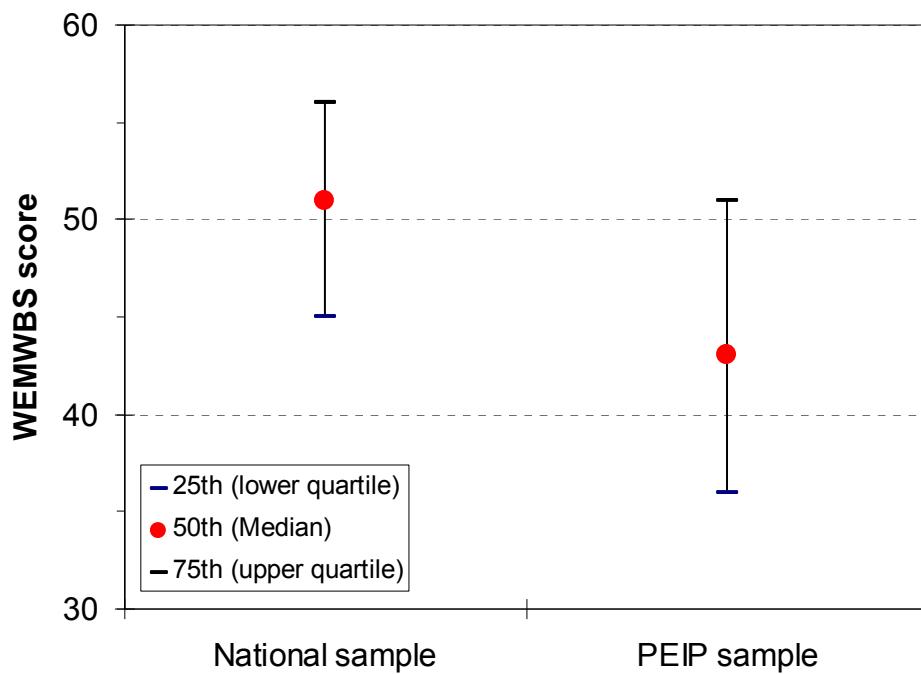
Parenting Scale: Parental Laxness and Parental Over-reactivity

The *Parenting Scale* (Irvine, Biglan, Smolkowski, & Ary, 1999) is used to identify two dimensions of parenting: Parental Laxness and Parental Over-reactivity, each composed of 6 items. The thirteenth item on monitoring does not contribute to these two dimensions but is included in the total score. Higher scores represent more positive parenting. Parental Laxness was reasonably reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 for the 6 item scale. Parental Over-reactivity was of lower but still acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 for the 6 item scale.

The correlation between the Laxness score and the Over-reactivity score was significant but of a relatively small magnitude ($r = .35$, $N = 2093$, $p < .0001$). It is therefore advisable to treat these as discrete scales.

Being a Parent scale (BAP): Parenting Satisfaction and Parenting Efficacy

The *Being A Parent* scale is an adaptation by Johnston & Mash (1989) of the *Parenting Sense of Competence Scale* (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978), which assesses

parenting self-esteem. The 16 items assess Parenting Satisfaction, an affective dimension reflecting parenting frustration, anxiety, and motivation, and Parenting Efficacy, an instrumental dimension reflecting competence, problem-solving ability, and capability in the parenting role (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Parents are asked to respond to a series of statements about parenting, indicating their agreement or disagreement. Each item is measured on a 6 -point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 6 (Strongly disagree).

Parenting Satisfaction was reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 for the 9 item scale. Parenting Efficacy was also reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 for the 7 item scale. The correlation between parenting efficacy and parenting satisfaction was only .23, so it is important to treat these as discrete scales.

3.3.1 Pre-Course to Post-Course change

Of the 2207 pre-course respondents, 1086 (49.3%) completed the post-course questionnaire (Table 3.8). It is important to note that those that did not complete a post-course questionnaire were not necessarily drop outs from the course. In fact, drop out rate overall was 29%. A lack of post-course information could be a result of administrative error: failure to organise the completion of the booklet or to return the booklets.

Table 3.8   Post course questionnaire completion

	N	%
Pre-course only	1086	49.2
Post-course follow up	1121	50.8
Total	2207	

A comparison between the scores of those parents that returned the post-course questionnaires and those that did not indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the three parent measures completed pre-course (Appendix 2.1). Consequently, the following analyses are based on the sample who had completed the course and had filled in both the pre-course and post-course questionnaires (*N* = 1121).

Paired t-tests indicate statistically highly significant improvements in outcomes on all seven measures (all *p* < .0001 – see Table 3.9*).

- There was a significant increase in parents' mental well-being, and in self-reported parental efficacy and parental satisfaction (and Parenting total score). The effect size in all cases is either moderate (> 0.5) or large (> 0.8).

- There was a significant decrease in parenting laxness and parenting over-reactivity (and Being a Parent total score). Effect sizes for improvements in parental efficacy and parental satisfaction are moderate, for the Being a Parent total score the effect size is large. (These effect sizes have negative signs because these indicate significant *reductions* in less effective parenting practices).

Table 3.9   Comparison of pre-course and post-course scores on the parenting measures

Parenting measure	occasion	mean	*N*	*SD*	Effect Size
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale	pre-course	43.5	1071	10.4	
	post-course	50.6	1071	9.8	0.71
Parenting laxness	pre-course	22.0	1040	6.6	
	post-course	17.4	1040	6.3	-0.71
Parenting over-reactivity	pre-course	22.5	1032	6.4	
	post-course	17.4	1032	6.2	-0.83
Parenting Scale total score	pre-course	47.4	1030	11.1	
	post-course	37.1	1030	11.6	-0.91
Parental efficacy	pre-course	27.4	1046	6.4	
	post-course	31.0	1046	5.7	0.59
Parental satisfaction	pre-course	31.9	1048	7.7	
	post-course	36.6	1048	7.9	0.60
Being a Parent total score	pre-course	59.2	1039	11.1	
	post-course	67.5	1039	11.2	0.74

p < .001 in all cases

In summary, at the time of starting the groups the parents were characterised overall by high levels of disadvantage as reflected in low educational attainment, low income and high demands on support services. However, it is important also to note the range, for example 13.3% had attended university. The ethnic profile indicates that the PEIP was accessed by a wide range of the community and that there were more parents from minority ethnic groups than would be expected from a nationally representative sample. At the start of the parenting courses, parents overall had significantly lower levels of mental well-being and had

recent histories of substantial use of support services. Nevertheless, there was a statistically highly significant and meaningful improvement in their mental well being and in their parenting skills after attending the groups.

3.4   The Children

The parents were asked to provide information on the child about whom they were concerned. As the Pathfinder was intended to address the needs of parents of children aged 8–13 years, this was the target group. The mean age of the children was 9.19 years (*SD* = 3.15 years) well within this expected range. However, the parents referred to children with a much wider range of ages than the Pathfinder target (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2   Age of children
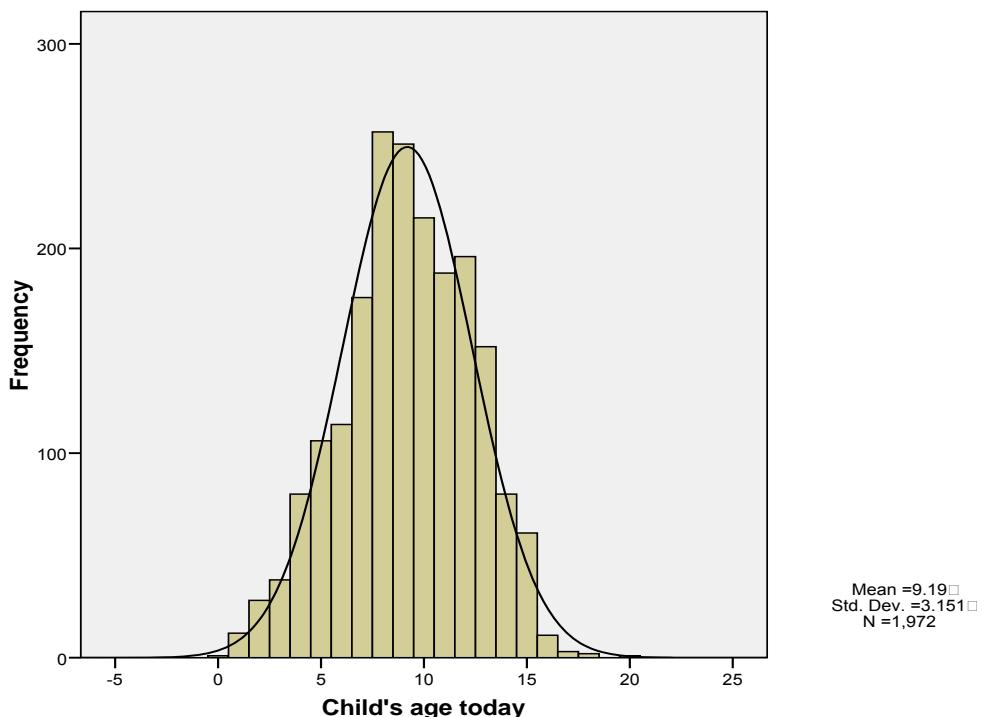
Child's age was missing for quite a large proportion (11%) of the sample. Of those parents who did report an age only about two-thirds (64%) were in the target 8-13 age range. While relatively few were 14 or above (8%) over a quarter (28%) were 7 or below (Table 3.10).

Table 3.10   Age of children

Years	N	%
0 – 7	555	28.1
8 – 13	1259	63.8
14 plus	158	8.0

The high proportion of younger children (< 7 years of age) is partly explained by the policy for Incredible Years LAs. Where facilitators had not previously run a course they were recommended to start with parents of younger children as more immediate gains were likely to be evident. However, this is only a partial explanation as the other two programmes also had substantial percentages of parents of younger children: Incredible Years 37.8%, Triple P 27.9%, Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities 21.3%.

Parents were also asked the gender of the child they were most concerned about. Of those children whose gender was reported, nearly two thirds (62%) were boys (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11   Children's gender

	N	%
Male	1247	62.3
Female	755	37.7

Parents were also asked whether their child was receiving extra support in school, for example a teaching assistant, and whether the child had a statement of special educational needs. A substantial number (43.2%) did not respond to the question about extra support. Of those that did, a high percentage (59.5%) reported that their child did receive extra support (Table 3.12). Over 90% reported on whether their child had a statement. Of these, 17.7% stated this was the case.

Table 3.12   Additional support in school and statement of secial educational needs (SEN)

	%
Additional support	59.5
Statement of SEN	17.7

3.4.1   Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The parents rated the behaviour of their target child on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) at the start of their course. The SDQ provides a Total Difficulties score together with four scales representing problems: Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, and Peer Problems. There is also a Prosocial scale, that measures positive behaviours. Finally, the SDQ also provides a measure of impact.

The SDQ continuous scores were classified as normal, borderline and abnormal, using the published cut scores (available from http://www.sdqinfo.com/b1.html). The results for the PEIP sample pre-course are given in Table 3.13, as well as the national averages.

3.13   Pre-course Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires: Classification of PEIP sample compared with national norms (%)

PEIP sample	Normal		Borderline		Abnormal	
	National	PEIP	National	PEIP	National	PEIP
Emotional Symptoms	80.8	48.1	7.8	13.1	11.4	38.8
Conduct problems	76.4	23.2	10.9	14.1	12.7	62.6
Hyperactivity	77.9	38.8	7.4	13.3	14.7	47.9
Peer problems	78.0	39.5	10.2	16.6	11.7	43.8
Prosocial scale	95.0	67.5	2.7	13.1	2.3	19.4
SDQ total difficulties	82.1	28.3	8.2	13.4	9.8	58.3
SDQ Impact score	83.4	27.5	7.8	11.4	8.8	61.2

The PEIP sample had a substantially higher proportion of children with scores rated *abnormal* when the parents started their groups than the national sample on all the scales. For example, about 58% of the children were classified as *abnormal* on SDQ Total Difficulties compared with the national norm of about 10%. The different distributions of the SDQ Total Difficulties scores of the PEIP and normative samples are presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3   Comparison of PEIP pre-course SDQ Total Difficulties and national norms
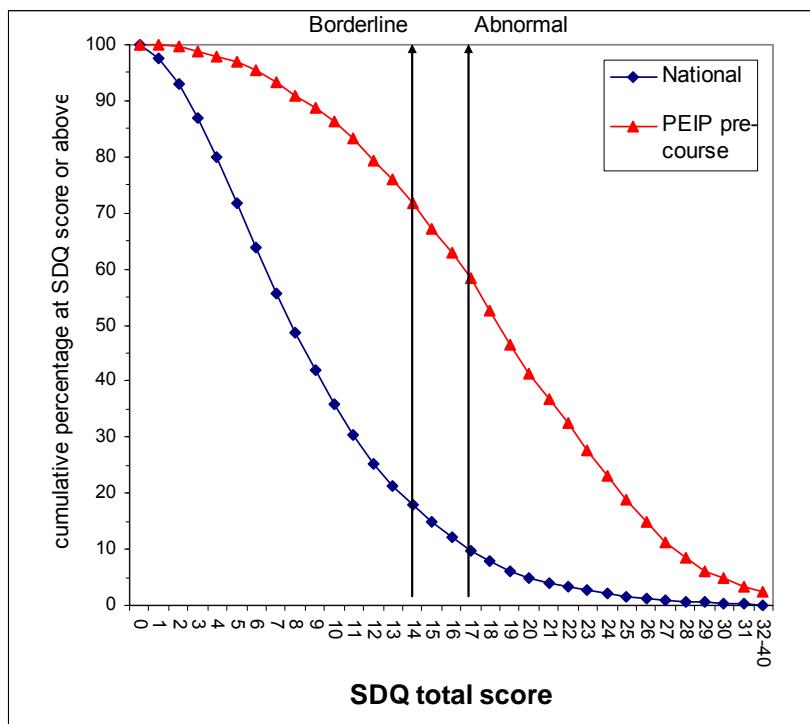
These differences were statistically highly significant (p <.0001) in all cases and effect sizes were large in all cases. Further statistical information is provided in Appendix 1.

3.4.1   Reliability of SDQ scales

Reliability estimates were calculate using Cronbach's alpha. Some of these are on the low side (<0.70) but are acceptable given they are short scales with only 5 items per scale. The total difficulties scale has the greatest reliability and this measure should be preferred in any modelling of change or improvement, where measurement reliability is an important concern. See Appendix 2.2 for more information.

3.4.2   Pre-course v post-course SDQ scores

Comparisons between the pre-course and post-course SDQ scores using paired t-tests indicate that there was statistically significant improvement on all measures as indicated by reductions in the levels of problems (p < .0001) – see Table 3.14. Furthermore, the children's Prosocial scale scores increased indicating a significant improvement in this domain also. Finally, there was also a substantial reduction in Impact scores, indicating that

the parents considered the children's problems were having lower levels of negative impact. Effect sizes varied but for Total Difficulties the effect size was moderate (0.57).

In terms of individual items, there were significant improvements on 24 of the 25 SDQ items. For 23 of the items the improvement was highly significant at $p < .0001$. For one item (SDQ17 'Kind to younger children') the improvement was less significant ($p < .025$). The only item not to show improvement was SDQ23 'Gets on better with adults than with other children'.

Table 3.14   Comparison of pre-course and post-course Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores.

SDQ scale	Occasion	Mean	N	SD	Effect size
Emotional symptoms	pre-course	3.8	1067	2.5	
	post-course	2.8	1067	2.3	0.42
Conduct problems	pre-course	4.3	1071	2.4	
	post-course	3.1	1071	2.2	0.55
Hyperactivity	pre-course	6.2	1053	2.7	
	post-course	5.0	1053	2.6	0.43
Peer problems	pre-course	3.3	1064	2.2	
	post-course	2.8	1064	2.1	0.24
Prosocial	pre-course	6.4	1068	2.3	
	post-course	7.0	1068	2.1	0.26
SDQ total difficulties	pre-course	17.5	1038	6.9	
	post-course	13.5	1038	7.0	0.57
SDQ Impact	pre-course	2.9	1031	2.7	
	post-course	1.7	1031	2.4	0.48

The same effect is apparent when the results are presented as *normal, borderline* and *abnormal* scores with decreases in the *abnormal* category and an increase in the *normal* category (Table 3.15). For example the percentage of children with an *abnormal* Total Difficulties score reduced from about 58% to 33% and the percentage with an *abnormal* Impact Score reduced from 61% to 37%.

A further analysis (crosstabulation) indicates that almost half (48%) of those children whose initial classification on Total Difficulties was *abnormal* reduced to *borderline* or *normal* at the time of the post-course questionnaire. Equally, 69% of those initially classified as *borderline* were classified as *normal* on the post-test.

As the age range of the children in the sample was broader than that targeted by PEIP, a further analysis was conducted on the 8-13 year sample only. The effect sizes were very similar to those reported in Table 3.14, for example Total Difficulties effect size was identical (0.57) and the largest difference was for Emotional Symptoms where the effect size for the 8-13 year sample was higher: 0.47 compared with 0.42 for the total sample (Appendix 2.3).

Table 3.15   Comparison of pre-course and post-course Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire *normal, borderline* and *abnormal* scores

Measure	Occasion	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
Emotional Symptoms	pre-course	48.1	13.1	38.8
	post-course	64.2	12.8	23.0
Conduct problems	pre-course	23.2	14.1	62.6
	post-course	46.1	18.2	35.7
Hyperactivity	pre-course	38.8	13.3	47.9
	post-course	60.4	11.4	28.3
Peer problems	pre-course	39.5	16.6	43.8
	post-course	48.7	18.5	32.8
Prosocial scale	pre-course	67.5	13.1	19.4
	post-course	74.0	14.2	11.8
SDQ total difficulties	pre-course	28.3	13.4	58.3
	post-course	54.0	12.9	33.1
SDQ Impact score	pre-course	27.5	11.4	61.2
	post-course	50.4	12.4	37.3

In summary, the children about whom the parents were concerned had a high level of SEN with a prevalence of statements of SEN about six times higher than would be expected of a cross section of children nationally. They also had high levels of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. However, following the parenting groups, parents rated their children as having substantially improved across all domains.

3.5   Comparison of Parenting Programmes

A comparison was made between the three programmes: Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, Incredible Years and Triple P. Again, the data used were the pre-course and post-course booklets of questionnaires returned by 28.4.08.

The returns of questionnaires was uneven across the three programmes. Almost half (49.1%) of the pre-course questionnaires returned came from the Triple P programme (Table 3.16).

Table 3.16   Number (%) of pre-course questionnaires by programme

	N	%
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	650	29.5
Incredible Years	473	21.4
Triple P	1084	49.1

The total number of usable post-course booklets returned by 28.4.08 was 1121[10]. Incredible Years 50.7%, Triple P achieved 47.5% and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities achieved 56.3% (Table 3.17).

Table 3.17   Number (%) of post-course questionnaires as a percentage of pre-course questionnaires, by programme

	N	%
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	366	56.3
Incredible Years	240	50.7
Triple P	515	47.5

There were significant differences between programmes on all pre-course measures ($p <$ .001) except parenting laxness and parenting total score (Appendix 2). Clearly, therefore, there was variation between programmes in child behaviour and parent need at the start of the programmes. In this context it would not be appropriate simply to compare the post-course questionnaires for each programme. The pre-course and post-course mean scores (and *SDs*) based only on those parents with a valid pre-course and post-course questionnaire are also presented in Appendix 2. These give a more valid basis for a comparison of programme effects. A statistical comparison of these effects is presented next.

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[10] An additional 139 post-group booklets were returned that could not be matched with pre-course booklets: these are not included in the analyses.

3.5.1 Measuring improvement

In terms of comparisons between the programmes, the measure used here is *improvement* in child and parent outcomes. Each of the scales from the post-course questionnaire was included in a regression analysis alongside the pre-course score. The measure is therefore an indication of *progress* on the relevant outcome. This methodology is important because it controls for differences between the programmes in the extent of child difficulties and parent need at the start of the programmes (as shown in Appendix 2.3). The analyses also controlled for differences in child gender, parent gender, child age group, parental education and family income (Tables 2.3a-d).

In the absence of a suitable control group it is necessary to designate one of the programmes as the base or reference group. Triple P has been taken as the reference group since it was the largest, contributing 515 of the 1087 (47%) post course questionnaires. Appendix 2.4 Table A2.4c reports the results of multiple regression analyses comparing the improvement made between pre-course and post-course questionnaires on each of the measures.

Before reporting the comparison between the programmes the following significant results are also noted:

- Mothers made greater improvement than fathers in parenting efficacy and satisfaction
- Parents of older children (aged 14-20) showed less reduction (i.e. improvement) in parenting laxness and over-reactivity than parents of children aged 8-13.
- Parents from high income homes showed less reduction in laxness and over-reactivity than parents from low income homes.

With regard to differences between programmes the following statistically significant results were found:

- Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities was less effective than Triple P in reducing laxness and over-reactivity and in increasing parenting efficacy and satisfaction. However there were no significant differences between the programmes in improvement in child behaviour as indicated by SDQ total difficulties score or in improvement in parents' mental well being. While the

65

differences between SFSC and Triple P were statistically significant they were not large. The standardised beta indicates the effect size was no larger than 0.13 *SD*.

It is also important to consider whether these results were affected by the wider age range of the children. The target group were parents of children aged 8-13. However as noted at the start around a third of children were out of this target age range. This varied across programmes as shown in Table 3.18. Only 1% of parents in Incredible Years had focus children aged 14+ (average 8%) and over one-third (38%) were aged <8 years (average 28%).

Table 3.18   Percentage of children by age range for each programme

	0 - 7 years	8 – 13 years	14 – 20 years
Strengthening Familes, Strengthening Communities	21.3	69.5	9.2
Incredible Years	37.8	61.0	1.2
Triple P	27.9	61.9	10.2

N = 1972

The analysis to compare programme effects was repeated just for parents whose child was in the 8 – 13 age range (Appendix 2.4, Table A.4d). There was no longer any significant difference between programmes for parenting efficacy and the results for the other three outcomes were attenuated.

Conclusion

Considering the results across all child and parent outcomes the differences between programmes are generally small or non-existent. There are no differences in relation to child behaviour and the only substantial finding is that Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities seems to have less impact than the other two programmes on reducing parental laxness.

3.5.2   *Parents' satisfaction with their parenting group*

The post-questionnaire booklet asked respondents to rate the parenting group they had been attending recently on ten questions (Table 3.19)

There is a strong ceiling effect with nearly all respondents choosing one of the two most positive choices (Figure 3.4). Total score across the 10 items was calculated for respondents who answered all ten questions. The mean score was 35.9 from a maximum possible 40. Figure 3.4 shows the ceiling effect.

Table 3.19 Parent ratings of their group (%)

	1	2	3	4
1. How helpful has the group been to you?	0.8	0.5	27.6	71.0
2. To what extent has the programme helped you personally cope with the problems you had before you began?	0.5	5.6	33.2	60.7
3. To what extent has the programme helped with your child/children's behaviour?	0.8	8.8	45.2	45.2
4. How are your problems now compared to before the programme?	0.5	5.9	55.3	38.3
5. How respected did the group leader(s) make you feel?		0.2	18.6	81.2
6. How understood by the group leader(s) did you feel?		0.9	24.5	74.6
7. How honest did you feel you could be about your family?		0.3	27.1	72.6
8. To what extent did the group leader(s) make you feel good about yourself?		4.9	36.5	58.6
9. How interested were the group leaders in what you had to say?		0.8	19.7	79.5
10. How much control did you feel you had about what happened in the group?		2.0	62.0	35.9

Note: The scale ranged from 1 (most negative) to 4 (most positive). Descriptors varied by item to reflect the item content.

Figure 3.4   Parental judgement of their group experience: total scores

Mean =35.86
Std. Dev. =3.309
N =1,061
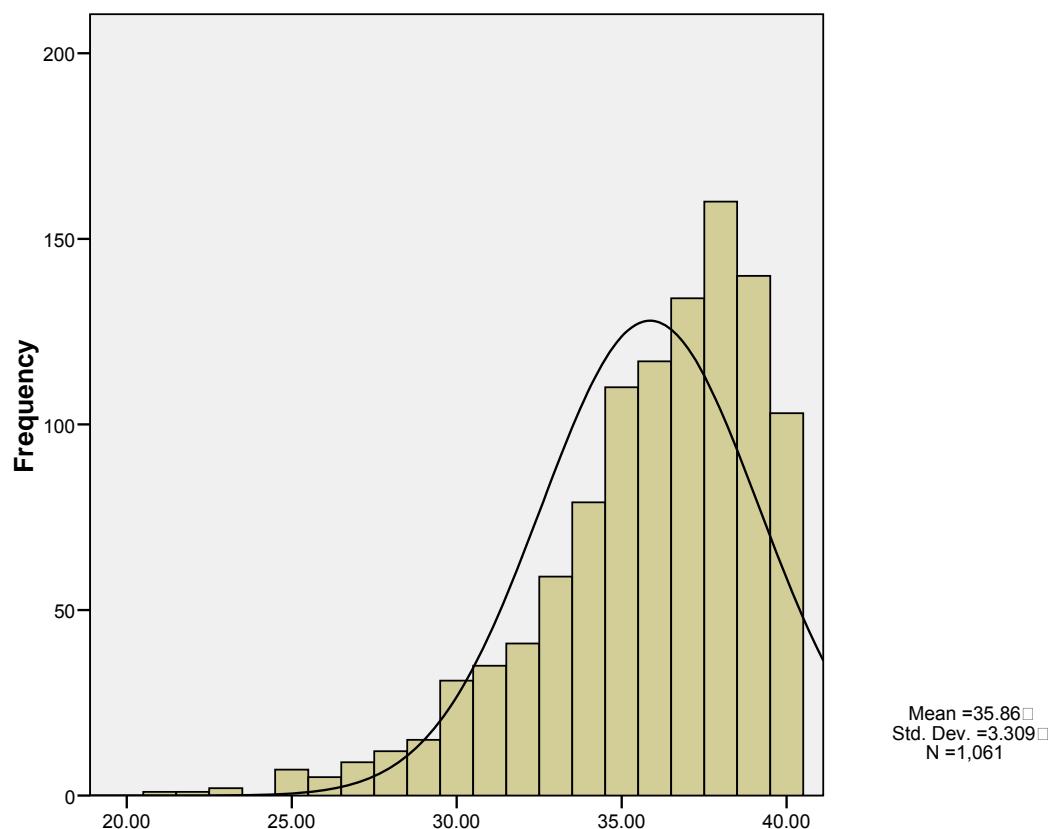
A ONEWAY analysis of variance for difference in mean score across the three programmes revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$). Pairwise comparisons of means with Bonferonni tests indicated the mean score for Incredible Years was marginally higher than SFSC ($p < .05$) and Triple P ($p < .001$) - Table 3.20. The comparison of Incredible Years with Triple P remained significant $(p < .01)$ after control for parental education, income and gender. See Appendix A2.5 for comparison of item scores by programme.

Table 3.20   Parental ratings of the experience of their parenting group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	341	35.8	2.99	21	40
Incredible Years	200	36.8	3.30	25	40
Triple P	487	35.6	3.47	22	40
Total	1031	35.8	3.31	21	40

3.6 Conclusions

This analysis of the results from the parenting groups indicates that:

- The PEIP was delivered to a substantial number of parents: 3575.
- The completion rate of the 2768 parents whose courses had ended by 31.3.08 was 73% (drop out rate of 27%).
- There were large differences in the number of parents attending the parenting groups across the LAs and between the three different programmes.
- The PEIP generally reached the parents for whom it was intended with respect to the level of child behaviour problems pre-group and level of parental need.
- There was a high level of parental satisfaction with the parenting groups provided by the three programmes.
- The parenting groups led to improvements in parental mental well-being, parenting and the children's behaviour as perceived by the parents.
- Differences in effectiveness between the programmes in terms of all child and parent outcomes were generally small or non-existent.
- There was a high level of parent satisfaction with all three programmes. Parents expressed higher levels of satisfaction with Incredible Years courses which is likely to be a result of the greater number of sessions for this programme.

**4.** **ASSESSING THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF PEIP**

The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP) sought to test whether early intervention through parenting programmes can bring about improvements in parenting skills which lead to changes in the behaviour of their children. Such changes in children's behaviour might be expected to lead to immediate benefits, such as improved attendance at school or reduced anti-social behaviour and juvenile crime and, in the longer term, help break cycles of deprivation, welfare dependence and worklessness and, ultimately, result in greater social inclusion and better citizenship (to the mutual benefit of both individuals and society at large).

Achieving the objectives of PEIP requires the expenditure of resources. Resources are required to provide one or other of three parenting 'interventions (Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities - SFSC) and the staffing and accommodation to deliver those interventions. By March 2008 it was estimated that total expenditure on PEIP was around £7.6 million. This represents a substantial investment of public money and it is necessary to pose the question 'how effective was that expenditure in achieving the objectives of PEIP'?

4.1   A framework for assessing cost-effectiveness

It is useful to consider a framework for assessing cost-effectiveness. Such a framework is illustrated by Figure 4.1. The PEIP intervention can be considered as a process whereby *resources* (LA budgets for PEIP) are used to purchase *inputs* (trainers, facilitators, course materials, accommodation etc.) which are then combined with parents in a variety of *activities* (PEIP courses). There will be *outputs* from these activities, the principal one being the completion of the PEIP course. Outputs are not, however, an end in themselves but merely a necessary step in the process of achieving the intended outcomes (changes in the behaviour of children). Provided the outcomes occur and are positive as intended, then a number of benefits (both for the individual and for society) might be expected to follow.

Figure 4.1

A framework for assessing cost-effectiveness
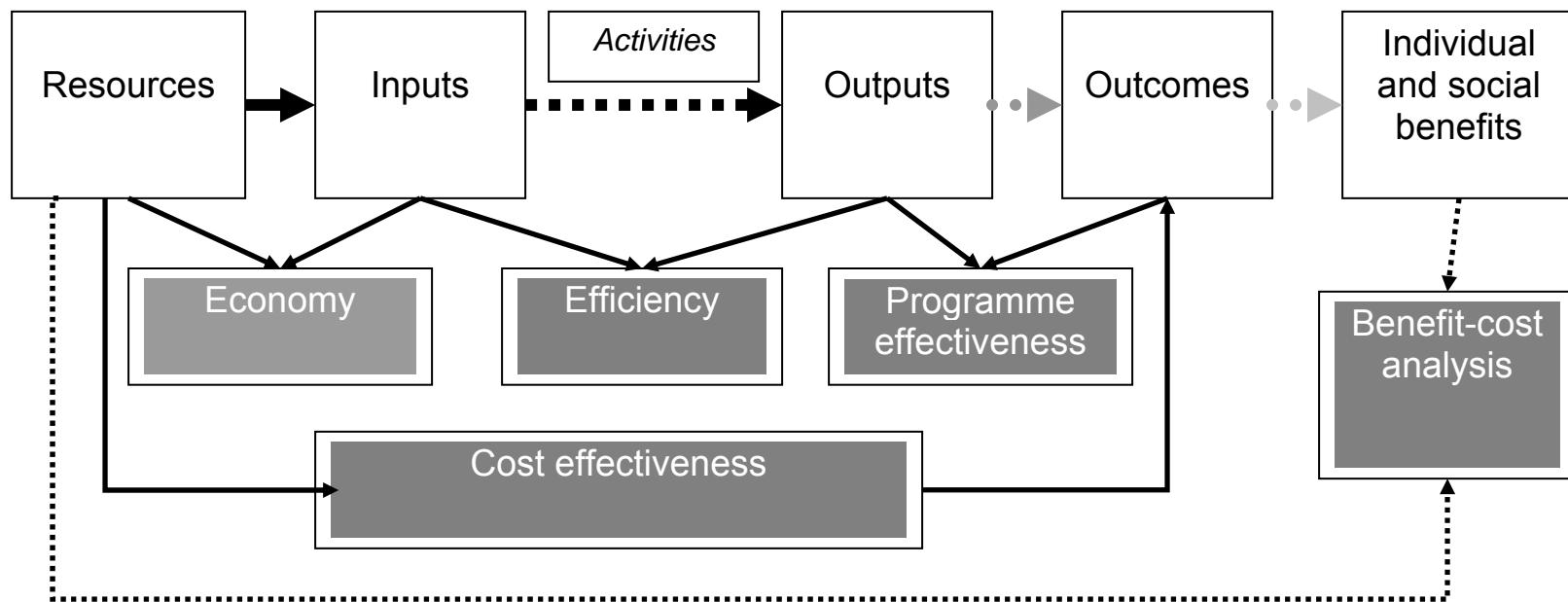
The costs and effectiveness of PEIP can be assessed at various points in the process (although the difficulty of doing so becomes progressively more difficult). The relationship between the resources (or budget) available and the inputs obtained is a measure of *economy*. If a given financial resource supports a high level of inputs, then it can be regarded as more economical than some other course of action that results in a smaller level of inputs from the same resource. Economy might result from obtaining lower unit costs/prices for inputs, better quality inputs, using a different combination of inputs or simply utilising a given resource more fully (for instance, the budget was fully spent).

The *efficiency* of PEIP can be considered by examining the relationship between the inputs used and the outputs obtained. Efficiency is not just a function of the level of activities supported (for instance the number of parents who are recruited to PEIP courses) by a given level of input, but is also affected by the extent to which activities are successful in translating activities into outputs. For instance, the greater the proportion of parents completing a PEIP course, the more efficient the intervention can be said to be.

By far the most important – but also the most difficult – aspect of assessing costs is to relate such costs to the objectives and aims of the intervention. A programme can be said to be *cost effective* if it achieves its intended outcomes at relatively low cost. In the case of PEIP, an outcome would be some observed change in a parent's or child's behaviour consequent on parent participation in a PEIP course.

Finally, *benefit-cost analysis* attempts to relate the wider benefits of an intervention (in this case PEIP) to the cost of achieving that benefit. Clearly, this is a much more complex issue than simply relating interventions to an immediate outcome as it requires a whole range of effects to be isolated, measured and given a value.

Important though it is to gain an understanding of the cost-effectiveness of PEIP, it must be acknowledged that there are few comparable studies that could provide either a guide to method or a yardstick against which to assess the resulting estimates of cost-effectiveness. In a recent literature review, London Economics identified 63 studies of parent interventions, of which only three attempted to establish the cost-effectiveness of the intervention[11]. The

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[11]   London Economics (2007), *Cost Benefit Analysis of Interventions with Parents*, Department for Children, Schools and Families Research Report DCSF-RW008, August, ISBN 978 84775 042 6: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW008.pdf

three interventions for which cost-effectiveness studies were carried out were CAMHS[12], Incredible Years[13] and parent training[14].

4.2   Some issues in measuring cost-effectiveness

Several issues complicate the assessment of cost-effectiveness. These relate mainly to issues of measurement and of timing. For instance, a critical issue for assessing the cost-effectiveness of PEIP is selecting the appropriate costs that should be considered. A full economic cost assessment should consider the total expenditure incurred in delivering the Pathfinders. Costs should relate to the delivery of programmes but where costs would have been incurred anyway (and the opportunity cost is thus zero) such costs should be excluded. Some costs, will only arise at the start of the intervention in the form of 'set-up' costs. The initial cost of training the facilitators who will deliver parenting programmes fall into this category, although this ignores turnover amongst facilitators and the need to maintain the stock of such trained staff. One-off set-up costs are most important in the short-term and where an estimate of the cost of initiating an intervention is required, although such costs may be quite small when spread over the long-term.

Costs may also be thought of in average or marginal cost terms. Delivering a parenting intervention requires a range of resources to be applied to the intervention. Some costs vary directly with the number of parenting courses or number of parents engaged. The formation and training of a team of facilitators, the administration and organisation of courses, accommodation costs and so forth are examples of such fixed costs. Other costs, such as course materials and facilitator time with parents, will vary directly with the number of parental interventions. Combining variable costs with fixed costs provides a measure of the full economic cost of resources used in the programmes and this can be averaged over the total parenting groups and parents involved. Small changes in the number of groups or parents will not always involve changes in fixed costs and in such a situation the cost of such small changes will reflect only variable costs. Variable costs represent the marginal cost of

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[12]   Hutchings J., Lane E., and Kelly J., (2004), 'Comparison of two treatments of children with severely disruptive behaviours: a four year follow up', *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 32 (1), 15-30.
http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?aid=204623

[13]   McCabe C., Sutcliffe P. and Kalthenthaler E. (2005), *Parent training programs in the management of conduct disorder*, A report from the NICE Decision Support Unit and the ScHARR Technology Assessment Group;
http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/MentalWellbeingChildrenCostEffectiveness.pdf

[14]   Edwards R., Ceilleachair A., Bywater T., Hughes D. and Hutchings J. (2007), 'Parenting program for parents of children at risk of developing conduct disorder: cost effectiveness analysis', *British Medical Journal*. 334:682, (31 March 2007)
http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/334/7595/682

an intervention (the cost of adding one more parent to the programme) but it needs to be borne in mind that these costs do not represent the full cost of the initiative.

The point in time when a cost-effectiveness assessment is undertaken is also important. Firstly, this is because in the initial phase of the programme there are likely to be costs but few outputs. Staff have to be appointed, facilitators trained, accommodation organised and so on. Any cost-effectiveness assessment at this stage will overstate costs relative to outputs. Once arrangements are in place, however, the level of activity and outputs will increase (possibly with only a small increase in expenditure on direct costs). As time passes fixed costs will be averaged over an increasing number of outputs, average costs will fall while outcomes increase along with measured cost-effectiveness. Hence the balance between costs and outputs (let alone outcomes) will shift over time and, ideally, cost-effectiveness should be assessed toward the end of the life of the programme or pathfinder.

Second, PEIP is intended to bring about changes in children's behaviour through a process that starts with an intervention with a parent. Such a process inevitably requires a period of time to come to fruition, starting with the initial identification of potential parents and the recruitment of parents to a parenting course, through participation in the course to the changes in parenting and, eventually, in children's behaviour. To assess the effectiveness of PEIP requires that sufficient time has elapsed to allow the effects of an early intervention to be observed. The estimation of effectiveness is further complicated by the fact that interventions will occur at different times. The observation of positive outcomes is more likely to be observed amongst parents who participated in a PEIP course in 2006-07 than those who have only just completed such a course towards the end of 2007-08 or who are still undertaking such a course.

Relating costs to outcomes requires that both costs and outcomes are observable and measurable. The 'before and after' survey of parents involved in PEIP uses well established measures of behavioural change. Nonetheless, the assessment of outcomes is only as reliable as the measures that are available. An extension of the analysis to embrace the value of benefits to individuals or society (a full benefit-cost analysis) is a major step that requires that benefits can be isolated and attributed to PEIP and, when measured, can be given a monetary value. In the case of PEIP Pathfinders, although there are likely to be individual and social benefits, there is no means in the present study to identify such benefits or to value them. For that reason no attempt is made to undertake a benefit-cost assessment as part of this exercise.

4.3 Data sources

The data used to examine the cost-effectiveness of PEIP were drawn from a number of sources. First, financial information supplied by DCSF and by Local Authorities (LAs) on a periodic basis over the duration of the PEIP (September 2006 – March 2008). A final account took place at the end of the programme (March 2008). Second, information about courses and parents participating was obtained from PEIP Pathfinder LAs via their Quarterly Reports to DCSF and responses direct to CEDAR. Finally, measures of the outcomes or impacts of PEIP were obtained from pre and post course surveys conducted by CEDAR.

There are a number of issues that affect the data available and which limited the scope of the analysis. The total expenditure on PEIP is known from DCSF data on grants to PEIP LAs. In the case of Triple P Pathfinders, the Year 1 grant was 'top sliced', with DCSF retaining a portion of the budget to pay centrally for Triple P training. In the analysis presented here such costs have been included in the relevant LA expenditures. All analyses relate to the expenditure budgeted for period of September 2006-March 2008 (although account has been taken of some parenting course that continued after April 2008).

Details of expenditure on PEIP within individual LAs are more problematic and complicated by the different financial management systems, and the different reporting practices, used by Pathfinders. Detailed breakdowns of expenditure were not available for all LAs and only covered the period up to December 2008. Details of expenditure are important as they allow fixed (or set-up) costs to be distinguished from recurring or variable costs. The detailed accounts could also have allowed an assessment of whether all expenditure actually related to PEIP. In Pathfinder LAs where several different parenting interventions were taking place it is possible that some cross-subsidisation of programmes took place (especially if the same individuals and other resources were involved) but the lack of reliable accounting data make it difficult to gauge the appropriate share of expenditures that should be attributed to PEIP.

Data on the number of parenting groups and participating parents was obtained from LAs. Interim analysis of cost-effectiveness was conducted on data obtained by direct request to LAs but was hampered by incomplete coverage of Pathfinders and missing data. A final request from DCSF to LAs in March 2008 produced a more comprehensive set of data via the final LA Quarterly Report and from direct responses to CEDAR. Nonetheless, the lack of a common systematic form of reporting on activities and numbers meant that there were differences in the information provided. Most LAs provided the final number of parenting groups held and the number of parents who had completed a parenting course. The area of

greatest inconsistency related to the number of parents who had been engaged by PEIP or had started a parenting course. In a small number of instances LAs reported to DCSF that they had not collected records of starts on parenting courses while others did not distinguish between parents starting a parenting course and parents who were engaged in other ways that did not lead to a start (such as those who were referred to other services or who expressed an interest but did not actually start a course). A final direct approach to LAs by the research team produced comprehensive data on numbers of groups run; numbers of parents that had started; numbers of groups that had completed or were continuing; and numbers of parents that had completed their course. However, in a very small number of cases the LA was still unable to recall the attendance at their earliest groups. This remains an aspect of PEIP about which there is an element of uncertainty but its effect is small.

A further issue concerning outputs is that the delivery of parenting courses in some LAs was skewed towards the latter part of the pilot period, as it took time to implement the programme. Indeed, a number of LAs reported that parenting groups were being run in April, May and even July 2008 whereas the PEIP ended on 31st March. Data for continuing parenting groups have been included in the analysis, since to exclude them would seriously understate output from PEIP. Of course the completion rate of such groups is not known but estimates were made using historical completion rates for each such LA.

4.4   The cost-effectiveness of the PEIP programme

Expenditure on PEIP

Table 4.1 provides information on the total expenditure by LAs on PEIP[15]. The table indicates that the total expenditure on PEIP was in excess of £7.6 million. As might be expected, Year 2 spend was generally greater than in Year 1, reflecting the increasing level of activity in the latter part of the programme. In the case of Pathfinders delivering Triple P the cost of training facilitators was 'top sliced' out of the budget and spent centrally. That expenditure has been added to Triple P area totals as it represents a significant set-up cost for those Pathfinders and should be included in the cost-effectiveness analysis. There were significant differences in the levels of expenditure across LAs, with LA7 and LA5 having the lowest expenditure (£245733 and £340100 respectively) while LA6 and LA14 had expenditure of £500,000 (and LA10 almost as much). There was, however, no obvious relationship between the parenting programme offered and the level of expenditure. For

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[15] The LA codes used here and throughout Section 4 are *different* from those used in the rest of the report to enhance anonymity.

instance, LA7 had the lowest spend of all LAs while LA10 and LA9 both had expenditure in excess of £498000 (amongst the highest spends) despite delivering Incredible Years.

Table 4.1:   Total expenditure of PEIP (£s)

	Year 1 spend	Year 2 spend	Total spend
LA7	59656	186077	245733
LA10	52750	445950	498700
LA8	114443	273999	388442
LA12	121229	260164	381393
LA11	170802	328859	499661
LA9	147459	343201	490660
LA15	173811	211415	385226
LA17	69223	403827	473050
LA14	237500	262500	500000
LA16	183789	209628	393417
LA18	147721	293976	441697
LA19	158023	328306	486329
LA4	85846	260500	346346
LA5	15500	324600	340100
LA3	218742	266193	484935
LA2	158049	202951	361000
LA1	137903	278863	416766
LA6	237500	262500	500000
All Pathfinders	2489946	5143509	7633455

Key:
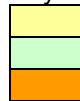
▢	Incredible Years
▢	Triple P
▢	Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Note: The LA codes used here and throughout Section 4 are *different* from those used in the rest of the report to enhance anonymity.

This variation did relate, in part, to the LA context. LA7, for example, already had a well established team of staff trained in the Incredible Years programme whereas LA 10 did not. Also, some LAs decided to use the PEIP finance to fund related elements to enhance their parenting provision. For example, two LAs trained staff in the Parent Partnership model as well as in the Incredible Years programme.

Inputs and outputs

Table 4.2 provides information about inputs and outputs of the PEIP intervention. A total of 425 parenting groups were delivered by Pathfinders under the auspices of PEIP. Of these 338 were completed within the Pathfinder period up to March 2008 while a further 87 were currently underway and will complete by July 2008. A total of 3575 parents started on a PEIP parenting course, although not all have completed, either because they 'dropped out' or otherwise failed to complete a course that had run its course or else their course was still running. Average (mean) group size was just over 8 parents per group.

Table 4.2:   Parenting groups, parent numbers and group size by programme type

Programme	Groups completed	Groups underway to finish post March 08	Total number of groups	Number of parents starting a PEIP course	Average group size
Incredible Years	70	6	76	721	9.5
Triple P	185	45	230	1418	6.2
SFSC	83	36	119	1436	12.1
All Pathfinder LAs	338	87	425	3575	8.4

Note: SFSC: Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Table 4.2 indicates that LAs offering Triple P course offered the largest number of parenting groups (230 in total) although these groups were, on average, smaller than groups delivering the other two programmes. The average size of a Triple P group was just over 6 parents per group compared with an average of just over 12 parents in SFSC groups with Incredible Years groups occupying an intermediate position in terms of size. Average group size by LA did not vary greatly within the three programme types. For instance the largest average Incredible Years group size was 12.9 while the smallest was 7.0. Average Triple P group sizes ranged between LAs from 5.0 to 7.3 while SFSC group sizes ranged from (an unusually large) 18.1 to 8.3.

One consequence of the different group sizes was that the total number of parents starting a parenting course was very similar on Triple P and SFSC programmes (both being just over 1400). The number of parents starting on Incredible Years was, however, much less than the other two programmes (approximately half) reflecting the combined effect of the small number of Incredible Years groups and the average size of such groups.

Table 4.3 records the numbers of parents completing parenting courses. Column (1) records the number of parents who had participated in (but not necessarily completed) a course that had concluded by March 2008, while column (2) records how many of them had actually completed that course. Column (3) provides the 'completion rate' (this only relates to groups that have concluded since on-going groups have, by definition, not yet reached completion). A total of 2768 parents had participated in groups that had finished by March 2008 and 2009 of them had completed their course. This represents a completion rate of 73 per cent (or, alternately, 27 per cent of parents that started a parenting course did not complete it for one reason or another). Completion rates were remarkably similar across the three programme types with only SFSC showing a slightly higher completion rate than the other two programmes (but the difference was small).

Table 4.3:   Parenting group outputs and completion rates by programme type

Programme	(1) Parents whose course had completed	(2) Parents who completed a course	(3) Completion rate (%)	(4) Number of parents on ongoing groups	(5) Predicted future completions	(6) Predicted total completions
Incredible Years*	550	398	72	171	125	523
Triple P	1226	861	70	192	116	977
SFSC	992	750	76	444	333	1083
All Pathfinder LAs	2768	2009	73	807	574	2583

* Note: Includes one LA where no groups had completed (all continued beyond March 2008). Predicted completions in that case were based on the number of parents starting a group and the overall average PEIP completion rate.

Table 4.3 also provides an account of the number of parents who had started a parenting course that was not due to finish until after March 2008 (column [4]). The number of parents who will complete on-going course is not known (because the course has yet to finish) but a reasonable estimate can be made by applying the completion rate from earlier groups to those that have yet to finish. Such an estimate might understate future completions if the completion rate were to increase over time as the delivery of the parenting programmes

bedded in and facilitators became more proficient. There is no evidence from earlier groups that such 'learning by doing' had taken place and completion rates appear fairly constant across the PEIP Pathfinder period. Column (5) indicates the likely level of completions to be expected from on-going groups on the basis of past completion rates. It is expected that of the 807 parents on continuing courses, around 574 will complete their course. The great majority of such future completions will be from the SFSC programme, reflecting the large proportion of on-going groups within that programme type. Column (6) adds together actual course completions and those predicted on the basis of on-going groups and past completion rates. The total number of parents expected to have completed a parenting course once all groups have run their course can be expected to be in the order of 2515. Again, the largest number of parents completing a parenting course is expected to have completed a SFSC or a Triple P programme.

Programme cost-effectiveness

The cost-effectiveness of a programme or intervention relates to the relationship between the outcome of the intervention and the cost of achieving that outcome. In the case of PEIP, the intention of the initiative is to bring about changes in parental behaviour and thereby change the behaviour of the children of those parents. In order for those outcomes to occur parents need to have participated in and (probably) have completed a parenting programme. Completion of a parenting course is not an end in itself but a means to an end. Completing a parenting course is thus an output rather than an outcome. While the distinction between an output and an outcome is important in principle, the 'before and after' survey of parents who completed a PEIP course strongly suggests that almost all parents who completed a PEIP course reported some degree of improvement in their ability to cope with their children's behaviour and most reported an improvement in that behaviour. Only 0.7 per cent of parents reported that participation in a PEIP group had not helped at all while a similarly low proportion (0.9%) reported that participation in their PEIP group had helped with their children's behaviour 'not at all'.

In view of the very strong association between completion of a PEIP course and reported changes in parent and child behaviour, course completion (an output) can be used as a strong indicator of the outcomes sought from PEIP. Completion is, of course, not a perfect measure of outputs, in particular because some parents could conceivably benefit from participation in a PEIP course even if they dropped out at some point and failed to complete. Around a quarter of parents (on average) did not complete their parenting course (see above) and at least some of these may exhibit positive changes in behaviour. It is not

possible to estimate from the available data what effect, if any, partial participation in a PEIP course has on subsequent behaviour since survey data is only collected from parents who complete. For this reason any positive effects of PEIP arising for parents who 'drop out' are not taken into account in the following analysis and this means that the cost-effectiveness of PEIP will be understated.

With the above 'health warning' in mind, Table 4.4 presents information about the mean cost of PEIP participation. The table indicates that the average full cost of a parenting group was £17961. The three types of programmes exhibited quite different average group costs, with the cost of an Incredible Years group being almost three times that of a Triple P group (this being a product of the comparatively small number of Incredible Years groups). The average full cost of an Incredible Years group was £32955 compared with £11651 for Triple P and £20581 for SFSC. There were substantial variations in average group costs within programme types. These reflected the effect of differing group number and group size within individual PEIP LAs.

Table 4.4:   Mean cost of PEIP groups and course completion (£s)

Programme	Cost per parenting group	Cost per parent starting a group	Cost per parent completing a group
Incredible Years	32955	3474	4789
Triple P	11651	1890	2743
SFSC	20581	1706	2261
All Pathfinder LAs	17961	2135	2955

The cost of a parenting group needs to be related to the number of parents who participated in each group. It has already been seen that group sizes differed across the three programmes. Thus, despite SFSC groups having an average cost that was intermediate to Incredible Years and Triple P, the large number of parents who started that programme had the effect of reducing the average full cost of a parent starting a SFSC group to the lowest of the three programme types. The mean cost of starting a parent on a PEIP course was £2135 but the cost of a parent start was below average for both SFSC (£1706 per parent start) and Triple P (£2743 per parent start) with the average cost of a parent start being driven up by the high average cost of a parent start on Incredible Years (£3474).

For various reasons not all parents completed their PEIP course, although the majority did so. The intention of PEIP is to bring about a behavioural change in a parent and their

children and this is most likely if a parent completes their parenting course (although there may be some benefit to parents who do not complete). Taking account of completion rates has the effect of raising the average full cost of PEIP outputs to £2955 across the whole pilot programme (as shown in the final column of Table 4.4). Since there were only small differences in completion rates by programme type, the ranking of cost per parent completing a parenting course remains the same as that of the cost of parent starts. Indeed, the slightly higher completion rates across SFSC LAs has the effect of reinforcing the ranking with the average full cost of a parent completing a SFSC course being the lowest of all programme types at £2261 per completion with the cost of completion in Triple P courses being £2743 while the cost of a parent completing a course was £4789 for Incredible Years. The high cost of the latter was mainly the result of the small number of Incredible Years parenting groups since Incredible Years group size and completion rates were around the average for PEIP as a whole.

While there were clear differences in the average cost-effectiveness of the three programmes, it must be acknowledged that the relationship between cost per completing parent and programme type is far from straight-forward and there were substantial differences in cost-effectiveness within each of the programme types. In the case of Incredible Years the average cost per parent completing a parenting course ranged from £3325 to £7470. This large range was associated with the large differences in number of groups delivered by Incredible Years LAs with cost-effectiveness being greatest (costs lowest) where a large number of groups had been delivered. Overall costs in two LAs were also related to training and support costs in addition to those specific to the programme. Cost per completion in Triple P LAs ranged from £1946 to £9367 although the latter was very much the exception as the costs in all other Triple P LAs were close to the average for the programme type as a whole. Differences in the number of groups delivered was, again, the driving force behind differences in cost per parent per completed course in SFSC LAs where costs ranged from just £858 per completing parent to a maximum of £7348 with the remainder close to the average cost for that type of programme.

The evidence from the PEIP pathfinders suggests that while there may be a broad pattern of differing cost-effectiveness across the three programme types, there is no simple relationship between type of intervention and cost-effectiveness. Variations in cost-effectiveness across PEIP LAs appears to be driven very much by the number of parenting course delivered and the size of such groups (much less so by completion rates). It is reasonable to attribute a programme effect as the programmes differ in their length. This leads to simple differences in costs directly attributable to number of sessions but there is an

indirect factor concerning length. Longer courses present additional logistical challenges, for example to avoid school holiday periods. The consequent arrangements have a knock on effect on the number of courses that can be run in a period of time. In addition, delivery of courses and the number of parents participating are likely to depend on factors such as the organisation and effectiveness of the teams charged with delivering PEIP and the social context within which those teams are working to deliver PEIP independent of the particular type of programme being delivered. For these reasons the differences in cost-effectiveness identified above should be interpreted with caution.

4.5   Cost comparisons with other parenting programmes

One way to assess the estimates of PEIP cost-effectiveness presented here is to make comparisons with cost-effectiveness estimates from studies of similar interventions. Unfortunately there are few studies with which a comparison can be made and estimates across the few studies that do exist vary considerably. Some suggest that parental training is a relatively low cost intervention. Dretzke *et al* (2005) found that parent training cost, on average around £1279 although they also found considerable variation around that figure[16]. Providing community based intervention in Wales was estimated to have cost £1289 and £1933 including start up costs and crèche facilities[17]. In 2006 NICE conducted a systematic review of parental training/education interventions together with a 'cost template' for costing such programmes. The cost template was developed from the review of UK evidence and contained estimates of the unit cost of different types of parental interventions. The NICE estimates of unit costs (that is a parenting *group*) were as follows:

- Clinic-based individual programmes   £2000;
- Home-based individual programmes   £3000;
- Community based group programmes   £7200;
- Clinic based group programmes   £5000[18].

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[16]   Dretzke J, Frew E, Davenport C, Barlow J, Stewart-Brown S, Sandercock J, Bayliss S, Raftery J, Hyde C, Taylor R. The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of parent training/education programmes for the treatment of conduct disorder, including oppositional defiant disorder, in children. *Health Technology Assessment*. 2005; 9 (50).

[17]   Edwards R., Ceilleachair A., Bywater T., Hughes D. and Hutchings J. (2007), 'Parenting program for parents of children at risk of developing conduct disorder: cost effectiveness analysis', *British Medical Journal*, 334:682, 31 March 2007
http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/334/7595/682

[18]   NICE (2006), Costing Template and Costing Report: *Parent-training/education in the management of children with conduct disorders*, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, September.
http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA102/costtemplate/xls/English/download.dspx

While it is difficult to generalise from such a small number of other studies it would seem that the estimates of PEIP costs per parenting group are significantly above those of other parenting interventions and consequently cost effectiveness was considerably lower.

What could explain the differences in estimated cost-effectiveness? There are several possibilities. They could, for instance, reflect real differences in cost-effectiveness. They could result from differences in the method used to estimate costs, for instance differences in the treatment of costs. They might be the result of errors in the recording of PEIP activities and participation by the Pathfinders. While recording errors can never be ruled out, the importance of accurate reporting was stressed to LAs in the latter part of the pilot programme and the data provided is probably as accurate as it is possible to achieve in the absence of a more formal, standardised reporting system.

In order to see if the differences in cost-effectiveness are the product of differences approaches to costs it is necessary to separate fixed and set-up costs from variable or recurring costs. The analysis above examined the full cost of the programme, including management, training, community liaison and a range of other categories of expenditure, all of which were attributed to PEIP and which directly or indirectly supported the programme. The estimates therefore represent the *average cost* of the whole package of activities associated with delivering a parental intervention. Earlier UK studies of cost-effectiveness appear to have looked at costs in terms of the *incremental or marginal cost* of delivery (although little indication is given in those studies of the methods used). Such an approach disregards all costs other than those directly related to the delivery of the parenting course. Activities such as determining community needs, community and provider liaison, training facilitators, publicity and general management are ignored while emphasis is given to the time taken by facilitators with parents, course materials, cost of accommodation, provision of crèche facilities, local evaluation and so on.

The validity of omitting a wide range of costs from the cost-effectiveness assessment is questionable. The case for omission is that many of the omitted costs are one off, start up costs or are not directly required for the delivery of a parenting course. The effect of removing such costs is to produce an apparent increase in cost-effectiveness (and a reduction in the average cost of a successful intervention). Removing all costs other than those directly related to delivery assumes that all set-up costs and other indirect costs are non-recurring. This may well be true in the short-term and within a limited range of operations. Nevertheless, were a Pathfinder to significantly increase the number of parents involved in parenting courses in their area, or if the programme were to be 'rolled out' to

other LAs (which are not currently pathfinders), then additional fixed costs and set-up costs would be incurred. It is difficult to see how a programme can be delivered without management or operate in isolation from, and without need to liaise with, local practitioners and providers. That being so, any costs associated with management, practitioner liaison etc. should be taken into account.

It could be argued that the few previous studies that exist of parenting programmes in the UK provide overly optimistic cost-effectiveness estimates because they exclude costs that should legitimately be included in the estimations. Despite this reservation about the virtue of using a narrow incremental or marginal cost measure, it would be useful to construct such a measure in order to compare the estimates of cost-effectiveness of PEIP with earlier studies which appear to use such an approach. Unfortunately, LAs have not presented their expenditure accounts to DCSF in a common format or in a manner that clearly distinguishes fixed and variable costs. Moreover, detailed expenditure accounts are only available for the period April 2006 – March 2007 and April 2007 – December 2007; no details are available for the final period January – March 2008.

There were only two LAs where it was possible – within the limitations described above - to separate expenditure directly related to delivery from other PEIP expenditure. In LA2, for instance, £81580 was reportedly spent over 21 months directly on the delivery of the SFSC programme. This cost does not take account of expenditure on a local needs analysis (£18000), project management (£35255), administration (£20961) or publicity (£21966). It is estimated that around 94 parents started on 11 parenting groups in that period of whom 74 had or were expected to finish. Looking only at direct costs and ignoring the other costs mentioned above, the average cost of a parenting group would be £7417, the cost per participating parent would be £868 and the cost of a completed parenting course would be £1102.

An alternative approach to estimating direct costs focuses on LAs providing Triple P groups. In these cases the cost of training facilitators was 'top sliced' from the Year 1 Pathfinder budget. Training facilitators could be thought of as a significant set-up or fixed cost (although there are likely to be other fixed costs in addition to facilitator training). The removal of such costs might leave expenditure in Triple P LAs closer to variable cost than is otherwise the case. If facilitator training costs are removed then the estimated costs of Triple P parenting groups are as follows.

Table 4.5: **Costs in Triple P Pathfinders, including and excluding training costs**

	Cost per parenting group	Cost per parent starting a group	Cost per parent completing a course
Triple P excluding training costs	10301	1671	2425
Triple P including top-sliced training costs	11651	1890	2743

The effect of excluding the costs of training facilitators is to reduce the cost of a Triple P parenting group from £11651 to £10301 and to reduce the cost per participating and completing parent to £1671 and £2425 (from £1890 and £2743 respectively).

Whether incremental cost-effectiveness is estimated by removing Triple P training costs or by detailed scrutiny of financial budgets (as in the case of LA2 above), the resulting estimates are not far removed from the estimates of earlier studies including the NICE study. This merely serves to suggest that taking an incremental cost approach leads to under-estimation of the overall costs involved in setting up and running a community based parenting intervention and how such an approach overstates the cost-effectiveness of such interventions.

4.7 Summary and conclusion

This analysis set out a framework for assessing the cost-effectiveness of the PEIP programme. Systematic reviews of evidence, such as that of NICE, indicate that few previous studies have made estimates of the cost-effectiveness of parent training interventions, hence both the method is under developed and the findings less than certain. This cost-effectiveness assessment has used financial information on PEIP budgets provided by DCSF and is based on an analysis of the full programme costs (rather than being limited to the direct cost of course delivery). The main findings of this section are as follows:

- Estimating the cost-effectiveness of PEIP was hindered by the lack of a mandatory and common system of recording participation in and completion of PEIP activities which seriously compromised the reliability of the data available for analysis;
- A total in excess of £7.6 million was spent by LAs on the PEIP programmes;

- A total of 425 parenting groups had been delivered by PEIP (including 87 that were still to complete); The Triple P programme had delivered the largest number of groups but had the smallest average group size;

- 3575 parents were reported as having started on a PEIP parenting course and 2583 had either completed their course or were expected to complete (a completion rate of 73 per cent);

- Almost a third of parents starting on an SFSC course were in groups not due to complete until after March 2008. However, three quarters of these were in one LA.

- Completion rates were fairly similar across the three programme types but were somewhat greater amongst LAs that delivered SFSC courses;

- The average cost of a PEIP parenting group was £17961. The average cost of an Incredible Years group was comparatively high reflecting the small number of such groups held during the PEIP;

- The average cost of engaging a parent on a PEIP course was £2135 while the cost per parent completing a course was £2955. The cost per parent who completed an Incredible Years course was high compared with the other two programme types, reflecting the comparatively small number of groups delivered;

- Differences in cost effectiveness within programme types were equally as large as differences between each programme type. This intra-programme variation was related to differences in the number of groups delivered and the size of those groups, differences that were more likely to be associated with the effectiveness of the team delivering a programme (management, prior experience etc.) and the social context within which they sought to deliver PEIP (the level of need within the LA) rather than with differences in the content of programme itself.

- Inter-programme variation was related to the number of sessions needed to run each programme and the consequent practical effect of organising groups during the period of the PEIP.

- The estimated cost-effectiveness of PEIP was less (that is the costs relative to outputs was higher) than estimates of earlier studies but it is likely that such earlier studies only consider incremental or marginal cost and did not take account of the full costs of providing parenting programmes.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the cost-effectiveness estimates presented here treat benefits in a very limited and restricted manner. Ideally the cost of PEIP needs to be seen in relation to the broader individual and social benefits that might potentially result in the longer-term from the improved behaviour of children. There are no data from the PEIP

programme that bear directly on those benefits. It can be noted that NICE estimated the average public expenditure savings from parenting interventions as being around £1435 with the bulk of the benefits being reduced expenditure by the NHS and education services (with smaller gains for the voluntary services and social services). This would suggest that the costs of PEIP would outweigh the benefits in the short term, a finding that is similar to that of Edwards *et al* (2007) who found a cost net of benefits of £1992 for Incredible Years in Wales. Nevertheless, at a short-term cost of £2955 per completed parenting course, the longer-term benefits/savings from improving the behaviour of children covered by PEIP would not be required to be unfeasibly great in order for PEIP to break even or even show a net gain (especially where cases of extreme conduct disorder are addressed). Without longitudinal data, however, it is not possible to demonstrate the full economic and social benefits of improving children's conduct through the PEIP parenting interventions.

5. THE PROGRAMME IN ACTION

5.1 Introduction

In this Section we report on the implementation of the three PEIP programmes: Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC), Incredible Years and Triple P. We draw on the perspectives of 17 strategic leads, 18 operational leads, 73 facilitators and 81 parents gathered through interviews during the period October 2007 to February 2008 by which time each Pathfinder had had about a year to establish the Programme. The Section builds on and develops the findings reported in three earlier reports[19],[20],[21] and summarised in Section 2.

In this Section we explore the overall LA strategy and its relationship with the PEIP; the operation of the PEIP; the implementation of the parent groups; and both reflections on the experience of implementing the PEIP and our interviewees' thoughts, hopes and projections for the future, including suggestions for programme improvements and for other LAs who might learn from this Pathfinder.

5.2 Parent Strategy

Over the duration of the PEIP, it became clear that the way in which the parenting programme for supporting parents of 8 – 13-year-olds was, or was not, linked in to the development, or revision, of the local Parenting Strategy was an important factor in the longer-term sustainability of that work.

5.2.1 *How well the Parenting Strategy maps on to the levels of need model used in the LA*

Overall and across all three programmes, there was a close link between the Parenting Strategy and the levels of need model or matrix used in each LA (Table 5.1). For example,

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[19] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Parent early intervention pathfinder 1st interim report.* Coventry: University of Warwick, CEDAR. (14pp).

[20] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder 2nd Interim report. DCSF-RW035.* London: DCSF. (59pp).
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW035.pdf

[21] Lindsay, G., Band, S., Cullen, M.A., & Cullen, S. (2007). *Evaluation of the parent early intervention pathfinder: Additional study of the involvement of extended schools DCSF-RW036.* (50pp). London: DCSF.
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW036.pdf

one Strategic Lead commented that '*it was brilliantly matched*' because '*We built the parenting strategy around the levels of need'.* (LA1/S).

Table 5.1 Link between Parenting Strategy and level of needs model/matrix in each LA

Programme	Maps on exactly	Relates to it but not identical	Significantly different
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	3	2	0
Triple P	2	3	0
Incredible Years	4	2	0
Totals	9	7	0

The PEIP had informed the development of the parenting strategies in all the LAs, as had other developments, such as extended services. One strategic lead noted that the PEIP and the parenting strategy:

> *'were absolutely linked together; the Service Improvement Manager was located within the Parenting Team as were the workers on PEIP so there was sort of coherence between…it was seen as a sort of integrated process I think.'* (LA16/S)

Where there was not an exact match, levels of need had been considered as the following quotations illustrate:

> *'There is an evolving clarity about what is universal, targeted and what is specialist.'* (LA3/S)

> *'It's virtually impossible to map exactly but I think it takes into account the previous auditing we've done around need and the information that's come up in relation to the PEIP and other sources about need in the interim process.'* (LA16/S)

Some LAs were still developing their Parenting Strategy:

> '*We're still sort of in the contemplation stage, but what we want to do is make sure that we've got a really good understanding of what the existing services are doing and how they can be strengthened to increase the level of evidence based practice generally.'* (LA7/S).

In other LAs the Parenting Strategy was to be revisited with the experience of the PEIP an important influence:

> *'The [LA's] Parenting Strategy is shortly to be revised. In its current form we would be able to map the strategy onto the levels of Triple P but we haven't done that in any kind of systematic way yet, although the revision of the [LA's] Parenting Strategy is going to take a good deal more account of Triple P and the PEIP and the Pathfinder because obviously we're a lot further forward with that than we were when our strategy was first written […]'* (LA9/S)

All but two LAs reported that the relationship between the Parenting Strategy and the LA's model or matrix of levels of need had been made explicit to workers (12 LAs) or would be soon (3 LAs).

5.2.2   One or more parenting programmes to meet diverse needs?

At strategic level, a key decision is whether to offer the same or different parenting programmes to parents of children at different ages and stages of development and with different levels of need. In the 17 PEIP LAs for which we have information, most (15) had opted to offer more than one parenting programmes (Table 5.2)

Table 5.2   One or more parenting programmes to be offered?

Programme	One programme only	More than one programme	Decision not yet made
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	0	5	1
Triple P	0	4	1
Incredible Years	0	6	0
Totals	0	15	2

In all but one case (an Incredible Years PEIP LA), the parenting programme rolled out during the PEIP was to remain part of the range of provision, often a key part. For example, three of the six Incredible Years LAs spoke of that parenting programme as being key within the range of parenting programmes offered, seeing it as *'the main plank'* or *'at the heart'* of their provision.

LAs were developing their strategy by considering levels of need. For example, in one LA the plan was to offer SFSC to parents with low to moderate needs, at levels two to lower end of level three of parenting need.   The LA also offers the 'Freedom Programme', for parents who are experiencing domestic violence but who may not have any other specific type of parenting support needs.

Another LA strategic lead reported that the parenting strategy envisages offering different parenting programmes at different levels of need after March 2008. Both SFSC and Incredible Years would be offered at more intensive to higher levels of need; not at a universal, but at a level of complex need. At the universal level shorter courses, one off sessions and workshops would be offered.

> *'One of the major principles of the Strategy [is] that people at different levels of need require different levels of support and therefore different programmes.'* (LA12/S)

Apart from the three PEIP programmes, a composite list of other parenting programmes mentioned by strategic leads as being part of their provision included:

- 1, 2, 3 Magic!
- Child and Family Book Scheme
- Escape
- Family Caring Trust course
- Family Foundations
- Family Links
- Freedom Programme
- Living with Teenagers
- Mellow Parenting
- Parent Power
- Parenting Your Children/Your Teens
- Positive Parenting (Time Out for Dads/Teenagers/Special needs)
- Scallywags
- Steps
- Strengthening Families (a different programme from SFSC)
- Stronger Families
- Various locally-devised programmes.

A number of LAs were in the process, or about to begin, mapping the range of parenting programmes available in their LA. As one put it:

> *'One of the priority work streams of the parenting strategy is to map current provision against identified need, as far as we can assess it, and to make the necessary market adjustments.'* (LA2/S)

However, in all but one LA, where the PEIP programme would not be continued, LAs planned to continue to run the PEIP parenting programme alongside other provision within the LA. Although no strategic leads said that the PEIP programme would replace other programmes already offered in their LA, four (one SFSC, three Incredible Years) said that this might happen in the future. For example, one strategic lead said that, in the future, Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities might replace others currently running as it was, *'very popular and also very effective'* (LA19/S). Two strategic leads spoke about how the Incredible Years programme might, in the future, replace others currently running, because it had such a strong evidence base.

5.2.3   Mechanism to match parents to appropriate parenting programme

Overall, and within each programme grouping of LAs, there was a variety of mechanisms in place, or planned, for seeking to ensure that parents found their way to a suitable parenting programme. As Table 5.3 shows, the two most widely adopted methods were discussion with, and often assessment by, frontline workers involved with the family and/or discussion of a family's needs with a LA co-ordinator - either a central person or someone based at district or area level. In some cases, LAs had offered training to frontline workers to help them refer or signpost parents appropriately. The following two quotations illustrate these two approaches:

> *'The parents are matched really at a very, very local level by practitioners that are working on the ground. […] we've run a whole series of workshops, and we're continuing to do so, to talk with practitioners on the ground about things like parental engagement, about how do you assess the level of parental need, how do you assess what is going to be the most appropriate service for parents. So, that all happens at a very local level with practitioners who are working with the parents.'* (LA9/S)

'All referrals, we've got a standardised referral form, and all referrals we try to get them to go through the parenting headquarters and the FIP [Family Inclusion Panel]. The [operational leads] are based together at the parenting headquarters and they look at each referral that comes through and they make a judgement about which kind of approach is most suited to them [the parents] in terms of either group work or one-to-one support, and then we look at how best we can meet the needs, for example, of those that need the one-to -one support'. (LA1/S)

Table 5.3   Mechanism to match parents to appropriate parenting programme

Programme	Parents can choose	Frontline workers	Co-ordinators (at central, district or area level)	No. of LAs using a mixed method
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	2	3	3	2
Triple P	0	3	3	1
Incredible Years	2	6	3	3
Totals	4	12	9	6

A number of the strategic leads mentioned the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as either already underpinning such work or as something that would be used more in the future. For example:

'Some parents have been formally assessed via the YOT [Youth Offending Team] and we are looking at the CAF [Common Assessment Framework] as part of the assessment method for programmes' (LA6/S).

'*We have five cluster areas with Integrated Service Managers (ISMs). To date, for the [PEIP programme] parents are identified through the TAC [Team around the Child] and the CAF and the lead professional who then will discuss that with the ISM. And we have a centrally-based co-ordinator who the lead professional and ISM can contact.'* (LA5/S)

All but one of the PEIP LAs had made the way in which parents could be matched to parenting programmes explicit to their workers, or were in the process of doing so (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4   Mechanism to match parents to appropriate parenting programme is explicit to workers?

Programme	Yes, matching process is explicit to workers	Process of making it explicit has begun	No, not yet
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	3	3	0
Triple P	4	1	0
Incredible Years	4	1	1
Totals	11	5	1

A 'one stop shop' approach to the provision of parenting programmes and referrals and self-referrals, was strongly endorsed by some strategic leads. It was seen to be a model that possessed many useful features in terms of coherent co-ordination, a clear, unified path for referrals, and an easy to understand and publicise structure for parenting support. One strategic lead gave an example of building local knowledge of their 'one stop shop':

> *'It's quite a simple concept when you actually think about it. And now we've even got the family information services involved, and families tend to ring that number because it is a free number and they know about it, and they now link them over to us [the PEIP headquarters] too'.* (LA15/S)

Finally, an LA had made changes to the process over the life of the pathfinder. The LA's strategic lead reported that:

> *'At first we tried to very much fix it with the prevent and deter panels in [the LA] and these panels, we believed, were a good place to actually start to look at children who were on the periphery of anti-social behaviour, and also it was important that we had a number of YIP programmes, and we thought if we can help the parents we can also support the children. But it hasn't worked as entirely well as we hoped it would. What we found was that the prevent and deter panels were still struggling a little bit to find identity and understand thresholds and so forth, so although they've made referrals for parents onto Triple P, they've been the higher threshold ones we've found. So what we've been doing is that we've been getting other referrals from schools, community agencies generally. We have tried to use a basic referral form really, not so dissimilar from CAF'.* (LA17/S).

Hence, LAs had developed a number of approaches to matching parents against programmes. The variety of methods used is a testimony both to the inherent complexity of the task and the variety of local contexts. The CAF appears to have potential, but it is not a universally accepted approach. Although there is evidence of working with parents, there is a danger that the process insufficiently includes parents as partners.

5.3   The Future – Funding, Management and Delivery Model

As the fully-funded PEIP finishes at the end of March 2008, both strategic leads and operational leads were asked to describe how the parenting programme to support parents of 8 – 13-year olds rolled out in the PEIP would be funded, managed and delivered from April 2008.

Responses to these questions were affected by the timing of the interviews. Those carried out prior to the announcement of the additional funding of three years at £100,000 per year, were unable to give details of delivery plans or exit strategies. This was particularly the case for SFSC LAs, where four of the six LAs were unable to outline plans for post March 2008. Nonetheless, among the remaining LAs across the PEIP, the typical picture was that the Pathfinder programme would be continued in one form or another. Only in one LA was it clear that the pathfinder programme would not be continued, although a second LA indicated that continuation was doubtful. Both these LAs were offering Incredible Years as their PEIP. In the first case the strategic lead explained this decision as having been taken in the context of a LA budget that did not enable the commissioning of new services and a failure to find a partner agency willing to host a scaled-down version:

> *'Unfortunately, [the Incredible Years Pathfinder programme] won't continue in [LA14] as far as I can see because there is no possibility of its receiving any core funding at this point. The additional funding coming from DCSF is not sufficient to continue it as a stand-alone project. […] I had hoped that another partner [involved in the bid] would have been able to look after it and just nest it in there, running just a few groups, until such a time as there might be monies for it again – protect its profile and its integrity – but, unfortunately, they don't see that as a goer.* (LA14/S)

There were, however, some changes in structure being considered by some LAs. For example, one LA (Triple P) intended to disband its co-ordination team, and the operational lead was being moved back to the LA post from which she had been seconded. In her view,

the loss of the operational and co-ordinating role would lead to a gradual decline in the uniform delivery of the programme across the LA. In another example of structural change, the LA (Incredible Years) intended to pass management of programme delivery over to a voluntary sector agency, and combine the provision across the age group with a neighbouring LA. A summary of the proposed delivery of the PEIP Programme from April 2008 indicates a third of LAs were not fully decided but the majority intended to use a core team, perhaps with additions (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Delivery of the PEIP Programme from April 08

Programme	Core team	Within existing service work plans	Core team plus existing service work plans	Not yet decided	Exit strategy implemented
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	3	0	2	2	0
Triple P	1	0	2	2	0
Incredible Years	0 or 1	0	1 or 2	2	1
Totals	4 or 5	0	5 or 6	6	1

In Table 5.5, those who had 'not yet decided' were considering a number of options, usually a core team *or* facilitators from mainstream or voluntary sector services under service level agreements *or* a combination of those two options, and were awaiting a final decision by the relevant strategic committee. The fact that no LA had decided to move to delivering the parenting programmes *only* through trained staff being released from their existing roles indicated the importance placed on continuing to have strategic leadership and operational-level co-ordination across the LA.

There was a limited number of models for continued delivery. These essentially involved either (i) facilitation being carried out by PEIP trained facilitators as part of their day jobs; (ii) facilitation being carried out by the voluntary sector; (iii) facilitation carried out as part of the extended services offer through schools or children's centres; (iv) an LA core team of fulltime parent support staff. Typically, LAs planned to continue provision by using a combination of these approaches. For example, in one LA continued facilitation of Triple P will take place using the LA's staff, and local voluntary agency staff, with co-ordination being provided by a parenting services team. This was also the case for another LA, where the PEIP had seen a

large pool of facilitators trained in Triple P, from both the LA and voluntary agencies. The operational lead was to remain in post after March 2008, and facilitation would be undertaken by LA and voluntary workers.

An example of a single approach to continued delivery in an LA (Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities), where delivery is through schools, utilising school staff. This approach was expected to continue, but with reduced funding:

> *'At the moment we're giving them 100% funding, but I think one of our concerns is that they become too dependent on our funding and they need to be able to find funding of their own to run the thing'* (LA20/1).

All but two LAs intended to deliver other programmes after March 2008. In these two cases the PEIP programmes had been identified as the preferred programme in the LAs' parenting strategy. In three LAs it was uncertain whether additional programmes would be run, but some plans had been made. In the remaining LAs, a wide range of programmes were to be offered post-March 2008. Programmes included home-grown, local programmes, and other programmes from the PEIP. For example, one LA (Incredible Years) intended also to offer Triple P and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities after March 2008.

Funding for the other parenting programmes offered in the LAs rarely came from central LA funding (although it did in a few LAs). More commonly, these parenting programmes were funded though multiple and varied funding streams including Big Lottery Fund 'Reaching Communities Programme', the Children's Fund and its LA-based continuation, Health (CAMHS or PCT), Parenting Fund, Youth Offending Team, Extended Schools funding and from voluntary sector applications for funding.

5.4 The Facilitators

This section reports on the LAs' plans for future recruitment and retention of and support for facilitators.

5.4.1 Changes in recruitment of facilitators

Operational leads in most LAs reported that they would not be changing the method of facilitator recruitment. Typically, they expressed satisfaction at both the numbers recruited and the method of recruitment. In LAs that expected to continue to offer the PEIP programme after March 2008, there was usually a sense that a sufficient pool of facilitators had been trained during the pathfinder to enable continued provision. Nonetheless, in some cases, there was some concern that despite training a significant number of facilitators, demand for courses was so high as to necessitate further training, although its provision might be problematic, or greater provision by facilitators. For example, one LA (Triple P) had a pool of over 200 facilitators, but had a need for six new courses to be started per month. In addition, some LAs had experienced comparatively high levels of natural wastage among trained facilitators within the life of the PEIP, resulting in geographic gaps in PEIP provision in those LAs.

None of the LAs expected to have any significant capacity to train new facilitators after the end of the pilot. Nonetheless, some LAs, running one of each of the PEIP Programmes, did have some plans in place for recruiting additional facilitators after March 2008. However, it should be noted that these are small scale plans, with, for example a Triple P LA expecting to run one training course between March and December 2008, one SFSC hoping to be able to train an additional four facilitators per year after March 2008 (utilising the Race Equality Foundation), and an Incredible Years LA intending to run one training course per year after March 2008.

There were some notable additional differences between LAs. For example, the operational lead for one LA (Triple P) noted that they had experienced difficulty with regard to line managers releasing LA workers from their day jobs to deliver courses. This was despite the fact that line managers had been involved in the recruitment process from the outset. The operational leads for two LAs (both Incredible Years) had also experienced the same problem. A similar concern about commitment, although this time among facilitators as opposed to their line mangers, was expressed by the operational leads for LAs using each of the Programmes. Greater care was to be taken in future in explaining the level of commitment expected once training was complete. In the case of one LA, the operational lead had identified a need for additional, pre-SFSC, training for would-be facilitators in the area of group delivery and teaching. Hence, although there was variation, similar issues were evident in LAs running each of the three PEIP Programmes.

5.4.2 Facilitators staying in post

Overall, operational leads from across the PEIP LAs expected most facilitators to remain in post after March 2008. This was especially the case where facilitators were recruited through voluntary agencies or LA staff (but note the issue of release of these staff highlighted above). For the SFSC LAs, only two LAs were uncertain (at the time of interview) about the future, but in one of these LAs, at least, those facilitators based in children's centres and the voluntary sector were expected to remain in post. The small minority of LAs that utilised a core team in their delivery, and intended to do so in future (one LA had utilised a core team approach, but will not be delivering the PEIP programme after the end of the pilot), expected the core team to continue to deliver, but at a reduced level. In two LAs (both Incredible Years) it was hoped to support continued core team delivery with some additional facilitators from other LA services if this can be agreed with line managers.

5.4.3 Supervision for facilitators

There was a notable difference between supervision provided for the Incredible Years facilitators and those for SFSC and Triple P. For Incredible Years, all six LAs had regular supervision from Incredible Years mentors, the frequency of which varied from LA to LA, from weekly to monthly. In addition to this supervision, almost all of these LAs had additional supervision from local sources. For SFSC and Triple P facilitators supervision varied from LA to LA and from facilitator to facilitator. Peer group supervision was established across the Triple P LAs, but this was seen to be of varying usefulness and effectiveness by facilitators (see Section 5.5.2 for the facilitators' perspectives). In addition, some facilitators from all the Triple P LAs could access supervision and support from line managers, whether they were employed by voluntary agencies, or LAs. Two of the SFSC LAs had offered group supervision, whilst in the remaining SFSC LAs supervision had been provided by a mixture of individual supervision by operational leads, and/or by line managers for those facilitators drawn from the LA's own workforce, and occasional REF supervision. One unusual form of support was present in one LA, which also provided an online message board and forum for its facilitators, in addition to supervision from the co-coordinator.

In respect of future plans, most Triple P and SFSC LAs intended to maintain their current mix of peer group, line manager and operational lead supervision. However, one (Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities) intends to purchase some further supervision workshops from the Race Equality Foundation (REF). During the PEIP, this LA

had bought two workshops (presented three times each) for their facilitators. It was hoped that more frequent REF supervision would be available after March 2008.

The Incredible Years LAs faced future supervision issues that are particular to the Incredible Years programme. Under this programme those facilitators who have been accredited at group leader level can provide peer supervision. However, facilitators cannot be trained to the level of 'mentor' until they have been accredited at group leader level. Supervision by mentors in the Incredible Years programme was of greater frequency than that typically received by Triple P and SFSC facilitators, with Incredible Years mentor supervision being weekly, fortnightly or monthly in five of the LAs. However, this was seen by these LAs as being too expensive to maintain, and all will seek to reduce the frequency of supervision. For example one LA intends to reduce supervision from weekly to monthly, while another intends to reduce monthly supervision to bi-monthly supervision. In addition, those LAs who do not have locally available accredited mentors will seek to put these in place after March 2008, again, to reduce costs associated with supervision.

With respect to maintenance and further development, supervision should be considered as a continuing, necessary resource. Unlike initial training which logically occurred at the start of the PEIP, supervision will continue to be a necessary element, and hence cost of running programmes both to provide support for facilitators and maintain programme fidelity. It is necessary for LAs to recognise this requirement and build in necessary funding appropriately.

5.4.4   Recruitment of Parents and support for children

Recruiting parents after March 2008

Across the PEIP LAs, there was a general feeling that existing methods of parent recruiting were effective. Nonetheless, there were particular issues that some operational leads felt had to be addressed, and in two cases it was intended to introduce wider referral mechanisms. In the case of one LA (Incredible Years), the intention was to open up the referral routes beyond Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), which had been the sole referral path, to include new routes, such as schools and PSAs. In another LA (SFSC), it was intended to broaden the target group from the parents of children between the ages of 8-13, to include those of parents of children from 3-18. In addition, there would be wider promotion of the parenting programme through extended schools.

The majority of LAs that did not intend to change the way parents were recruited were already utilising a very wide range of recruiting techniques to enable self-referrals, including supermarket 'road shows', local press coverage, advertising through schools, libraries, GPs' surgeries, community centres, women's centres, and LA web pages and visits to schools and relevant centres and setting up coffee mornings where parents could drop in to find out more. In terms of other referrals, LAs utilised a range of paths, including court-referrals, and professionals, such as doctors, social workers, schools, CAMHS, Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), and referrals from voluntary agencies.

Recruiting fathers

All the operational leads interviewed were aware of the issues surrounding recruitment of fathers to parenting courses. These difficulties were such that a very low number of fathers attended any of the programmes. For example, one LA (Incredible Years) noted that only around 10% of parents who had attended a group were fathers. Another LA operational lead (SFSC) said that more than half the groups that had been run during the PEIP had attracted at least one father, putting a positive gloss on the position. The issues that the operational leads felt they were facing in regard to fathers were: (i) the timing of courses, (ii) the perception, among many men and women, that 'parent' meant, in effect, 'mother', (iii) a lack of male facilitators, and (iv) suitable venues.

Although some LAs were considering running fathers only groups, just two operational leads (both SFSC) reported having run such a group. In one of these eight fathers had completed a course, and in the other a specifically recruited Somalian facilitator had delivered to a group of Somalian fathers. This LA also had plans to start a male only group in a mosque. Two LAs (Incredible Years) had offered fathers only groups, while another two (one Incredible Years and one SFSC) also had plans to start fathers only groups in February/March, 2008.

Operational leads' thoughts on improving the recruitment of fathers to parenting courses included advertising in football and rugby programmes, recruiting more male facilitators, specifically encouraging fathers during home visits, timing groups for the evening, and addressing the issue at a strategic level.

Extent to which parents in PEIP continued to meet

Operational leads across all the PEIP programmes were unsure about whether or the extent to which parents continued to meet after the end of their group. In some Incredible Years LAs the leads were clear that parents did not appear to be meeting after the conclusion of courses, but the number of completed courses in the Incredible Years LAs was, comparatively speaking, low when these interviews took place. For all the Triple P and SFSC LAs the response was varied, with all these operational leads saying that some parents did continue to meet, while others did not. The leads had some ideas about possible reasons for this, including whether or not parents had children at the same schools, lived near each other, had been encouraged to set up a continuing group, or had made friendships. In two LAs (both Triple P), for example, parents continuing to meet as a group facilitated by the provision of rooms in schools or in a free café. In one LA (Incredible Years) a Parents' Forum had been established, open to all parents who had completed a course, but this was the only example of such an arrangement that covered an entire LA. In addition, there was evidence of parents making friendships from the groups.

This raises the issue of the degree of community embeddedness of the Pathfinder. Support needs to come from the community to help maintain the gains of the PEIP. Parents continuing to meet may contribute to this but the relatively limited evidence of this happening suggests that this is an aspect for LAs to consider and build into their continuation of the PEIP.

Plans to run support programmes for children/young people alongside parents from April 2008.

Two LAs had offered programmes for children during the Pathfinder but one had no plans to continue this for the 8-13 age range. Two other LAs had hoped to offer programmes for children but the intention for one LA had yet to be finalised, and depended on funding allocations. The other, an Incredible Years LA, had intended to offer support for children and young people, but the pathfinder programme itself will not continue beyond the end of March 2008 (see Appendix 3.3).

The only LA which ran support programmes for children during the PEIP intended to do so from April 2008 onwards too. The SFSC programme for parents was delivered in one room, the START programme for the 8-13 year olds in a separate room, and the crèche and

supervised activities for children outside the targeted age range took place elsewhere. All came together for a joint meal. The operational lead commented:

> *'…the family centred model has been really effective…it has been very positive…and if parents have to make alternative arrangements for their children it's another reason not to get to a programme, whereas if you have everything under one roof it makes it a lot easier and it makes the engagement of parents a lot easier as well'* (LA7/1).

The plan is to continue parallel delivery of SFSC for parents and START for young people. One of the operational leads in a different LA had acquired some funding to undertake START training so that she could, after March 2008, offer START in parallel with SFSC. The other operational lead in the LA noted that a voluntary group in the authority sometimes offers a course for young people that runs in parallel with a non-PEIP programme for their parents. A further LA (SFSC) has a history of working with the local fire service, which intends to offer a young person's course, Phoenix, to run alongside a SFSC course.

5.4.5   Operational issues: the benefit of hindsight

A number of common themes emerged across the PEIP LAs, irrespective of the programme in place when operational leads were asked to give comments with the benefit of hindsight. These were:

- The realisation that setting up the PEIP was a longer process than some had expected, and required significant setting up time.
- The limiting effects of the short timescale of the pilot.
- The need to fully engage managers of facilitators drawn from LA departments.
- The importance of setting up the coordinator/operational lead role as quickly as possible, and the recognition that this was a key role.
- Difficulties associated with arranging training for facilitators.
- Supervision issues.

The issue of the amount of time needed to set up the PEIP was raised by operational leads from seven LAs covering all three programmes. With the exception of those LAs that had a prior history of running their PEIP programme, most LAs found that they were not in a position to deliver courses until the beginning of 2007 (whereas PEIP had started in

September 2006). For example, one operational lead noted that a much longer lead in time was needed to plan the logistics needed for successful implementation:

> *'A longer lead-in time for these things. I think it was all to do with the timescale that we were working to, obviously, getting people trained, moving on to them delivering, and it was all very rushed, because until you know who you have got available to deliver a course, you can't plan the way you are going to deliver it in an [LA] like [name] because it is so expansive. […] I'm looking forward to planning over a longer period of time […] so that all the logistics [will] be in place'.* (LA3/O1).

This point was reinforced by a second operational lead, who highlighted the amount of time that was needed to get the underpinnings in place - staff recruited and trained, recruitment and assessment of parents, the marketing of the programme and, in this LA's case, the targeting of schools. There was a clear sense among those operational leads who raised the issue of set-up time that the timetable of the PEIP had put real pressure on the operational leads to rush the initial, foundation, stages of the project. Associated with problems linked to set-up time, many of the operational leads across the programmes felt that the pilot itself was too short.

Those LAs which drew heavily on LA staff to facilitate programmes sometimes had problems associated with the release of those staff by line managers. For example, one operational lead noted that, although the LA had involved line managers in the recruitment process of facilitators, and although the operational leads' understanding had been that line managers had agreed to release staff to facilitate courses, this had, in some cases, proved to be a problem.

In a small number of LAs, it appeared that there was a limited understanding of the nature, and significance of the role of operational lead or coordinator. It appears that problems arose, for example, in one LA (Triple P), with the appointment of an operational lead who had, essentially, been given a finance brief, with comparatively little attention being paid to the nature of the parenting programme or day to day operational issues. In three LAs with different programmes the operational leads stressed the importance of putting in place the coordinator role as soon as possible, as this was a key role to ensure that all the various personnel, training, and facilitation could be brought together and made functional as soon as possible.

Issues were raised concerning facilitators and facilitator training by some operational leads, the amount of time facilitators need to plan their programme; that facilitators were put forward without sufficient consideration given to whether they were the best candidates to deliver the programme; and that facilitators had insufficient information in advance about what would be involved in the role. Comments from SFSC operational leads also included the amount of work involved in preparing a user friendly version of the facilitator's manual and in two cases problems associated with arranging programme training for facilitators. The need to put facilitators through additional programme training, subsequent to initial training, was raised by the operational lead for one SFSC LA but this was an issue, in particular, for Triple P facilitators, who frequently need training on more than one level of the programme. The logistical difficulties associated with arranging training with organisations based in other continents was also cited by one operational lead as a reason for the patchy coverage of the PEIP across the LA. In this case, there had been a relatively high level of wastage among trained facilitators, and it had proved difficult to arrange rapid training for new facilitators. Another operational lead also made a point about accessing sufficient training for the facilitators:

> *'It took us a long time to understand that it was going to take an awful lot of time and effort to get people from Australia to do training […] there weren't many people on the ground really'.*(LA9/O1)*.*

Although supervision issues were frequently raised by facilitators, they were not so frequently mentioned by operational leads. However, supervision issues were raised by two of the SFSC operational leads. In one case, the point was made that supervision was particularly time consuming because the work was different from the work multi-agency line managers would normally do; as a result, they were not equipped to deal with issues arising for facilitators. In addition, there was a need for more supervision that took account of facilitators' mixed professional backgrounds.

5.4.6   Operational issues: Key learning points for other LAs

Success of PEIP

There were few themes in common across the PEIP LAs when it came to the operational leads' response to the question, 'is there anything else you would like to say to other LAs that are considering rolling out this pathfinder programme?' The one consistent comment related to the success of the programmes. The majority of the operational leads were very

enthusiastic about the PEIP, irrespective of the particular programme with which they were involved. No operational lead doubted the effectiveness of the programme they were helping to deliver.

Parent facilitators

Beyond their enthusiasm for the PEIP, operational leads provided a wide range of additional points they wished to convey to other LAs. There were, nevertheless, some notable points made. For example, in the two LAs that employed parent facilitators in conjunction with professional facilitators, one SFSC and the other Triple P, both of the operational leads stressed that they felt that it had been a successful experiment. In both LAs, the parent facilitators co-facilitated with professional facilitators. One of these operational leads argued that the inclusion of parent facilitators helped break down barriers between parents and agencies, which she felt was 'particularly pertinent for this type of project'. The other operational lead felt that there had been some resistance to the use of parent facilitators from Triple P International, but this had dissipated when it had been impossible to tell parent from professional facilitator at the accreditation sessions.

Capacity

It is necessary to build extra capacity into the system in order to be able to ensure that all sessions would run despite illness among facilitators. One LA (Incredible Years) for example, noted that three facilitators per course was the optimum number, although two would suffice.

It was noted by operational leads from across the PEIP that all the programmes were more time-consuming for facilitators than some (particularly line managers) had supposed. Preparation time was significant across the three programmes, particularly in the early delivery by facilitators. The operational leads for two LAs both said that facilitation absorbed facilitators' time for a day and a half per week, and facilitator evidence from, for example, the Triple P LAs, indicate that a half day's preparation is needed for each session delivered.

Length and cost of the programme

The length of the Incredible Years programme was highlighted by three operational leads who discussed this at length. However, although two other operational leads commented on its length, they also argued that it was not an issue for parents. Instead, one operational lead

said that the issue was that '*principles were learned and practised effectively*' (LA8/O) by parents; while the operational lead for another LA said that parents were committed to the programme. In addition, it was stressed by all the Incredible Years operational leads that the key to success was that the programme was delivered with fidelity, particularly in relation to the training and supervision of facilitators to ensure that they used collaborative learning in their groups.

There was also concern among the Incredible Years LAs about the high cost of the programme. However, the leads argued that there were '*no quick fixes*' (LA11/O), and that families undertaking the programme reaped significant benefits, which, another operational lead argued, made it a cost effective programme in the long term.

Range of support

Finally three operational leads argued that parents needed a wide range of support if they were to gain as much as possible from participation in the parenting programme. This was particularly the case for parents that had a combination of needs. For example the operational lead for LA5 commented:

> '*Because this age range [8-13] doesn't have any outreach services to support those parents […] parents of children over the age of five need just as much support and assertive outreach for those very vulnerable families that are hard to reach. They are not hard to reach, it's that the services aren't there to reach them.*' (LA5/O).

5.5   Implementing the Programmes

In this section we explore the facilitators' views of the implementation of the parent groups. These are derived from 73 interviews across all 18 LAs.

All the 28 SFSC and 19 Triple P interviewees had facilitated at least one programme during the Pathfinder. Of the 28 who provided information for Incredible Years, 20 had facilitated or co-facilitated at least one Incredible Years 'Pathfinder' course for parents of 8 – 12s during the period of the PEIP and eight had not. Of those eight, three had observed a course and one had delivered two Incredible Years courses for parents of 2 – 7 year olds. She had received the training for this as part of the Pathfinder. One of those who had observed also acted as a caseworker for a family attending the group and another was employed as the Children's Worker to support selected children of the parents attending the groups.

5.5.1 Course materials: changes during the PEIP

Changes made by programme authors

The course materials for the Incredible Years 8 – 12s course, called the 'Pathfinder' course, were amended by Caroline Webster-Stratton during the course of the PEIP. According to the facilitators interviewed, the main changes were:

- The video was updated to DVD
- The content of the DVD was different from the video in that some vignettes were changed and some dropped and in the much greater amount of narration from Caroline Webster-Stratton
- Facilitators had to draw on three manuals, rather than the previous two
- Additional sessions were added, taking the expected length to around 18 - 20 weeks
- Some hand-outs for parents were changed.

The impact of these changes was experienced differently by different facilitators. Although facilitators welcomed that changes had been made in light of feedback from those involved in the earliest groups run as part of the PEIP, some complained about the lack of notice that the changes had been made. For example:

> *'Initially the course was due to run for 17 weeks, with 17 planned sessions from the school age and advance manuals. Caroline has amended the programme adding extra sessions which now means that we have two school aged manuals and one advanced. In order to complete the programme we have found that we may need to run the course for 20 weeks. We would have liked a little more notice of the changes made, due to having to change a session an hour before delivering.'* (LA3/F6)

Other facilitators spoke of being *'slightly thrown'* by the changes. In one case, a facilitator explained that, having co-facilitated her first 8 -12s group, she had gone on to lead a second group but felt that, because she had to take on board new material also, she was not as able to develop her skills as group leader as well as she had hoped. Overall, the change in material during the pilot *'caused some confusion'* to facilitators. One went as far as to say that it was *'a little bit ludicrous to change the material in the middle of a pilot'* (LA11/F7). However, this comment needs to be considered against comments earlier in the project that sought changes.

For SFSC, only two facilitators mentioned that some material either had been, or was being re-written to simplify language and make it more suitable for a UK, rather than an American client base, for programmes run post Pathfinder.

Whether changes were made by programme facilitators

Overall, there was a general level of satisfaction among both SFSC and Triple P facilitators with the suitability of course materials for parents. Where there were criticisms from SFSC facilitators, many of these related to the perceived 'Americanisation' of language throughout the materials, and in some cases to presentation in language that is perceived to be over complex or too 'wordy' for some parents. This echoed criticisms made during earlier phases of the study.

Many SFSC facilitators had made changes in language, or suggested that these were needed to convert 'American wording' to a form more suitable for UK parents. Interestingly, very few of the parents interviewed mentioned this as a significant factor; where it was mentioned at all this was rather a characteristic that they noticed then accepted. This may be because facilitators changed the wording before it reached their eyes, e.g.:

> *'I have made my own Power Point presentations – I have mainly used the same wording but on occasion I have made it easier to understand and changed US phrases'* (LA12/F6).

Three facilitators for Incredible Years also suggested that American vocabulary should be removed from the programme. As with the other programmes, tailoring included simplifying language to the level of vocabulary familiar to the group participants, bearing in mind the low literacy levels to be found in many of the groups, or individuals within groups.

Respecting programme fidelity

Almost all the Incredible Years facilitators interviewed said that they adapted the course material to suit their particular group but only within the parameters set by Caroline Webster-Stratton. There were two SFSC interviewees who specifically said they had *'stuck to the material very closely'* and *'stuck fairly religiously to the materials'.* In common with SFSC facilitators, accounts from Triple P interviewees of making changes would often come after they had initially said that they had not amended the course materials (question 1a in the interview schedule). All the Triple P interviewees and some of the SFSC interviewees raised

what they, typically, saw as minor points that could be attended to in order to make the course material more suitable for the parents. This was, in some cases, linked to descriptions of ways in which the facilitators had already, or intended to, alter the course materials.

While there were suggestions from Triple P facilitators regarding how the material might be improved in respect of simplifying the language, the typical response of facilitators was that they had not amended the material. There were comments that reflected their concern to preserve programme fidelity, eg: *'I have quite strong feelings about programme fidelity. There's not much point in running an evidence-based kind of programme and not doing it!....'* (LA16/F1), but all of the Triple P facilitators indicated that they did not deliver the programme word for word. Rather, it was common for facilitators to put at least some of the material into their own words, while, they felt, remaining true to the idea of 'fidelity', e.g.:

> *'I think if you've got an experienced facilitator ….. they can take the format and take the strategies and put it into words that suit their audience and because the programme actually gauges so specifically to cover all avenues…..you're not using your own opinion, you're using the training, if you know what I mean, [though] you might use different words…..'* (LA15/F2)

Adapting to parental literacy levels

Four of the Triple P facilitators specifically highlighted issues related to course materials and literacy. However, none of the four felt that these issues were a major barrier, although they did require additional input from the facilitators themselves. One Triple P facilitator gave examples of what appeared to be low level problems associated with parental literacy and the course materials, e.g:

> *'I've got some parents who I think their confidence with literacy is probably low but in actual fact they've managed OK with the books which actually surprises me but…….actually parents have been quite keen to write into it …..We had one mum who I think we thought might be bordering on moderate learning difficulties but nevertheless seemed to cope OK. What we've always said is, with the book, is that this is just one element of your training, it's there for you and it's there to take away.'* (LA17/F1).

For another Triple P facilitator, the literacy issue was linked to the 'class based nature of the course material'. This interviewee argued that the two issues combined made some of the material difficult for some parents:

> *'I think it's aimed at very middle class families; I know a lot of the families that came on the course, or that actually turned up, struggled with the material. So you were having to explain in very simplistic terms again what it meant. Not saying that was for everybody but a certain few; they did struggle with the content of the book and things'.* (LA1/F1)

In one Triple P LA (LA1), at least, this issue has been addressed by having outreach workers on hand to help parents complete the questionnaire prior to the sessions starting.

An SFSC interviewee suggested that delivering the programme as a Family Learning accredited course had attracted a number of parents with low literacy skills, and reported that *'hand-outs for parents have needed to be re-written, text enlarged and clipart graphics added'* (L6/F10) to ensure that the material was accessible to all the parents in the group.

Using more illustrations

There were examples from all three programmes of facilitators adding illustrative material, amending visual aids to improve accessibility for parents, or at least suggesting that this would be a good idea. Such additions or amendments might be to simplify or supplement the material (or in some cases to replace it), as well as adding interest and colour. One SFSC facilitator felt that the OHP transparencies were unsuitable for parents with poor literacy skills, or visual impairment:

> *'The language was not 'parent friendly' and needed modifying to suit the parents we work with. I re-wrote the acetates using a different font and large print. I included illustrations to provide visual clues and interest'* (LA2/F7).

While some facilitators reportedly used all the OHP transparencies and hand-outs, others used flip-charts instead of the transparencies, simplifying and/or adapting the language used at the same time to make the content accessible to the group's profile/and or for a UK rather than American client base. In one LA several facilitators got together and discussed the first four sessions and suggested ideas:

> *'We used flip charts a lot and pictures….making the material less Americanised and more inviting for parents'* (LA2/F6)

An Incredible Years facilitator also talked about trying to use visual techniques to help parents understand some of the more complex session topics, such as the Six Steps of Problem Solving. In this case, this creativity with learning styles was honed and developed in the context of mentor supervision in the course of a consultation day with other group facilitators.

> *'[Rather than using all the vignette clips] ……we looked at the most important vignettes and thought, 'OK, this is the first principle that we need to get across is problem-solving using the six steps'. Rather than getting the steps covered quickly and then going on to something else, we just stuck with the ste*ps. *…We're almost streamlining it with an eye on the needs of our parents. …'* (LA14/F6)

In a rather similar context, in an LA where the system was that an experienced facilitator should supervise a facilitator undergoing training in SFSC, an interviewee commented that she had:

> *'altered the materials just to more understandable language, changed it in a way so that the facilitator training with me could deliver [the material] much better'* (LA20/F4).

In another LA that ran SFSC, a respondent had simplified parts of the material, e.g:

> *'Some parts of the programme have required a certain amount of making simpler. All the material has been covered, but visual aids have been used to demonstrate a point more clearly, e.g. the circle of interdependence and building blocks'* (LA6/F6).

A further SFSC facilitator described three approaches that were tried with the building blocks, as the co-facilitators regarded the overhead as 'monotonous': firstly colouring in the boxes to make the overhead more colourful, but this had appeared blurred; secondly using actual bricks from the school, but these were not large enough; and thirdly enlarging the blocks, using the same outline and words on the overhead, but presenting each block in a different colour, made from laminated card, flat in the form of a poster, and sticking on the words as relevant for each session.

A Triple P facilitator felt that there was scope to further support parents with literacy problems by producing brief checklists, using lower register language, for parents to use in conjunction with (or instead of) the parent handbook. Similarly, another facilitator, suggested additional, picture-based material to help with literacy problems:

> *'I think that some of the parents that we deal with have their own needs and their ability with literacy and things can be difficult, so it would be good to have hand outs that are picture based or more accessible for them'.* (LA15/F2)

As with written text, it was pointed out that visual material needs to be UK focused. Half of the Triple P facilitators raised the issue of cultural and family background in relation to the material (and to a lesser extent its class based nature). The DVD material incorporated scenarios based upon a specifically Australian cultural background, which was not seen to be entirely familiar to English parents. One facilitator from LA16 explained the issue here:

> *'……I think some of the DVD materials are really good and the parents really like the DVD but Triple P obviously is very Australian. If in some wonderful, future time it was possible to have materials that looked more… UK-style families and it is quite kind of 2-parenty and also I'd really like to see some of the children in the videos to have some sense that the odd one might be disabled. It's very good in that it's ethnically diverse but it's not diverse from our perspective in the fact that our parents would look at it and think 'oh yes, there's kids like mine' so that would be one thing I'd want to change'.* (LA16/F1)

As suggested in the above comment, one Triple P facilitator needed to tailor material in a group of parents of children with special needs: specifically, the video and DVD materials used the example of teaching a teenager to use power tools, and this was changed to talk about learning to use a washing machine instead. A facilitator for SFSC who had found some wording *'either a bit American, or not in our parents' type of language'* (LA6/F9) saw potential for adding more illustrative materials to make the content: *'more fun, more interesting, more vivid'* but time constraints prevented her and her co-facilitators from applying themselves to this.

Meeting time constraints for facilitators, and for parents

Within the parameters set by Carolyn Webster Stratton, almost all the Incredible Years facilitators reported selecting the most suitable material (vignettes, hand-outs, homework) for

the group from the total available material, rather than trying to cover everything offered. Such tailoring also included taking additional time to ensure the group took on board key concepts, even if this meant adding sessions and/or not covering all the sessions in the Advanced section of the course.   If necessary, the overall length of the course might be shortened to allow for parents' ability to commit to attending.

The following quotations illustrate the flavour of such comments about adapting the programme to suit the group participants within the parameters set by the programme author, Caroline Webster-Stratton, and the context of mentor supervision:

> *'The course materials are adapted really to suit the client group. Each week during planning, the group leaders evaluate the level of learning so far and, by means of supervision, come to a final decision as to what, if not all of the material, can be covered. The course currently stands at 16 weeks. For some groups of parents, this is too long a commitment so we shorten the courses, or we may extend if parents are in need of a lot of engagement work or follow-up work, due to levels of need.'*(LA11/F6)

and:

> *[My mentor asked for guidance from Carolyn Webster-Stratton] and Carolyn… said, 'This learning is essential so if it takes more than one week, then so be it. They need to get this base of the foundation really settled and cemented in their heads to be able to move forward'. So, with my group, I spoke to [my co-facilitator] and we then took the decision that we would then run 'praise' over two weeks to make sure they really had got it……I do feel quite confident almost adapting it for my group – once I had permission….but up until then I probably wouldn't even have considered straying from the chosen path, if you like.'* (LA8/F6)

Triple P has a basic eight week structure, consisting of four two hour sessions, followed by three, weekly, telephone contacts between each parent and a facilitator, finishing with a final two hour face to face session. The Triple P programme envisages each parent attending every session, and undertaking the telephone contacts. None of the facilitators made any comment about the overall length of the programme, but comments were made concerning the timing of individual sessions, problems associated with the telephone contact sessions, and facilitator responses to parents who missed sessions.

Facilitators quickly realised that the highly structured nature of the programme meant that it would be difficult for them to give parents what they felt would be enough space to discuss issues that were important to the parents. Two facilitators reported making themselves available for 30 minutes before or after each session to discuss any issues with parents, One had also added an additional pre-course session to allow parents to get to know her and each other (and parent groups gave further evidence of this).   The first session for one group consisted entirely of parents explaining their problems and experiences. As a result, the initial four sessions grew to five. In addition, the facilitator was available both before and after each session for individual consultation.

Two Triple P facilitators made a specific point about difficulties with covering the material in each session.

> *'It's just in session two it's very pressed for time, particularly on the group course, the teen one seems better, although maybe it's just that I've done the group one more time now. Yeah, we always seem pushed for time, so that's why it's been amended in order to fit in all the other things, otherwise you kind of are chasing your tail in week three if you have to try to pick things up, and the homework doesn't fit logically in and so on'.* (LA1/F3)

The telephone sessions proved to be problematic for some Triple P facilitators. In one LA, one of the facilitators had replaced the telephone contacts with brief (20-30 minute) face to face sessions with parents. Three of the facilitators noted that it was sometimes difficult to contact the parents by telephone for a variety of reasons, for example, chaotic lifestyles and the inability of some parents to remember that there would be a telephone session.

All the facilitators noted that the demands of being a parent meant that it was not possible for every parent to attend every session of the programme (at each of the focus group interviews undertaken for Triple P there was at least 1 parent, and in one case 5 parents, missing). Rather than excluding parents who missed a session, facilitators typically responded by helping parents catch up on a missed session, though the need to limit this approach was recognised, as illustrated by the following comment:

> *'..... In fact actually there was a couple of them that attended some but not all so we sort of offered them a catch-up of an hour before the next session only once…. but if they then missed another session then we just said to them 'look, we're really sorry but you'll have to come on the next one.'* (LA9/F4)

While a number of SFSC facilitators mentioned engaging with individual parents in discussing issues before or after sessions, and phoning/visiting a parent's home to bring them up to date with a missed session, the issue was raised predominantly in the parent focus groups/telephone interviews with parents. Many parents emphasized their appreciation of this 'extra curricular' attention from facilitators.

Many SFSC facilitators found it difficult to cover all the material in the time, e.g:

> *'The difficulty about presenting the material was that there was so much information crammed into the sessions that you couldn't really do it justice…..As a rule, the course materials were excellent and I was disappointed that we had to cut short or cut out some subjects…. '* (LA7/F10) and

> *'Some things needed to be reduced due to the time restrictions that we had with working alongside the crèche times….we looked at what was workable for the client group that we had and what information they were wanting'* (LA2/F4)

Rites of Passage was the element more than any other that SFSC facilitators found in some way challenging to deliver, while in some areas of the country, it was reported that parents seemed to find the Community Involvement element more relevant to their experience than in others. Where facilitators experienced time pressures and considered dealing only briefly with some programme content, the Rites of Passage element was perhaps more likely than other parts of the programme to receive this treatment. For many SFSC facilitators, however, dealing with the Rites of Passage element was a case of emphasis rather than omitting the material altogether, or it was a question of giving an explanation of the phrase 'Rites of Passage', as some or all of a particular group were unaware of its meaning. One facilitator commented that *'we have a split group – some are quite academic, others don't have an understanding of the concepts'* (LA6/F2).

Also with a view to maximising relevance to particular groups, another interviewee had *'slightly amended [the course materials] in response to the group make-up and dynamics; we omitted the Economic Rites of Passage; only briefly covered the 'spring effect' and did not need to cover the smacking session.'* (LA20/F1).

Introducing more role play

One Incredible Years facilitator spoke about sticking to the course material but being creative in the teaching and learning methods used to put the course content across to parents in more interactive ways to suit a range of learning styles. For example, this facilitator talked about making more use of role play rather than so much emphasis on the pre-recorded vignettes and calling the role play activities 'practice', to make them seem less daunting to parents:

> *'A lot of the time, we preferred, rather than watching the videos, to do the role plays and use these sort of handouts [we'd made]. So we laminated thought bubbles for the parents to write their thoughts in. When we're talking about the thoughts, feelings, behaviour triangle, we'll get them to, 'OK, in this scene, this role play, I want you to write down some of the thoughts this person was having…and how that would affect their behaviour'. So it was more that we got the parents interactive and involved in what they were doing….'* (LA14/F6)

This adjustment encouraged parents in a particular group to take readily to role play whereas some parents in other groups had shown some hesitancy with this activity. A Triple P facilitator had also noted reluctance among some parents about participating in role play, but commented:

> *'I haven't amended the materials; I've been relatively true to them. What I have amended sometimes is the time and perhaps, for example, in the role play, not everyone has done it because not everyone has felt confident. So it's been those who wish to; the others have observed and also taken part in the discussions'.* (LA1/F3)

This relates to adjusting delivery style in accordance with the profile or preferences of the group, as suggested by a facilitator with SFSC:

> '*We need to be able to draw on our own materials from other groups, for example our drawings to illustrate praise and encouragement, 'cos some parents are dyslexic and can't read the manuals. Role play is particularly suitable in such cases'.* (LA6/F2).

Interviews with parents confirmed their varied responses to role play, some taking to it quickly, others becoming more confident during the course of the programme, yet others retaining an enduring dislike of this activity.

5.5.2   Professional Support

Whether level of support changed during the Pathfinder

Six of the Incredible Years facilitators interviewed spoke about changes to the level of supervision they had received during the PEIP. In one LA, the level of supervision for facilitators running the 8-12s programme had increased with PEIP-specific video supervision being offered and with regular meetings of PEIP facilitators. In three other LAs, however, the level of supervision had decreased over the course of the pilot – one facilitator reported losing the line management supervision she had had which had enabled her to discuss the needs of specific families within her group, another reported having supervision for the 8 – 12s group in with that for the 2 – 7s group and experiencing that as a dilution: *'I feel this has diluted the experience'* (LA3/F9). In the third LA, the mentor had taken a new job with less time available to offer supervision and, as a result, accredited group leaders were taking a more active role in peer supervision:

> *'The supervision has changed slightly in that the mentor is not always available as she is moving on to newer pastures, plus some of the group leaders have acquired accredited status so can offer some form of supervision. Plus group leaders prefer to use this space now as a reflective space, rather than planning time.'* (LA11/F9)

The above quotation highlights the potential vulnerability of mentor supervision if mentors move on or, as happened in another LA, are off work for a period of time.

Several SFSC and Incredible Years facilitators made the point that, although regular supervision was on offer in their LA, they had not been able to access much because of difficulties in getting time away from their day job. The level and quality of support received by SFSC facilitators had varied considerably, but few reported any changes over the time of the Pathfinder. In common with the Triple P facilitators the majority of interviewees were satisfied with their current level of support, a minority wanting to see further support being put in place.   Both groups of facilitators were receiving peer group support, and supervision from line managers and Triple P or Race Equality Foundation supervision as part of wider,

job related supervision. However, some facilitators reported that they were receiving no one-to-one supervision.

The most common form of support available to Triple P facilitators was peer group supervision, a form of supervision recommended by Triple P International. There were differences between LAs in the organisation of the peer groups, with some being formed by the facilitators themselves, while others had been organised by the LA. Peer group support was, for a minority of the facilitators, their only access to support. For some facilitators there was a sense that its value was limited. In reply to a question concerning support, one Triple P facilitator noted:

> *'No – we've had nothing. We go to sort of network meetings but no sort of supervision or anything like that [...] I think it's a bit poor really considering I've done three courses and I was only signed up to do one, and not really had any one to one support 'how do you think it's going?'. It's all within a network meeting type of thing. So a bit disappointed in that side of things really'.* (LA1/F)

This facilitator received supervision as part of her regular job, but felt that the stresses of facilitating Triple P required additional, programme-specific, support. The view that peer group supervision provided valuable but, nonetheless, quite general support was common to other facilitators.

Many SFSC facilitators valued peer support highly, particularly where this was combined effectively with support from programme co-ordinators. Several interviewees preferred this to line management support, indicating that the line managers in their regular jobs were not sufficiently knowledgeable about the SFSC programme to be of much help. This concern was shared by Triple P facilitators in regard to supervision provided by non-Triple P trained managers. The following are examples of comments made by Triple P facilitators:

> *'…my manager can't offer me support regarding Triple P because she's not trained in it, so you're very much on your own as such….'* (Full quote: Appendix 2, item 9).

and by SFSC facilitators:

> *'…they [day job managers] are not aware about the actual programme. The only thing they knew about the programme was what we told them, in our own companies'* (LA2/F6)

and

> '*The line manager wants up-dates, but I don't get much from supervision: <u>we</u> are piloting and presenting material to <u>them</u>.*' (LA6/F2).

On the other hand, some facilitators reported good support from their line managers:

> '*It's been excellent. [Name of programme co-ordinator] is always on hand and checks how the session has gone. And I received supervision support on a monthly basis from my line manager at work. My line manager has an open door*' (LA6/F2).

and in another LA:

> '*I have received excellent levels of supervision from my line manager throughout the life of the Pathfinder*' (LA2/F7).

One facilitator, however, responded simply: '*What supervision?!* '(LA20/F1).

Several facilitators commended the support received from Race Equality Foundation (REF), as an adjunct to informal meetings with line managers and informal peer support sessions with fellow facilitators, though time constraints had limited contact with REF, e.g:

> '*It's been really good [from REF]. That's been a really positive aspect of it. And when new groups have run, we have tried to mix newly trained with experienced facilitators. At the end of each session we've done some sort of evaluation, either run by REF or the programme co-ordinator, or we support each other…If I need to I can always speak to my manager as well*'. (LA12/F2)

Several facilitators also commended the REF workshops that focused on managing groups, the practicalities of how to facilitate a programme and on recruiting parents, as a welcome addition to their basic 5 day training. A large number of SFSC facilitators had felt in the earlier days of the Pathfinder that they lacked this kind of support in the role of a facilitator, as opposed to training in the programme itself.

Desired changes in professional support

About a quarter of the Incredible Years facilitators who had delivered the 8 – 12s course had no suggestions for changes and would be happy if the support they had received was continued for future facilitators. The other three-quarters made some suggestions for changes. The most frequently requested change for the future was video supervision that was more focused on the particular issues of each specific group.

In terms of expectations for future support, there was a mixture of responses from the Triple P facilitators. The majority indicated that they were happy with their current experience of supervision. For example, a facilitator from LA15 said:

> *'There is an awful lot that goes on now; they offer up a lot of supervision and support, not just one to one but there are support workshops that go on all of the time to go through the different sections of the course and things offering support. But I feel quite confident in what I do and don't probably attend as many as I should'.*
> (LA15/F1)

The implication here is that the facilitator possessed sufficient professional experience that she did not feel the need to utilise all the support available, and this feeling was expressed too by several of the SFSC facilitators, e.g.:

> *Personally I didn't attend the peer support workshop. I didn't feel I needed it, but some of my colleagues found it useful'* (LA20/F2)

In addition, other facilitators felt that existing line manager supervision was enough. However, a number of points were made concerning desired changes in the support available to some facilitators.   For example, one facilitator from LA17, where the Triple P programme has been delivered via a variety of voluntary agencies, argued that a clearer supervision model was needed for the LA and its facilitators.

5.5.3   Future programmes

Engagement in facilitating the programme after March 2008, and how this will be organised

Only two of the 19 Triple P facilitators interviewed did not intend to deliver Triple P programmes after March 2008. In one case this was because of a job change, while in the

other case, the facilitator had '*only signed up to do one course*' (LA1/F1) and did not intend to do more. The remaining facilitators all expressed the intention, or wish, to deliver further courses. These facilitators were uniformly enthusiastic about the programme and their future involvement in delivery. The following comment is an example of this enthusiasm:

> '*I will continue to do it. We have the resources to do it, I have the skills to do it, I'm qualified to do it and the evaluations show how good it is, so I wouldn't not do it*'. (LA15/F1)

Triple P facilitators from voluntary agencies and LA services, for example YISP, were equally keen to continue delivering Triple P programmes. Triple P courses had been incorporated into a variety of offers, for example:

> '*I've got one programme definitely next term and then two possibles for the following term in the schools in my patch, because Triple P have a commitment to deliver double the number in this New Deal for Communities zone because of the high levels of deprivation in this area. And as I work here and part of that is the Triple P yeah it will continue……*' (LA1/F3)

The SFSC facilitators were also enthusiastic, in principle, about the merits of the programme itself, but many had no idea about the future delivery of SFSC in their LA. Moreover many were unsure on a personal level whether or not they would be facilitating after March 2008: for one thing, at the time of interview, facilitators had no information about any continuation funding for the programme, and for some the commitment in time was a negative issue.

> '*YISP in [name of LA] are intending to continue running parenting groups, although what the level of funding for this will be I am not sure*' (LA12/F3).

In another LA, a facilitator was sure that the two programmes run in the school where she was a home support worker would not be repeated because of lack of funding: a lack of communication had apparently led to overspend on the first programme.   However, as a part-time home school support worker, not employed directly by the school, this facilitator was considering saying to the co-ordinator: *'could you pay me to deliver SFSC somewhere else in [the LA]?'* (LA6/F9). Describing the programme as *'all such good stuff'* she had extracted certain parts to use in her one-to-one work with families, for example, incentive charts, and comments from other facilitators indicated that they had similar plans (within copyright restrictions).

Others had worked as facilitators prior to the pathfinder and would continue to work in this capacity.   A facilitator who anticipated running more programmes as part of his day job commented: *'The demand is there and in [this LA] all schools will be able to take up the offer'* (LA20/F2). In a similar vein, a facilitator elsewhere had delivered SFSC prior to the PEIP and will in future be doing so in her work for a voluntary organisation. She also uses the SFSC model in one-to-one home visits on her case loads and will continue to do so.

One facilitator reported that her contract would end at the end of March with the pathfinder, but believed the SFSC programme has a great deal to offer parents, and may try to run some programmes through her church for the local community. Elsewhere, a facilitator had delivered only one programme, and was finding that others trained through the pathfinder were more likely to facilitate as there were more links between delivering the programme and the focus of their day job. Several facilitators had put their names forward for START training (for facilitating programmes focused on children/young people, to run simultaneously with the SFSC programme for parents).

Overall, there was a very mixed range of responses from SFSC facilitators, but emanating from uncertainties about future funding, organisation and in some cases, job roles, rather than confidence in the programme's value.

The Triple P facilitators also had limited knowledge as to the ways in which facilitation would be organised after the end of the pilot. Only four facilitators from two LAs were able to provide any detail concerning future organisation of the programme. In one case, both facilitators indicated that Children's Centres would become central to their delivery of Triple P after March 2008. These facilitators worked for different voluntary agencies that had won contracts to run children's centres in the LA. In the other case, one of the facilitators explained that there was a commitment to offer Triple P with referrals being taken via the Early Intervention Panel.

As regards Incredible Years at the time of interview with the facilitators from one LA they were unsure of the future but, shortly afterwards, during interviews with the strategic and operational leads, it became clear that that LA had declined to fund any further delivery of the Incredible Years 8 – 12s parenting groups. In the other Incredible Years LAs, the plans for the future, after the end of the pilot, were not clear to facilitators although those from two LAs sounded more confident that their authority would commit to further delivery of the courses.

5.5.4 Conclusions

- Overall, those facilitators interviewed (particularly for Incredible Years and Triple P) were concerned to preserve programme fidelity and many were therefore cautious about altering programme material.

- Where amendments were made, facilitators typically reported that they drew on their professional experience as counsellors, social workers or facilitators in other contexts in making their judgments.

- Some facilitators for all three programmes had made adjustments to meet the needs of particular groups, and many more had suggestions for making programme content still more suitable. They emphasized that each group of parents has its own profile, as do individuals within the group.

- Some facilitators regarded the material as 'too Americanised', in the cases of both SFSC and Incredible Years, while some Triple P facilitators made similar comments regarding the Australian nature of their course material.

- Amendments made, or suggested, centred frequently on meeting the needs of parents with low literacy levels.

- Facilitators also favoured amendments that would simplify and/or add interest and colour to the materials, particularly adding illustrative material.

- Many facilitators emphasized interactivity between parents as a helpful part of the programme, and felt that this approach could usefully be used more.

- Most of the facilitators were reasonably satisfied with the level of supervision they were now receiving either/or from line managers, programme co-ordinators and peer facilitators.

- Some facilitators pointed out that line managers are not always sufficiently knowledgeable about particular programmes or the facilitator role to provide effective support.

- There was a fair degree of uncertainty about future delivery of programmes and its organisation at both LA and personal level, due largely to lack of clarity around funding availability.

5.6   The parents' perspective

In this section we explore the views of the 81 parents interviewed (26 SFSC, 15 Triple P and 40 Incredible Years). The parents were asked to give their reflections on the

programme, the materials, joining the group, changes that had taken place, and further programmes. They were also invited to offer other comments if they wished.

5.6.1   Reflections on the programme

Specific elements of the programme

Where parents commented upon specific elements of the SFSC programme, they highlighted 'Time Out', the programme's emphasis on praise for the child, the need for clear instructions, using a reward chart, the 'first, then' strategy and consequences to behaviour, the building blocks, modelling, role play and the manual for parents. Positive comments included the following:

> *'When I came to the class it [Time Out] really helped me, learning how to sit with her, give her 5 minutes, 10 minutes; and we was taught another thing: talk to children one to one, because both of my kids tend to talk at the same time and you never seem to find time for each, which I now did, 10 minutes or 5 minutes for each of them just to talk about what happened every day and that was really useful, actually'* (LA20/P1)

There were positive comments, too, about the blend of specific strategies for dealing with behaviour and the broader elements of the programme, for example:

> *'There's a mixture of talking about how things are going, looking at specific strategies and different theories, an overview of things like child development, cultural values, and in fact I was surprised by how much was going to be covered. I was wanting all the helpful tips, if you like, but it was actually much broader than that, and it's probably more useful that it is done like that, because you have a much more substantial overview of things and you're not trying to do everything at once either, you can focus on different things. There is a lot in the course, more than I anticipated'* (LA12/P2).

Several SFSC parents also commended the programme for its clarity. One said:

> *'Where there are specific strategies, these are very clear on how to go about them. Rather than just saying you should do this or that, it goes through quite carefully, eg. giving clear instructions. Goes through what are and what are not clear instructions,*

then there is role play, and makes you examine whether or not your own instructions are clear. I would say there are tips which are actually practical, helpful ones ….'. (LA12/P2)

SFSC parents commended input from professional speakers who had focused on topics that were of current, or perhaps of potential, relevance to their families, for example drug or alcohol abuse and domestic violence. They particularly appreciated the opportunity to research and choose for themselves the speakers they felt would be most relevant to their needs. The exercise enabled them to build up awareness of the range of services and expertise available to them in their area, and this was linked to the Community element of the programme.

Triple P parents, too, talked about the usefulness of learning about a range of strategies that they could use in their relationships with their children. Parents mentioned a variety of strategies, including 'Time Out', behaviour and reward charts. The key was that there were mechanisms that could be learned too, for example, diffuse particular situations, obtain desired outcomes, and improve parent-child relations. For instance, a parent commented:

> *'It gives us something that we can follow; that is the most useful thing. It really helps to give us confidence to deal with the children. […] It has something to tell you – okay if the child's doing this you can do a, b, c, d, … it gives you exactly what you could do so I think that's the most useful. […} like the child being misbehaved and what we can do, we can try, they give us some suggestions. First of all talk to the child first or ignore his behaviour or it's a quiet time or give him time out; it depends on the situation and it gives you some idea in the situation you could use then and gives you exactly what steps that you need to do like time out…' (LA16/P2).*

In four of the six groups, Incredible Years parents said they found, 'everything' or 'virtually everything' about the session topics helpful in their own parenting at home. The following is a composite list of specific examples of topics and principles reported as most helpful when put into practice at home, the last eight of which in particular were valued too by SFSC and Triple P parents interviewed.

- putting the Parenting Pyramid into practice, starting from the base and working up
- understanding the modelling principle – that adults model behaviour to their children
- increasing the praise and positive feedback to their children

- using rewards and sticker charts to reinforce desired behaviour

- communicating with their children in a calm, quiet voice

- giving specific attention to each child in the family

- paying positive attention to behaviour that is desired and ignoring undesired behaviour

- communication skills of speaking up and of listening

- problem-solving skills

The following quotations illustrate the flavour of the Incredible Years parents' views on the content of the sessions:

'Putting the pyramid [Parenting Pyramid] into action, starting from the positive play and knowing how much you got back from your kids then makes you think, 'Oh, I can do this'. It's not as hard as you think to get rules and routines and structures into place. Everything, as you go up the pyramid, everything fell into place.' (LA3/P1)

and

'The word we're using quite a lot is 'modelling'. We all go through it. We've been told from early on that everything we do we model to our children and we've all sort of taken that on. All of us have seen from our own behaviour at home and we've tried to improve to try to pass that on and if we can keep ourselves calmer and deal with things then that helps to diffuse things.' (LA8/P2)

and

*'The last six weeks of the course have been helpful to me [*this parent had previously done the Basic course] *because my son is 11 now. […] The approach and all the communication skills and things have been helpful to me.'* (LA14/P4)

Social elements of the programme

Overall, SFSC parents spoke of a blend of specific elements of the programme and more general aspects that they found helpful in attending the sessions, but although the interview schedule asked initially about the programme itself, many parents spoke first about and emphasized, the social, sharing aspects of participating. Among Triple P parents too there

was a very strong view that undertaking the course with other parents is one of the most valuable aspects of attending the course.

Triple P parents whose children attended the same school and who already knew each other, and those who had not met prior to the Triple P course saw fellow course members as co-learners, a source of supportive but critical reflection, parents with similar experiences of parenthood, and, in some cases, good friends. The following comment illustrates this:

> *'I definitely weren't coming back [after a session] and then it was [name of other parent] that convinced me really outside. She kept saying 'at the end of the day you don't have to be embarrassed', because I was more embarrassed than anything....And she said to me 'at the end of the day you'll be bonusing from it, …' so she said 'you might as well just go back' but I said 'I'm embarrassed. Look I've took up a whole lesson all about me' and everyone was so supportive so that's what made me come.'* (LA15/P2).

SFSC parents too felt that they benefited hugely from support from other parents on the programme, as the following comments illustrate:

> *'That parent is finding something really, really helpful – perhaps I could too, if I try it.'* (LA12/P2)

and

> *'It's just knowing that you're not the only one going through it, and it's not my fault as a parent, sometimes it can be outside things, and just knowing that you are doing OK…It's made me feel a bit better knowing that they're not judging me, that they've already been through it and they know what I'm going through'* (LA12/P1)

In all six Incredible Years groups, the parents spoke warmly of the importance to them of each session beginning with 'homework feedback', when each parent recounted how the intervening week had been for them and in particular how they had got on in trying out the learning from the previous session. This was the time when parents felt listened to and supported by the facilitators and, in particular, by the other parents who would offer ideas as to how difficulties might be dealt with. The following quotations illustrate comments from parents in all the Incredible Years groups about this mutual support, and echo the benefit

that parents from all three programmes drew from talking over issues with other parents, receiving and giving support to others:

> *'I like that you start off virtually recapping on what happened, how it went the week previously, because you realise then it isn't just an empty session, as such, because people do go away, things happen over the week, and people appear to be genuinely interested in how it went for you because this is how it went for them. I think that's a very good part of the session because it shows it's actually working: when it didn't work for you this week, but it did for someone else.'* (LA11/P8)

and

> *'You sort out your problems. You feel better when you go back home.'*
> *'Yes, sometimes we'll have opinions or views on what's going on in [Name 1's] life and sometimes [Name 1] will help out in what's going on in our life. Not just [Name 1], [Name, 2, 3 and 4] too. It's not something that you just sit there and don't take an interest in other people's lives. You do. You learn, really, from what they are going through.' (*LA10/P3, then P1)

Individual parents from all three programmes spoke movingly of how it was the mutual support and encouragement of the other parents attending that kept them coming back to the group. In every group interview, the parents talked about the relief of realising they were not alone in having difficulties with their children.

One SFSC programme comprised parents from a very wide ethnic range, and parents enjoyed learning about other cultures, religions and approaches to parenting from a group that included mothers from Pakistan, Somalia, North Africa, Bangladesh, Mauritius and Jamaica. Several parents from this group felt rather socially isolated outside the group, and found contacts at the sessions with whom they could share their parenting related problems; furthermore, friendships had developed among the group. This development of cross-cultural links accords very well with the SFSC programme's emphasis upon fostering community cohesion.

Delivering the materials

Many parents from SFSC and Triple P made clear their appreciation of the course facilitators' expertise, friendliness and supportive approach and in the case of Triple P,

praised other workers associated with the courses – such as crèche and outreach workers. One parent said: '*They've been lovely, really, really good'* LA1/P1. The inclusion of a male facilitator was also considered a benefit, particularly during role play '*so that it's not just looking at how women would react in a situation'* (LA12/P4)

In the SFSC LA where parent facilitators were used, one interviewee felt that parents benefited from the '*balance between the tutor from a professional background and one trained as a parent'* (LA19/P1). A second interviewee was not aware of the professional/parent status of the facilitators. A parent elsewhere was impressed by the mix of three SFSC professional facilitators from various backgrounds, giving input from different perspectives.

In four of the six Incredible Years groups, the ethos created by the group facilitators was praised (the topic did not arise in the other two groups). Parents described the group facilitators as, 'friendly', 'normal', 'down to earth', 'non-judgemental', 'encouraging', 'good listeners', 'good at their job', 'relaxed' 'willing to have a laugh with us', 'good at going above and beyond for you'. Parents also appreciated that the facilitators created a learning environment that was fun and relaxed, but also focused on the learning, and was also safe, because of the ground rules negotiated at the start of the course. The following is an illustration of this point:

> '*I, personally, like the fact that they [the facilitators] are friendly…. We generally stay on course with what we're doing but we still generally have a laugh and they'll have a laugh back.'* (LA3/P2)

and

> '*I know [Facilitator 1] is a health visitor and [Facilitator 2] is a foster carer but they're normal. (Laughter) They don't have that hat on, 'What I say goes'. They're normal. It's been nice.'* (LA3/P5)

Parents from both Incredible Years and SFSC groups valued contact from facilitators outside sessions; in the case of the former this would include mid-week calls from the facilitator, and the possibility of making buddy calls (even though no-one used this, they liked the idea of it). SFSC parents appreciated phone calls, and in some cases home visits, to bring them up to date if they unavoidably missed a session, as well as facilitators' willingness to discuss an issue privately with them if necessary.   A blind mother had been particularly impressed

with the *'inclusiveness'* of the sessions, the facilitator e-mailing material to her weekly, and enabling her to use software to convert this into a medium she could read before the session. In two Incredible Years LAs (LA8 and LA11) the parents specifically mentioned the benefits of support made available to their children outside the group.

These comments bring into focus facilitator interviewees' recognition that the relationship they build up with parents is all important if they are to maximise benefits from their parenting programme; the evidence from the parents interviewed is that facilitators from all three programmes were successful in achieving this.

Practical elements

On a practical note, it was important that the group should be small enough to facilitate trust and discussion in a comfortable and private setting, provision of refreshments and crèche where available, or alternatively payment for child care, and for transport were all judged important, and overall were provided to the satisfaction of the parents interviewed.

5.6.2 Materials

Overall, for SFSC, many parents commented positively on the materials used in delivery, particularly on the manual for parents, e.g.:

> *'I will find the manual really useful, but particularly when the course is finished so that if I feel myself slipping or old behaviours are coming back I can look to it and think: "that's how we deal with this"'* (LA12/P1).

In another LA, parents found the manual '*quite straightforward, very good, easy to refer to and very informative as well'* (LA6/P2).and specifically said they had not found the language too academic.

The use of the manual as an aide memoire as suggested in the above comment was echoed by Triple P parents, among whom criticisms of the handbook were mild, eg:

> *'The handbooks are very useful. I think from session three, when you had 'start techniques, stop techniques etc', …the last week, I haven't really had the time to sit down and think, "right we need to change how we are doing things as a family"', so it's great that we have got this [the handbook] to go back to….'* (LA9/P3).

A minority of SFSC parents in one LA found the manual more difficult to use (and the facilitator for this group shared this view). One parent felt discouraged from reading the manual at home because '*explanations given were unnecessarily complicated*' (LA1/P3), though she had found that '*some things which were quite complex and difficult to read before a session turned out to be quite simple when explained by a facilitator'* (LA1/P3).

Interestingly, few SFSC parents commented on 'Americanisation' of the materials, highlighted as an issue by a number of facilitators, '*The language was fine*' (LA19/P1), *'the language was not a big problem*' (LA7/P6) were typical comments.

One parent reported that she *'found some of it Americanised in the beginning. I thought it was very American to do that 'Ra, Ra' round of applause every time a particular overhead came on'* (LA6/P1).

Similarly, Triple P parents were aware of the Australian source of the programme and made allowances for cultural differences between Australia and England. Triple P parents' view of the parent handbook and DVD material was positive overall, though there were certain aspects of both they felt could be improved: notably some of the scenarios that appeared in the DVD material, that they felt failed to reflect the situations they might have to address. One parent explained:

> '*The DVD was very patronising. Some of it was all right but some of it was just so obvious that no mum would do that anyway.* (LA15/P2)

A second parent from the same LA felt that a sequence about children running in the house illustrated a scenario that was insufficiently significant for either parents or their children to give serious attention. More fundamentally, a parent from LA1 believed she would have benefited more from the programme had she undertaken it when her children were much younger:

> '*I personally… [have] been a bit disappointed by the content of the programme because ……I was already aware of the few things that I could have used and I was already using; quiet time, stickers, family rules and things like that, ….and I came with like specific issues which haven't been touched at all …………… I think it's good for young parents or a single child parent, I think it's brilliant; I should have had that course maybe 4 or 5 years ago but now it's too late and I was a bit disappointed by that…...'* (LA1/P2).

This parent was particularly keen to learn about issues related to problems between siblings, which she felt were not addressed by the programme. In contrast to these views, parents in other Triple P LAs noted that they had undertaken parenting courses before, but had not found them as effective as the course they were now taking.

In four of the six Incredible Years groups, parents discussed the usefulness of the course materials (the book and/or CD, the homework, the handouts, including refrigerator notes, and the vignettes on the course DVD). Views varied on the usefulness of the vignettes played on the DVD within the sessions but all views about the other course materials were positive; all were seen as useful in reviewing what had been learned and in supporting putting it into practice at home. For example:

> *'The book helps. Basically, what we cover in the day is in the book as well. '*
> *'[The refrigerator notes] are useful to a certain degree because it's like what you're aiming for, I think anyway, what you are aiming for during the week. Instead of getting the book out and going through it, it's just there. It's there to remind you. It's very useful.'* (LA3/P1)

One parent disliked the illustrations of Black people in the recently revised edition of the course book, viewing them as inappropriate caricatures:

> *'…..All the let's say European white people or whatever are just drawn as people whereas- not at the beginning of the book, it seems to change towards the end of the book - the way that some of the Afro-Caribbean people are represented is like caricatures which I find actually quite insulting'.* (LA11/P6)

Overall, parents said they much preferred learning through role-play than learning through watching the vignettes on the course DVD within the sessions, and an interactive learning approach was preferred by many parents on all three programmes.   While some Incredible Years parents saw the usefulness of the vignettes and learning from them, others found them boring and off-putting:

> *'I switch off when they [the vignettes] come on. I really find them frustrating.'*
> *[General agreement that they prefer the role-plays.]…..*
> *'It does give examples. It's effective in that but it's the way that they're doing it on [the DVD]. It's quite boring.'* (LA3/ various parents)

5.6.3   Joining the group

Referral routes

In all programmes, parents came from a range of referral routes. In some cases, the group was a mix of referred and self-referred parents, in others all the parents were referred. In many cases it would be difficult to draw a line between self-referral and referral by another agency, as in the case of a parent who had asked social services to offer some counselling on anger management. She subsequently asked her therapist for a parenting course, and she suggested this particular one.

Those parents (from all three programmes) who had self-referred found out about the programme in a variety of ways – through flyers advertising the programme, through information displayed in schools, school newsletter, a Women's Centre, through school-based information events, through word-of-mouth and through family support centres. For example, a parent from one explained how a Learning Mentor from her child's school signposted certain parents from the school to an information meeting hosted by a Triple P facilitator from the LA. Similarly, another parent from the same group was referred by a professional, in this case, her social worker. A parent on the SFSC programme commented:

> *'I heard about the group through the Youth Offending Team, because my son got into trouble with the law and ended up with a YO worker. I didn't know what to do and they said "would a parenting class help?'* (LA12/P4).

By contrast, a Triple P parent from LA16 self-referred after seeing a poster advertising the programme, and realising that she needed some additional parenting support. Her account is interesting in that she describes how she was unwilling, at first, to make the step of self-referral:

> *'I saw it advertised in my son's school and I could identify that we were having problems. We'd come to a point where we were having problems, and I felt a bit helpless, and then all of a sudden I saw this notice in the school, but I didn't feel confident enough, and that was probably about a year ago, just didn't have the confidence to ring the number, and I was looking at it. And then a year later I was in this place [a Women's Centre], and I saw it advertised, and this time I did ring it.'*
> (LA16/P2)

In one Triple P LA, all referrals are handled by a single centre, irrespective of the source of the referral. Parents attracted to the programme by widely distributed flyers found that when they telephoned for further information they were met by questions that made them wary of signing up for the programme:

> *'I just rang to register to ask …… raise a few issues that I had and were they going to be covered and I was told "yes, probably" etc and then she said "have you been referred?", oh no "who is your referral?" both questions, and I said "no" and they said "the school or is it your doctor or Social Services?" and I said "no, it's just my own referral" and then I was asking myself "why are you asking me that?"…… am I going to have my name…letters at the school or Social Services so it was just the way I was asked about referral. Am I a naughty mum?'* (LA1/P3).

Although the Triple P programme was new in all except one LA, word of mouth could be a strong motivating factor in persuading parents to enrol on a programme, though referral by a professional added an impetus to participate in a way that was lacking in the case of self-referral.   However, all the Triple P parents said that they had realised that they were having problems with their children and were motivated in any case to learn ways of addressing those problems.   There were many examples of this from all 3 programmes; the one that follows is from an SFSC parent:

> *'At the time I was contacted I was at the end of a road, I had been looking at so many different places for help, and this fell on my doorstep and I just thought "anything I can do to get help and information has got to be a good thing;" so I thought it would be an opportunity to go and learn, perhaps not where I had been going wrong, but how to put things right'.* (LA12/P3)

Many parents were very keen that the group should, in the future, be made accessible to more parents and at an earlier stage in terms both of the age of their children but also the severity of need. Many of the SFSC parents added their view that more effort should be made to attract fathers.

Information about the programme

Most of the SFSC parents interviewed felt that they were given sufficient information about the programme before attending for the first session, the first session merely gave them confirmation that the programme would be useful. However, one SFSC parent who was obliged to attend the programme in relation to parenting orders said she had been given little information about the programme in advance, and as a consequence '*felt apprehensive about the whole thing'* (LA2/P1) Apprehension or embarrassment about doing the course was reported fairly frequently among parents from all three courses, regardless of the availability of advance information, relating often to fears that others on the programme might think them bad parents, or that they might be coerced into disclosing issues. In practice, these fears often proved groundless and confidence grew as the programmes progressed, but there were exceptions to this, as discussed in the next Section.

In common with other parents, Triple P interviewees were given information about the programme from a variety of sources. In all LAs but one, parents explained that they had only basic information, but that their need for additional parenting knowledge, and, in some cases, the recommendation of professionals, such as learning mentors or doctors, was enough to lead them to enrol on the programme (and this was the case, too, for SFSC parents). The Introductory session of the SFSC programme was very much an information giving session, at the end of which it was anticipated that parents would either commit to the programme, or decide the programme was not relevant to their needs and withdraw.   In only one Triple P LA, were parents given more than basic advance information. In that case, parents were invited to an information meeting addressed by an experienced Triple P facilitator who had some co-ordinating functions within the LA.

One Triple P parent felt that lack of information had hindered the decision to self-refer, and comments from those parents who delayed referring themselves seem to indicate that the general lack of detailed information might be keeping some parents away from attendance. Others were concerned about the lack of information before starting the programme, even when they had enjoyed and benefited from, the course. In general, however, the perceived lack of detailed information about the nature and content of Triple P did not put off interviewees, as they felt in need of support, e.g:

> '*There were a couple of interesting bullet points [on the information leaflet] that caught my attention, but, again, I also felt that I was in a crisis where I need help desperately.'* (LA9/P2).

Incredible Years parents were not asked this question because of time constraints.

Some concerns about the programmes

Two of the SFSC parents felt that the age of their own children was not ideally suited to the focus of the programme: one had expected the programme to focus more on teenage children, and conversely, one felt that an outside speaker's focus on drug related problems was not relevant to problems with her 8 year old child. Overall, age was not an issue for much comment: many were parents of several children in different age groups, and there were many parents (particularly those who self referred) who wanted help with strategies in dealing with behaviour in general terms rather than identifying problems with a particular child in a particular age group.

After the first session parents could have a degree of uncertainty at this stage feeling that the programme was going to be useful to them, but still feeling that people might gain a negative impression about them and their children, that they would not learn enough techniques quickly enough, or that they would not be able to cope with attending the whole course.

> *'After the first session I was still very sceptical I suppose about everything; about this working and about my own abilities….. .' (LA16/P2).*

By contrast, other parents described their experience of the first session in very positive terms – it was, said LA9/P1, '*the eureka moment!'*, which was explained by another mother from the same Triple P group:

> *'……And then there was a classic phrase – "you wouldn't expect to speak to your colleagues like that, so why are you speaking to your child like that?" And you think, "My God, they're right!"'*. (LA9/P2).

5.6.4   Changes that have taken place for parents

The changes that parents reported in their own behaviour or approach to parenting were remarkably similar across all three programmes.

Adopting a calmer approach

All six of the Incredible Years groups gave specific examples of how they had changed their own behaviour in line with the principles learned on the course. The key concept, that children copy the behaviour modelled by their parent/s, underpinned these changes, e.g:

> 'You don't realise how big an impact you're making on your child. It's not until you sit down and think, "Crikey, he's copying exactly what I've just done" and then you think, "I've got to try and stay calm and reverse it"'. *(LA8/P2)*

One of the most commonly experienced changes across the programmes was that parents found they were able to deal with their children in a calmer way. A decline in parents shouting at their children and a diminishing number of arguments between parents and children were linked to the implementation of strategies learned from Triple P, SFSC or Incredible Years. The following comments, firstly from a Triple P parent, secondly from two SFSC parents, reflect changes to a calmer way of dealing with their children since attending the programme, also growing self-awareness, and recognition that an aggressive approach can be counter-productive.

> '….I was raising my voice willy nilly and I didn't realise, I wasn't present enough to see how that was making him feel, how threatening that was, and some of the role plays and some of the things we did here made me see….. I was shouting and screaming and everything but now, just the fact that I don't raise my voice now has changed everything. I'm mummy and he's safe and he feels safe and he gives that off. It's completely different.'(LA16/ P2)

> 'Whereas before I used to lose my rag, totally, now I am more under control…Before it was grab her, smack her bum…but [this time] I didn't stress up big time because it would have stressed her out more. She still got me mad, but I though, if I keep calm, she will keep calm. I've put that into practice a couple of time and it's worked'. (LA29/P2)

And a father commented:

> 'I am calmer now. It opened my eyes and made me stand back and look at myself and the way I was dealing with my son. Before, it was my way or the highway, type of thing' (LA7/P3).

Becoming more confident in positive parenting

Parents saw positive changes in their children's behaviour, this in turn increasing confidence in their own parenting ability, as for example these two parents:

> *'It's made me more confident in my parenting, it's made me more able to set boundaries with my daughter; it's made me more confident in challenging her when she's being disruptive… She knows when I mean business now…It's kind of ingrained in me now and I can see, even when things are happening and I'm not referring to the book, I can see myself thinking and afterwards I think 'I did that because of that course' and it's changed the way I react to her reactive behaviour. It's just completely changed both of us, I think, our outlook to each other as well. We're enjoying each other's company now, we're not just arguing constantly…It's changed our lives. It really has given me my daughter back.'* (LA12/P1)

and

> *'…… I feel it's helped my esteem a bit and made me feel there's not only ways of helping my son but for helping myself as well with other issues I've got […]I've not long come out of a domestic, violent relationship; I was in it for 3 years and I feel I let myself go a lot and I feel that …..it has affected my son to a certain degree and I feel that since doing this course it's helped me try to build myself up again, to be a better mum towards my son and I feel I'm slowly making progress.'* (LA15/P2)

Drawing on specific strategies from the programme

Parents referred to specific programme techniques that had helped them in dealing with their children's behaviour, for example this Incredible Years parent:

> *'Having sticker charts and things in place like the grab-bag that we have here [in the group]. We all put that in place at home, too. We put any sweets they had into a bag and, if they'd been well-behaved, they could have it then.'* (LA3/P1)

this SFSC parent:

'It's called 'first, and then' – saying to kids "if you tidy up your toys we can go wherever"…and that has worked. Before, it was just "tidy your toys up!" (LA19/P3)

and this Triple P parent:

'I don't argue at all, and when I do I have to go to quiet time and that's changed my relationship with the children […] They call me jolly mummy now.' (LA1/P2)

Taking time to listen

Parents spoke of taking more time to listen and talk to each of their children, for example this Incredible Years parent stated:

'I think there was something… which was about exclusive attention and trying to give a child absolutely their own bit of attention, and it could be for five minutes, ten minutes or whatever, but where they weren't doing anything else and no other child or member of the family was intruding on it. And actually I… thought that perhaps we already did that, but then I realised actually that we didn't really; it always was done alongside something else. That I found really useful, just how five minutes can really raise the child's well-being, and it's nice for a parent as well'. (LA11/P7)

and this SFSC parent:

'I now actually stop what I am doing and listen to them or say things like 'let me just finish this washing up and I'm all yours'. They ask you something while you're washing up…it's always 'wait a minute'. I should think more about how 'they're feeling and not just about what I've got to do. That has improved a lot in my relationship with my daughters'. (LA12/P4)

Parents from all three programmes recognised that more time would be needed for changes to become embedded: that they could not expect miracles and that neither they nor their children would be able to achieve perfect standards at all times.

5.6.5 Changes that have taken place for children

Across all three programmes parents reported that their relationships with their children had improved, often markedly. Parents gave specific examples of positive effects on their

children arising from the changes they had implemented through learning on the course. These positive changes included improvements in children's behaviour, well-being and self-esteem, as well as increased interest in school work. The following are examples of the many comments received:

> *'Definitely from upping the praise, I've seen her self-esteem grow. Just being aware of the littlest things. Just to remember to praise instead of being on her back all the time over the silly little things that aren't really important. […] Her self-esteem and our relationship has improved so much from it.'* (LA8/P3)

> *'It's made a difference to her schooling – she was being suspended and on the way to being excluded and I've spoken to her teachers over Christmas and they've said she's like a different child. She is more confident and part of the course is building their self esteem, and she's shining, to be fair, she's just glowing. She's more outgoing, she's not lethargic.'* (LA12 /P1)

> *'My son he has the habit of losing his temper at home doing homework and gradually, slowly we're making progress with him. We've come up with some strategies how to try and control it to a certain level now and with homework we pace it throughout the day rather than doing it all in one go…..'* (LA17/P2)

Overall, the degree of improvement varied. In some cases, parents found that strategies that they had learned from the programme enabled them to communicate with their children in ways that ensured that small, but essential, daily tasks were completed. The result was improved behaviour on the part of the children, reduced stress for the parents, and the completion of basic, important tasks – such as getting children to school on time in the morning. In a few cases, however, as with two parents in the Incredible Years LA14 group, parents were disappointed in the lack of change in their children's behaviour and would have liked parallel support for the children (as was offered, for example, in one LA). As one expressed this:

> *'We've done our bit to try and change and help our children but we don't seem to have got the support for our children to try and help us as well, you know.'* (LA14/P1)

5.6.6 Future programmes

Most parents were satisfied with the programme as they had experienced it. As expressed by one SFSC parent:

> *'I think it should stay the same. I wouldn't change anything about the course or the curriculum – it's working – it's made a difference to us!'* (LA12/P1).

With Triple P the two issues raised related to the length of the course and the intensity of each two hour, face to face session. Some of the parents felt that the course should be longer. This was seen to be necessary to allow parents time to explain their own situations and problems. There was a feeling here that undertaking the course would raise difficult personal issues that needed some more space and time for discussion. There was also a feeling among some parents that the sessions were very intense and that parents would benefit from having more time, more sessions, in which to explore the programme:

> *'I don't know about the budget thing but I think this is quite intense, this course. There's a lot to do and every time we just tried to run through it rush rush rush. And lots of homework which needed good planning.' (LA16/P1).*

Some of the suggestions from the Incredible Years parents echoed those from SFSC interviewees. These were:

- that groups should be more available so that more parents could access the support – and that groups should run at a range of different times and in different locations to suit different lifestyles (full time work, shift work etc)
- access to the groups when children were younger and problems less severe
- that support should continue in some form post programme

As regards the first of the points above, a number of SFSC parents would also like more fathers in particular to be able to access support, with programmes timed more appropriately to take account of their working hours.

In relation to the third point above, in addition to the social meetings already taking place, several SFSC parents in one LA suggested a monthly drop in session meeting available for parents having problems they are not able to resolve. Others would welcome post programme meetings, but on a less structured basis, e.g.:

'I think it would be nice at some time to meet as a group, just to see how everybody is getting on. Perhaps just one meeting three or four months down the line, just to see whether things have changed for everyone' (LA19/P1).

Several SFSC parents expressed their appreciation for facilitators who had called them to bring them up to date on any session they were unable to attend, also those who offered parents the opportunity to speak to them privately about any issues of concern, and hoped this approach would continue in future.

Clearly the way facilitators approach their role is crucial to the success of the programme, and several parents highlighted the interactive parts of the programme, rather than the 'listening' parts, as those they had enjoyed most and found most useful in terms of learning new strategies.

Some of the Incredible Years parents had additional suggestions: that groups be made up of parents from the same school or area so that buddying support could be used more and parents could support each other after the group had finished, and finally, that parallel support to the children be available so that it was a family that was supported, not just one parent. In respect of the final point, one LA had trialled the START programme running alongside the SFSC programme for parents. The use of a Children's Worker also received positive comments from parents.

Across all three programmes parents said that they would recommend the respective programme to other parents they knew, or in some cases had already done so.

5.6.7 Conclusions

- Comments from parents across all three programmes were overall very positive and very similar in content and emphasis.
- Parents reported changes in their approaches to parenting with specific examples in line with principles and strategies learned on the programmes.
- Parents reported that children had noticed changes in their parents' approach and responded with positive changes that related to their self esteem, behaviour at home and interest in school work.
- There were many examples of parents' relationships with children having improved, with less confrontations and more episodes of friendly co-operation.

- Overall parents expressed satisfaction with programmes in their current form.
- Parents from Triple P felt that the length of the overall programme and individual sessions should be re-considered.
- Parents from SFSC and Incredible Years would like some form of continuation support.
- Parents from all three programmes felt that they should be made more widely available, particularly for younger children (and by implication before problems become severely entrenched).

5.7 Other issues raised about experience of the PEIP

5.7.1 Those who had not had an opportunity to deliver the course

Of those facilitators who responded to Phase 3, but had not been involved in facilitating or co-facilitating a parenting course during the Pathfinder, one was employed as Children's Worker and so was not expected to deliver the course to parents. Among the others, the most common reason given was that their various day jobs prevented it. In one case, this had always been acknowledged as likely to be the case but it was felt to be important that this person did the training so that, in his role as a senior manager of the LA's anti-social behaviour unit, he would be in a good position to share his understanding in order to influence colleagues to refer appropriately to the course. In other cases, the people had changed role since having been trained on the Pathfinder and were no longer able to commit to delivering or co-delivering a course. For example:

'I have been unable to hold any of the parent trainings as I have recently stepped into a new job role. It is still in the same school, but as Attendance Manager rather than EWO, and therefore I am now managed by the school rather than the Local Authority. I tried very hard to [persuade my manager to] allow me to still run the parenting classes, but was not successful as the role is already very demanding.' (LA5/F8, by e-mail)

'I would love to have continued with Pathfinder but it wasn't an option. […] I wasn't allowed to continue because my role with Pathfinder was conflicting with my casework in the team that I moved in to, so what was decided was that, after the first programme ended, I wouldn't participate in any more.' (LA11/F6)

One person, who had been trained on the Pathfinder but had not played any further part during the Pathfinder because it proved impossible to fit in with her day job, nevertheless remained keen to be involved in the future, if that proved possible, although she also noted that in that situation she would need at least a refresher training course. Although, in one sense, she felt her training place had been '*a bit of a wasted place*', in another sense she acknowledged that it had not because she had found she made use of what she had learned from the training in her one-to-one work with families, particularly the importance of praise and reward and the attention principle – giving the child attention for positive behaviour and ignoring undesirable behaviour.

> '*If I end up doing a parenting group later down the line, I wouldn't feel comfortable going straight in. I'd want to retrain or do a refresher. […] In that aspect, it seems a bit of a wasted place. I assume that must happen though, because you don't know what is coming in the future and that is part of the gamble. But I have used some of the stuff because I still work with parents, even though it's on a one-to-one. It's gone in to the tool-bag, along with other courses and stuff I've done.*' (LA14/F3)

Another interviewee had not had the opportunity to facilitate or co-facilitate the course but had tried very hard to be involved as a caseworker supporting a parent to engage with the group. Despite a series of home visits over a number of months, the parent did not attend the group. Reflecting on this, the interviewee noted the accuracy of the guidance given during training of the level of relationship a caseworker would need with a family in order to be successful in engaging them to attend the group:

> '*[My attempted case] wasn't the typical type of arrangement that we were actually asked to refer. I think, when I did the training, the idea was that the families we would refer would be families that we had an existing relationship with. Knowing them, doing work and we'd got to the situation where we felt [the group] would be the next stage for them to move on to but my sole involvement with that particular family was solely for the purpose of getting them to that group. I hadn't met them before. I think that was the weakness in that sense. If it was a family I had known for six months before, they would have felt far better about working with me on issues they may not have been absolutely sure about in their own minds. They might have had a bit more confidence in what I was doing. So, in that sense, it was a difficulty that the organisers of the group envisaged could happen, doing it that way But it's a shame because I think she could have really benefited from that group.*' (LA11/F4)

5.7.2 Those involved in other roles

Observer

Within the recommended model of Incredible Years facilitator development, the first step after training is to be an observer, sitting in on a parenting group to learn from the modelling of the group's lead facilitator and co-facilitator. Three of the eight who had been trained in Incredible Years but had not delivered had taken on this role, though one had done so only for three sessions because of the demands of her day job. Despite time pressures from the day job, the following quotation illustrates the learning one interviewee gained from observing every session of a group:

> *'I [observed] the first group all the way through to the end […] I often had to run after the group and I wasn't able to participate with [the facilitators] in discussing what happened, reflecting on it. I just didn't have the time to do that. […] But I learned a lot from [the facilitators] and I thought they were brilliant at doing the programme and engaging with the families. They had excellent group cohesion and most people did stay in the group for quite a long time and only missed a few days so I thought that was brilliant that they were able to do that.'* (LA11/F6)

Case worker

In LA11, the model of parenting support being piloted in the PEIP included caseworker support to each parent attending the Incredible Years 8–12s parenting group. These caseworkers were trained in the Family Partnership Model of caseworking and were offered regular supervision. The following quotations are from one interviewee who combined the observer role and the caseworker role. First, he described the impact he saw on his case-work family:

> *'I carried my one case that I had brought with me from my previous team and that came to a successful end. The mother, my casework parent, that was her second time doing [an Incredible Years course] and she felt that she understood Pathfinder [the 8 – 12s course] slightly better. Of course, she also then had one-to-one tuition the next day when I came to the house. I was also there to meet with her partner and explain a lot of the concepts as well. I started seeing a considerable change in the*

way that she was participating in the group, it was obvious that she had been reading and had been listening to some of the TVs and actually attempting to use some of the skills that she was learning with her children. And I did observe some of that within the home, which was brilliant. I would spend a good hour and a half, two hours in the home the next day, often after school when the kids were there to get a slightly different perspective. I would swap back and forth so I wasn't always interfering in their afternoon schedule. […] It works! I saw it working and working with a family that I have worked with since 2004 and I've seen them develop and grow and have lots of intervention and services involved. To then see them, finally, with mum having some learning difficulties, having had domestic violence as a factor in that relationship, you know, huge factors against them, but they were getting it! They were getting it, with the extra tuition they were getting the next day. They were getting a lot of support and I saw the difference, which was brilliant.' (LA11/F6)

However, this interviewee found the workload '*unrealistic'* as it was in addition to a full caseload in his day job. In the end, the pressure had a negative effect on his health:

'Throughout the programme, I was essentially doing two jobs and that wasn't how the purpose of it was sold. It wasn't supposed to be in addition to my work. It was supposed to be done together and it did feel as if there was additional work that needed to be done. […]I think the model of it, I think is brilliant with the casework element to it. I think it's unrealistic to expect someone to continue doing their work half the week, devote half a day to one family. I felt the half a day was necessary but I also then had no decline in my caseload […] I was also really knackered during all that! […] I was off sick for quite a while and, as a result, decided to go part-time because I don't want my health to suffer for my job.' (LA11/F6)

Casework support of parents in the group was not unproblematic for those facilitating the group. For example, one facilitator leading a group found that having caseworkers supporting parents worked better in some cases than others. She valued the caseworker support when the caseworker liaised with her but when this did not happen it added an additional task to her role, and created the potential for parents' needs to fall through the net due to poor communication between caseworkers, parents and group facilitators.

'That's been the bit that I think has been a confusion all along, the fact that it's been joined in with the Parent Partnership Model of working, which I don't think has been

really clear to anybody how and when that should work. In some ways, as group leaders, I think it's been difficult for us.' (LA11/F7)

In a different LA, one group facilitator led a group where every parent attending was also supported by a voluntary sector keyworker and the group ran in the same voluntary sector organisation's building. Her experience of this *"network of support"* was positive:

*'Everybody in the group has a keyworker at the project where we delivered the course. That has made a massive difference, as well, I think. I know from other groups and talking to our Pathfinder colleagues in [LA10] that they've had parents on courses where those support networks haven't been there and so it's almost like they are having to deal with all of these issues in the Pathfinder sessions because there is no other outlet for the parents. That has definitely helped us with our group because we can kind of, not ignore those things but say, "Oh well, let's talk to your keyworker about that after the session." You know, we can park them to one side for the time being whereas other parents might not have those support networks available to them. I think other group leaders have really had a tough time with some of the groups.' (*LA10/ F5)

Children's Worker

In LA8, the model of support for parents of 8 -12 year olds being piloted in the PEIP included support for the children in families where the parent/s attended the group and no other agencies were working with the child. The two part-time Children's Workers were trained in the Basic and Advanced *Incredible Years* and also attended the Incredible Years Dina School training. One took part in the evaluation.

Although the original intention had been to offer groupwork to the children, the unforeseen resignation of one of the workers meant that the role was redesigned as providing one-to-one support to a small group of children per term in the home and/or in the school. The main focus was two-fold – to model to the parents the skills of interacting with their children being taught in the parents' group and to spend time with the children working with them in a collaborative way to help them identify and manage their emotions, to communicate appropriately and to problem-solve. In some cases, the role also involved liaising with a range of educational professionals such as SENCos, educational psychologists and pastoral care staff.

The Children's Worker and both facilitators interviewed in LA8 reported positive feedback from the parents of the children on the caseload of the Children's Worker. (Parents interviewed in the parent group interview also gave evidence of the impact of the work with their children.)

> *'[The Children's Worker] works with three from one of my groups and two from my other group - cases where you think, "That child needs something extra", they've not got too much else, there's nobody else involved. […] And it's been a huge, huge success. My parents are coming in and saying, '[The Children's Worker] is showing me this' and, '[The Children's Worker] is doing that with [my son] and it's really working well because it's nobody connected with school. It's not connected with family. It's not connected with Social Services. It's just somebody who is there for them'. And that has been huge. So, for me, the ideal would be for one Children's Worker to be attached to every group so that that would work.'* (LA8/F3)

The Children's Worker role was not, however, included in the funded plan for the post-pilot delivery in LA8. This was seen as *'short-sighted'* by the facilitators interviewed who argued for the benefits of having the support there for children and parents:

> *'Now that isn't going to happen and it's very sad that that isn't going to happen because [LA8] has decided it doesn't want it which is really bad. But of course they didn't have evidence to show how successful it was. Now we've got parents saying, "If it hadn't have been for [the Children's' Worker], I don't think I'd have been able to engage with this programme as well" because obviously what they are getting is like a double whammy in a way because the child is having his needs met by somebody else as well as the parent. It's just been huge and because [the Children's Worker] has a familiarity with Webster-Stratton, the support is just incredible.' (*LA8/F3)

6.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section we draw conclusions from the evaluation regarding this roll out of the three parenting progammes across 18 local authorities. We consider both process and outcome issues.

6.1   Conclusions

6.1.1 General Outcome
- There was universal enthusiasm for the project from all groups involved in terms of the success of the roll out and the outcomes.
- The outcome measures suggest that the programmes had very positive effects on the parents' mental well-being; their perceptions of themselves as a parent and their parenting skills; and their perceptions of their children's behaviour.

6.1.2 Programme Differences
- Although the three programmes all include a focus on parenting, based upon social learning theory, they differ in:
    o length of sessions;
    o length of courses;
    o intensity of focus on parenting;
    o their specific training methods;
    o the style of training;
    o additional issues included (e.g. culture, violence, parental mental health problems and relationship difficulties);
    o and the system context; only Triple P specify an integrated intervention system.
- All three programmes provided similar facilitator training programmes and specified supervision and accreditation procedures, with the Incredible Years being the most elaborate.
- All programmes have considered or are in the process of considering the extent to which their training meets the National Occupational Standards for work with parents.

6.1.3 Management of Roll-out

- Although DCSF were perceived as supportive and helpful, the set up timescales were seen as unrealistic and not allowing enough time for the complex organisational task.

- There were wide variations in how long it took local authorities to be in a position to run their first groups and a small number had finished very few parent groups by the time the project ended. Delays resulted from the recruitment and training of facilitators, setting up the infrastructure, and identifying and recruiting parents. Implementation was particularly delayed in areas that did not already have established systems and an existing pool of facilitators. In addition some LAs extended the training of facilitators, so delaying implementation.

- The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder was successful in rolling out these three programmes (Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities) on a large scale, across 18 local authorities with comparable benefits from each programme.

- The scale and complexity of the roll out resulted in a number of operational challenges including:
    - the realisation that setting up was a longer process than expected;
    - the limiting effects of the short timescale of the pilot;
    - the need fully to engage managers of facilitators drawn from local authority departments;
    - the late recognition that coordination was crucial and the importance of setting up the coordinator/operational lead role as quickly as possible;
    - difficulties associated with arranging training for facilitators;
    - and supervision issues.

- A problem particular to the Incredible Years sites was the decision to put together a course specifically for the PEIP in order to meet the needs of the age group (8-13 years) and likely problems to be encountered. Changes to the course, DVD material, manuals and handouts caused some concern, increased the length of the course and delayed facilitator training.

- However, this particular issue amongst others illustrated the need, emphasised by the programme leads, for consultation between programme leads and central and local government before beginning the project, in order to ensure a clear understanding of what implementation involved and to avoid unrealistic expectations (e.g. of time-scales, training and supervision issues and numbers to be trained).

6.1.4 Facilitators

- Each programme managed to train a reasonable number of facilitators with by far the most training done by Triple P whose facilitators frequently trained on a number of different intervention levels, formats and groups. Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities trained 356 facilitators; Incredible Years trained approximately 300; Triple P trained 430.

- Facilitators were recruited from a wide range of professional backgrounds across all sectors. However, a number of areas successfully included parents without relevant qualifications, and in one Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities and one Triple P local authority parents were highly valued as facilitators.

- Facilitators were in general very positive about all three programmes, including the quality and relevance of the training they received, the processes of co-facilitation, and the outcomes.

- Issues raised by facilitators and operational leads as problematic included:
    - the amount of work involved in preparing facilitator materials;
    - the amount of training involved beyond the initial training;
    - accessing training quickly since in the case of Triple P it involved trainers from Australia;
    - keeping facilitators' motivation going when their day jobs crowded in on their time;
    - the amount of time facilitators need to plan their programme;
    - that facilitators were put forward without sufficient consideration given to whether they were the best candidates to deliver the programme;
    - and that facilitators had insufficient information in advance about what would be involved in the role.

- Although most local authorities were satisfied with the numbers of facilitators recruited and trained and the way in which this was done, none expected to have the capacity to train significant numbers of new facilitators following the end of the PEIP programme. Most facilitators were expected to remain in post, yet there were concerns in some authorities about not having enough to continue, because of high demand for courses, managers' reluctance to release workers from their usual roles, and loss of staff through natural wastage.

6.1.5 Facilitator Supervision

- The majority of facilitators were satisfied with the level of support provided:
    - all local authorities using the Incredible Years programme had regular supervision from accredited mentors with additional supervision from local sources.
    - the situation was more varied for SFSC and Triple P in quality, level and type.
    - this included peer supervision, which was seen as of varying usefulness and effectiveness, supervision from line managers, which was mostly doubted in value because of their lack of specialist expertise and support from programme leads, which was usually valued.
    - however, some facilitators had received no one-to-one support and had difficulties accessing supervision at all.
    - supervision frequency was higher in Incredible Years than the other programmes, but there were questions about whether there were the resources to maintain it at this level.
- Supervision was less of an issue for operational leads, although they had concerns about its unusual time requirement, not being equipped to deal with the issues arising themselves and the need for supervision crossing professional boundaries.

6.1.6 Parent Recruitment and Course Allocation

- Parent recruitment methods were diverse:
    - through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS only;
    - self-referral advertised through road shows, local press, schools, libraries, various centres and web sites;
    - courts and professionals throughout the agencies.
- There appeared to be two major methods of deciding whether a parenting course was appropriate, either by frontline workers, who in some cases were given training to do this, or by the use of a central coordinator. It was unclear however to what extent parents were involved in this decision making, but the process of matching was in some cases linked to the Common Assessment Framework.

6.1.7 Parenting Courses and Participants

- The number of parenting courses completed by the end of March 31st 2008 was 338: Incredible Years ran 70; Triple P: 185; SFSC: 83; in addition 87 courses were still underway: Incredible Years (6), Triple P (45), SFSC (36).

- The number of parents who started was 3575 overall: Incredible Years 721; Triple P: 1418, SFSC: 1436.

- Differences in numbers of parenting groups and numbers of parents trained reflected the different programmes used but there were also local variations including in particular LAs, for example, substantial delays in starting the PEIP and a decision to add extra training for the facilitators to improve their preparation.

- Differences in numbers of groups using the different programmes reflected the different number of sessions required to deliver each programme.

- The completion rate overall was 73% and very similar for each of the programmes: 72% Incredible Years, 70% Triple P and 76% SFSC..

- Recruitment of fathers was low (12% of the participants were male) and only two groups had been run specifically for fathers. All local authorities were aware of this as a problem and related it to: timing of courses, "parent" seen as meaning "mother", the lack of male facilitators and suitable venues.

- Otherwise programmes were targeted appropriately. At the start of the parenting courses:
  - parental mental well-being was significantly lower than expected from norms;
  - the majority of the children were judged by their parents attending the courses to show very high levels of emotional and behavioural problems (62% classified in the clinical range on the SDQ compared to the national expectation of 10%);
  - the majority of parents had not continued their education beyond 16 years and earned less than £200 per week, although recruitment was from the whole socioeconomic range;
  - courses had been accessed by a wide range of minority ethnic groups who comprised 23.9% of the total (76.1% were White British).
  - the mean age of the children was 9.2 years with 64% in the target 8-13 year age band, although the range was 1 to 18 years;
  - two-third were boys and 17.7% of the children overall had statements of special educational needs, about six times higher than the population as a whole.

6.1.8 Programme Fidelity

- In general there was clear awareness of the need for fidelity amongst facilitators. Changes were made to courses, but mostly within the guidelines.

- Facilitator satisfaction with materials was generally high, although there were criticisms of American English, predominance of Australian culture shown, wordiness and complexity of language, and high literacy demands.

- Literacy challenge was generally overcome by facilitators adapting their language as necessary, adapting transparencies and other written materials and providing help with literacy. As a consequence these were not major issues as far as parents were concerned.

- Courses were tailored to some extent in terms of time:
  - For Incredible Years this involved lengthening some topics as allowed in the guidelines, but cutting others.
  - For Triple P and SFSC, there were difficulties fitting the content into the time available and sessions were, for example, lengthened by facilitators being available before and after sessions, and contacting parents if they missed sessions.
  - There were some problems with telephone contacts and at least one Triple P facilitator replaced them with face-to-face sessions.
  - Rites of passage as a topic was often cited as problematic in Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities; as a result the emphasis given to it was reduced or it was omitted.
  - The response to role play varied in parents, and was associated with both increased and decreased use by some facilitators.

6.1.9   Course Outcomes

- All courses were effective in improving parental mental well-being, parenting behaviour, parental efficacy and satisfaction as measured by self-report, with moderate to large effect sizes on all 7 measures.

- The parenting courses were effective in producing statistically highly significant improvements in the parents' perceptions of the emotional and behavioural functioning of the children on all scales of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire with effect sizes in the small to moderate range.

- The percentage of children rated in the clinical range on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Total Difficulties score reduced from 58% to 33%.

- In spite of the differences in the characteristics of the three programmes, they were all equally effective in terms of the majority of outcomes.

- Changes the parents reported included being calmer with their children, more confident in parenting, and giving more time to talking and listening to their children.

They thought their relationship with their children had improved, as well as their behaviour, well-being, self-esteem and interest in school, although this was not universally the case.

- Parents overall were extremely favourable in their evaluation of all three programmes; they valued the content, the group experience, the qualities of and relationship built up with the facilitators and the practicality of child care, refreshments and transport. Some parents, however, suggested that their course was too short and too intense.

- Since social support and community building is such as important issue, the extent to which parents continued to meet after their course was explored. Although three local authorities had encouraged and enabled this (e.g. by providing rooms in schools) and it was apparent that some parents might have formed lasting friendships, operational leads were generally unclear about the extent to which this happened.

6.1.10 Cost effectiveness

- The average cost of a PEIP parenting group was £17961. The average cost of an Incredible Years group was comparatively high reflecting the small number of such groups held during the PEIP.

- The average cost of engaging a parent on a PEIP course was £2135 while the cost per parent completing a course was £2955 because drop out increased the unit cost. The cost per parent who completed an Incredible Years course was high compared with the other two programme types, reflecting the comparatively small number of groups delivered.

- Differences in cost effectiveness within programme types (i.e. between LAs using the same programme) were equally as large as differences between each programme type. This intra-programme variation was related to differences in the number of groups delivered and the size of those groups, differences that were more likely to be associated with the effectiveness of the team delivering a programme (management, prior experience etc.) and the social context within which they sought to deliver PEIP (the level of need within the LA) rather than with differences in the content of programme itself.

- Some inter-programme differences were due to local context (e.g. the number of previously trained facilitators and/or local policy decisions, e.g. to provide additional training for facilitators).

- *Inter-programme variation was related to the number of sessions needed to run each programme and the consequent practical effect of organising groups during the period of the PEIP.

- The estimated cost-effectiveness of PEIP was less (that is the costs relative to outputs was higher) than estimates of earlier studies but it is likely that such earlier studies only consider incremental or marginal cost and did not take account of the full costs of providing parenting programmes.

6.1.11 Extended Schools

- In terms of the extended schools agenda, although there was variability, some schools were very positive about parenting programmes and were involved in the identification of families, the provision of premises and staff as facilitators. Non-teaching staff such as PSAs and learning mentors were seen as particularly useful in recruiting and engaging parents.

- Facilitators saw considerable gains for schools, children and families from working in schools, but this depended upon the welcoming and helpful attitudes of relevant staff. Barriers were practical (e.g. inappropriate space allocation, school shut down in holidays, Ofsted inspections) and attitudinal (e.g. tensions between educating children vs. parents and standards vs. inclusion).

6.1.12 The Future

- Most authorities will continue to work with their allocated PEIP programme, but with the addition of a range of other programmes, in order to take account of different levels of need.

- A major concern was with sustainability once the DCSF funding came to an end.

- The PEIP programme seems to have been an important ingredient in the development/revision of local authorities' Parenting Strategy, presumably because of its being one of the most important developments in this area.

- In terms of continuation of the PEIP programme once it came to an end, a third of the local authorities were not fully decided, but the majority intended to use a core team, perhaps with additions. They were going to do this with a combination of approaches including: facilitation by PEIP trained people within their existing roles; using the voluntary sector; within the extended schools services or children's centres; and via a core team of parent support staff.

6.2   Recommendations

Our recommendations take the evidence from the Pathfinder and consider the implications of this evidence for further roll out of parenting programmes across a larger number of local authorities. In making these recommendations we have taken into account the DCSF decision to allow local authorities more scope in their choice of programme than the three studied in the Pathfinder.

6.2.1   Main recommendations

- Systematic parenting support should be rolled out across the UK.
- In terms of *outcomes* for this particular group (i.e. 8-13 year olds likely to be antisocial) any of the three programmes used in the project may be selected.

6.2.2   Specific recommendations

- Local Authorities should also consider the *cost effectiveness* of the programmes as the present study indicates that these vary, with Incredible Years the most expensive..
- LAs should also recognise that a substantial element of the cost effectiveness of the delivery of *any* programme is within their control: this concerns issues of organisation, planning and implementation.
- Given the multiple differences between the three programmes yet the same outcomes, it follows that other home grown courses might be equally effective, and priority should be given to the search for and evaluation of alternatives.
- The search for alternatives should focus on support that is based upon broader and more explicit models of parenting than are available currently and that evaluative research should be concerned to explore process as much as outcome.
- The notion of fidelity which is considered so important by programme leads might need serious thought given the fact that similar outcomes are produced by very different programmes.
- Local authorities should know that rolling out such programmes is time consuming and complex; they should therefore include in their plans consultation with programme developers at the earliest opportunity; a designated local and knowledgeable programme coordinator; and engagement and training of the managers of staff recruited as facilitators.
- Recruitment of facilitators is crucial and needs to be done carefully, yet more attention needs to be given to making selection criteria appropriate and explicit.

Since parents can be extremely effective, research is needed to explore the personal qualities and interpersonal skills needed to be effective as a facilitator and not just to base this on previous experience and qualifications.

- Facilitator training requires time and care and should involve clear and detailed accreditation procedures.

- Knowledge of parenting and how to support this should be embedded in all parts of children's services and it is suggested that this would be helped by facilitators being recruited from and working within all service areas.

- Facilitators should be given the time and resources to run parenting courses and this should always include ongoing and regular supervision from people who have the knowledge and training to provide it.

- Parents should be recruited for parenting programmes by all means possible, not through single services. It should be decided in partnership with them, preferably by practitioners with whom they already have a relationship and who they trust.

- Extended schools have the potential to play an important role in the delivery of parenting support, including the delivery of parenting programmes.

- All personnel should be trained to identify families with problems, to engage them, and to provide first level support, and to decide intervention requirements in partnership with them.

- The provision of parenting courses should be appropriate to the developmental stage and needs of children and families and set within an elaborate and coordinated system of care in which there are a range of support options and not just parenting courses.

- Particular attention should be given to involving and recruiting fathers onto support programmes, taking into account a growing knowledge of how this should be done.

- Care should be taken to engage and retain families once recruited onto courses. Funded crèche provision is essential to this and on-going contact with parents between sessions where necessary, as well as transport facilities and refreshments.

- Explicit attention should be given to the building of social support and community building with systematic policy put in place to aid the continued mutual support of groups once formal courses have come to an end.

- Systems for maintaining the benefits of parenting programmes beyond the period of the courses should be developed.

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APPENDIX 1 Comparison of Parenting Courses within PEIP

It was decided within the research team that it would be useful to make a comparison of the three parenting programmes being rolled out within the PEIP local authority areas. The table that follows has been put together from manuals and other literature provided by the training organisations and from conversations with senior trainers.

Information on facilitator selection, training and accreditation is given first and then details of the programmes for parents. Although an attempt has been made to be as faithful to the programmes as possible, the information provided should not be considered as in any way definitive. Although these programmes are manualised, the leaders have discretion to vary the content according to the needs of the participants in the training and to allow for opportunistic learning within the group. The complexity of the material and variation as a result of facilitators tailoring course material to the needs of participants means that the comparison is at a somewhat gross level and intended to be indicative of differences between the programmes.

The information on relative proportions of time given in the body of the table is derived from manuals and information provided by programme developers. Again they are broad approximations and have been used to provide an indication of the relative importance of the various topics. Where issues are not given designated time, but are addressed when they arise or are general themes of the programme, times have not been included in the table and they have been noted as "Themes".

Since Triple P is a more complex system of intervention than the other two programmes, please see notes at the end of this document.

The Incredible Years programme has been designed specially for the Pathfinder project and has not been evaluated previously as a package.

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Characteristic	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Training organisation	Race Equality Foundation (REF)	Triple P International Pty. Ltd.	The Incredible Years
Programme overseen by	Leandra Box with backup from Marilyn Steele	Project Manager: Majella Murphy-Brennan Project Consultant: Professor Matthew Sanders	Judy Hutchings with backup from Carolyn Webster-Stratton
Country of Origin	U.S.A.	Australia	U.S.A.
Facilitator Training			
Length (days)	5 day course	3 days for Level 4 Group Triple P Provider training plus attendance at an Accreditation Day.	For PEIP: 2 extra days for existing basic group leaders who have done basic 3 day course. 5 days for newly training group leaders.
Trainer	Dr Marilyn Steele, Programme developer.	Clinical and educational psychologists from the UK and Australia and all accredited by the University of Queensland.	Training for PEIP is being done by mentors and trainers from the UK. Trainers can train leaders anywhere. Mentors can train within own agency or defined area. Trainers and Mentors must be certified as group leaders, have completed at least 8 full 12-14 week courses and the mentor training process in supervision and workshop delivery.

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Selection qualifications for Group leaders/facilitators	None specified.	Basic professional training. Typically psychologists, family counsellors, social workers, parent educators, teachers, nurses, and other allied health professionals participate in this training.	People with extensive experience and qualifications for working in groups, with previous courses in child development and social learning theory.
Selection qualities for Group Leaders/facilitators	Non-judgemental and committed to training.	Knowledge: child/adolescent development & child/teen problems; skills in social learning theory & group facilitation; interpersonal communication and group facilitation skills	Motivated and not mandated.
Selection background	Professionals and parents	Professionals. Although this is not always possible when particular countries have insufficient numbers of appropriately qualified mental health service providers (e.g. rural & remote communities; black and ethnic minority communities).	Qualified and experienced clinicians in discipline related to mental health care for families and children - including nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers.
No. of Participants in training workshops.	15-24	Up to 20	Up to 25

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Materials available for Group leaders/facilitators	Facilitator manual Package (e.g. OHPs) Parent manual	Facilitator's kit for Group Triple P includes: Facilitator's Manual; CD Rom with PowerPoint presentations, & Every Family Group Workbook, plus Every Parent's Survival Guide [DVD]; participant Notes for Group Triple P Provider Training Course. And Facilitator's Kit for Group Teen Triple P includes: Facilitator's Manual for Teen Triple P; CD Rom with PowerPoint presentations & Every Family Group Teen Workbook plus Every Parent's Guide to Teenagers [DVD] and Participant Notes for Group Teen Triple P Provider Training Course.	Facilitator manual; other reading; video-vignettes to be shown to parents; sample session videos for self-study for the group leaders; handouts; books or CD for parents.
Accreditation or certification for group leaders or facilitators.	Attend facilitator training course, run at least one course and submit monitoring information	Attend facilitator training course; run a group or practice with peers; attend an accreditation day for each level of training; this is where knowledge & competencies tested by quiz & role play. *See www.triplep.net (or org)*	For accreditation for 12 sessions basic and school age programs: Attend 3-day group leader course plus minimum of one consultation workshop with mentor/trainer. Session checklists, client weekly and self- and peer final evaluations for 2 complete courses Mentor/trainer review and satisfactory completion of at least one session tape. Letter explaining desire for accreditation, and letters of recommendation from two professionals
Facilitator training	£700-900 per	£720-998 per person	Rates vary according

cost	person	for combined Group and Group Teen Triple P provider course.	to the organisation employing the trainers: • Minimal if trainers/mentors are on site. • $1500/day plus expenses if use Seattle staff. • In the region of £800-900 per day plus expenses for UK trainers/mentors, plus expenses.
Facilitator supervision	By REF: individual or group.	In preparation for accreditation and delivery of Triple P, practitioners are encouraged to begin implementation of Triple P interventions with families and/or practice the specific competencies targeted for accreditation either individually or with peers. Regular meetings in small groups are encouraged at least in early stages. Discussion and video review	Peer support meetings to review session tapes using Peer and Self-evaluation checklists; monthly telephone consultations; feedback on a mid-course videotape; consultation workshops. For the Pathfinder project mentors have been carefully selected and contracted to work outside their own areas to provide supervision for two day a month.

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Training methods	Facilitative in style. Models the process of the parents' course, so that participants experience the process (e.g. cultural sharing). Use of OHP. Discussion. Role play. Provide tips on facilitation. Small group work.	Skills-based training approach with: Didactic presentation; clinical problem solving exercises; small group exercises to practise consultation skills; video and live demonstration of core consultation skills; feedback and peer tutoring. Homework. Emphasis is placed on practitioner self-regulation skills.	Participants act as parents and course methods are modelled, followed by discussion and analysis. Role play as parents and course leaders. Collaborative processes modelled implicitly with extensive discussion and practice in workshops plus consultation based on collaborative model. Videotapes of actual courses. Brainstorming. Homework. .
Child and family risk factors	20 mins. (in addition to Content: *Family/Community Violence* below)	45 mins.	0.5 hours
Behaviour problems	2 hours (integrated into P-C Relationships & Pos. Discipline)	15 mins.	0.5 hours
Triple P system	Not covered	15 mins.	Not covered

Evidence	Not covered	15 mins.	0.5 hours
Parent Assessments	Not covered	2 hours.	Not covered
Principles of intervention	1 hour	15 mins.	3 hours
The parent course: preparation, implementation and outline	2 hours	0.5 hours.	2 hours
Detailed content of course	20 Hours Inc.: 1 hr. Developmental info. 4 hr. 40 min. Culture 1 hr. 40 min. Rites of Passage 7 hr. 20 min. Pos.	9 hours	20 hours

	Discipline 2 hr. P-C Relationship 1 hr. 40 min. Anger Management 40 min. Family/Community Violence 1 hr. Community Involvement		
Managing the Group: facilitator roles and logistics.	1 hour	1.5 hours	4 hours
Parental resistance and management	1 hour	1.5 hours	2 hours
Telephone consultation and feedback training.	Not covered	1.5 hours	Not covered.
Accreditation and evaluation	40 mins.	1.5 hours	0.5 hours

Parents Course	SFSC	Triple P for Level 4/Group	Incredible Years
No. of dedicated introductory sessions within the course.	1	None as standard.	None as standard.
No. of Sessions	12	8 (5 as a group; 3 on telephone 1 group (optional)).	17
Completion Criterion	8 sessions	3 group sessions are regarded as therapeutic.	11-12 sessions considered meaningful exposure.
Length of sessions	3 hours	2 hours for groups 15-30 minutes for telephone.	2 hours
Maximum contact within the course (not including home visits or telephone calls).	36 hours	11.5 hours	34 hours, although can be greater, if parents take longer to absorb material.
Session interval	Weekly	Varied: Typically conducted on a once per week basis however the group can be successfully conducted as 2 x one (1) day blocks. Weekly sessions forming a two day block for group sessions to intervals allowing homework.	Weekly

No. of facilitators	2	1	2
No. of participants	8-20	10-12	6-12
Monitoring and Evaluation	Parent questionnaire designed for programme. It includes: parents' involvement in community activities and intergenerational patterns of family drug use, domestic violence and child abuse; parents' sense of competence in 4 areas; frequency of use of a variety of discipline measures and communication strategies; participation in family activities; and perception of child's competence in 4 areas. Ratings of the value and effects of course (post only). Facilitator Class Summary Report to provide information on implementation, process issues, parent response and suggestions for improvements.	Parent questionnaires: Demographics; Eyberg/SDQ; Parenting Scale; Being a parent; Parent Problem Checklist; Relationship Quality Index; Depression Anxiety Stress Scale; Parent Daily Report Checklist; Client Satisfaction Questionnaire. Record of client attendance and session summary checklist for each session completed by facilitator.	Following session protocol. Session and course parent evaluations. Group leader checklist review of all sessions. Group leader self, peer and/or trainer evaluation forms of a videotape. For pathfinder, leaders are being asked to collect: Demographics; Beck Depression; Eyberg; SDQ parent & teacher; Parenting Scale; O'Leary-Porter Overt Hostility Scale; Teacher Questions on absence and performance.

Assessment Points in relation to parent	In introductory session. During last session.	Prior to or at start of course. Following last session.	Parent evaluation of all sessions done at end of each session. Overall evaluation of course done in last session. Facilitators rate attendance and level of participation of parents each week and also complete a record of weekly telephone contacts. Programme measures to be done at recruitment, approx one month prior to course and within one month of final session.
Status of Assessment	Required.	Recommended.	Parent evaluation of course: required. Parent measures: recommended/requested.
Feedback to Parents	Not stated.	Feedback to parents on pre-measures during course. Offer of feedback on post-measures following course.	Parents can evaluate their own progress by reference to their goals set at the first session and self-monitoring checklist. May also have feedback on audit/evaluation measures.

Focus	Violence against self, family and community	The focus of Triple P varies depending upon the concerns and needs of parents. While many parents focus on externalising behaviour problems others focus on internalising problems or developmental difficulties. Typically, the focus is aimed at enhancing the competence and confidence of parents through parental self-regulation: self-sufficiency, self-efficacy, self-management, and personal agency	Prevention and/or treatment of child behaviour problems via improved parent-child interaction, less harsh and more nurturing parenting and increased compliance.
Content Themes	Cultural/spiritual. Enhancing relationships. Positive Discipline. Rites of Passage. Community involvement.	Parental management of child behaviour and reduction of parental stress. Core principles: safe/interesting environment; positive learning environment; assertive discipline; realistic expectations; taking care of oneself as parent.	Relating to child; Enabling learning; Social, emotional, persistence and academic coaching; Building positive relationship between parents and children; Behaviour management/effective limit setting/child compliance; Child education; Communication generally; Anger management; Problem Solving Skills; Self-control and depression; Giving and getting support;
Child Age (years)	3-18	2-12; 12-16.	8-12

Methods	Facilitator modelling. Role play. Lecture. Discussion. Parent homework activities.	Presentations Skills training Observation Discussion Practice Feedback Video demonstrations Homework tasks	Collaborative discussions. Values exercises on benefits and barriers. Principles training. Buddy Calls (building support networks). Skills training. Group Brainstorming to identify social learning principles and strategies. Buddy "buzzes" to share solutions. Training set in a problem solving format – with identified goals, assessments of barriers, and solutions to be tried. Based on self-learning model – self-monitoring. Videotape vignettes. Role play or behavioural rehearsal. Homework assignments Weekly leader phone calls to parents
Parent Manual or workbook	Manual	Group Workbook	The Incredible Years book or CD. Handouts and homework assignments. Refrigerator Notes.
Ground Rules	Specify confidentiality.	Ground rules negotiated and discussed as opposed to specified.	Negotiate all rules with group.

Content of Parent course	SFSC	Triple P for Level 4/Group	Incredible Years
Positive parenting	Theme throughout.	27 mins.	Theme throughout.
Causes of child problems	Theme throughout.	33 mins.	Theme throughout.
Monitoring child behaviour	Theme throughout.	17 mins.	Theme throughout.
Identifying and planning for high risk situations	Theme throughout.	1 hour.	Theme throughout.
Special time/activities for child; developing positive relationships	30 mins. Importance, reasons and activities. Notion of modelling.	20 mins. Quality time, topics, showing affection	4 hours Respect children, appreciate child perspective and understand temperament and developmental abilities, modelling social skills, following child lead, balancing power, descriptive commenting, social, emotional and persistence coaching, attention, ignoring, modelling principle, have fun. Having developmentally appropriate expectations for child –depending on child's temperament and abilities.

Content of Parent course	SFSC	Triple P for Level 4/Group	Incredible Years
Reinforcement, consequences, attention & praise	1 hour.	20 mins.	2 hours Including: encouragement, programme design and content, identifying positive behaviour. Individual goals are set in first session and reviewed periodically.
Teaching new skills	Theme throughout.	34 mins. Setting example, incidental learning, Ask/say/do	
Setting goals for change	Theme throughout.	20 mins.	
"First…Then…" messages with ignoring/praise	40 mins.	32 mins. Compliance routine	1 hour.
Attention, incentive or behaviour chart	2 hours 40 mins.	0.5 hours	2 hours.
Request,	45 mins.	8 mins.	1 hour.

confrontation and logical consequences			
	SFSC	**Triple P**	**Incredible Years**
Family rule discussions	0.5 hours.	12 mins. Setting ground rules with child	1 hour Learning routines, chores, responsibilities, limit setting. Rules about TV, computer games, drugs, homework.
Giving instructions	1 hour.	12 mins. Plus Directed discussion	
Ignoring	0.5 hours.	7 mins. Planned ignoring	2 hours But constant theme.
Time out	45 mins.	0.5 hours.	3 hours

Managing own and child's anger and stress.	50 mins.	Theme covered under parent goal setting; escalation and all causes of behaviour problems and taking care of yourself principals; consequences/stress, as reduction of children's behaviour problems reduces parental stress. Families who require additional support they can be offered an enhanced intervention	Theme throughout.
Solution building: parent and child	1 hour 10 mins.	Theme included under family meeting, discussion; incidental teaching.	3 hours Parents thinking like scientists. Listing stressors and barriers, understanding adult problem solving, and skills involved as well as how to teach children to problem solve
Family problem solving	40 mins. Family contracting	Theme of session 4 planned activities.	2 hours
Communicating effectively with others: children and adults. Giving and getting social support.	35 mins. Parental support & interdependence	Theme; central goal of Triple P is to teach children to communicate their needs. Strong emphasis on parents learning to communicate respectively with children and not to get into coercive and escalating cycles of aggression	2 hours Listening and expressing problems and feelings in positive ways. Conceptual, but very skills based.

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
To control own emotion (e.g. anger, depression) and improve relationships.	Theme throughout.	Theme; all discipline strategies require managing emotion. All Triple P requires team work and parents backing each other up and being supportive	2 hours Increasing positive self-talk and with others. Challenging and stopping negative self-talk; Calm down strategies and self-care concepts.
Promoting children's self-confidence	Theme throughout.	Theme; Triple P teaches children the skills they need to manage the situation they encounter on a day to day basis and promotes a sense of efficacy and personal agency which is related to children's self esteem.	Theme throughout.
Child social support & social behaviour	0.5 hours.		Theme throughout.
Promoting child academic skills and schooling Collaborating with Teachers	20 mins.	Possible theme in that customisation and catering for the needs of parents in the group means that this will become the focus for some parents. Planned activities may target visiting and talking to a child's teachers and/or learning to assist the child with homework; encouraging pre- academic skills like listening and story telling.	4 hours
Managing conflict: child and adult	1 hour.	Theme; children taught skills to avoid conflict, parents taught skills not to escalate. Both are taught skills not to reinforce conflict	2 hours Problem solving.

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Child development in general.	1 hour 15 mins. Life cycle. Areas of development. Progress.	Theme throughout, but no ages and stages.	Theme throughout.
Discipline	15 mins. Definition and discussion	Theme throughout.	Theme throughout.
Child temperament	40 mins.	Theme throughout.	Theme throughout.
Teaching children about physical development	20 mins. Communicating healthy living to children (e.g. nutrition, hygiene, drugs, alcohol, sexually transmitted disease).	Not covered	Not covered.
Traditions & customs	0.5 hours.	Theme throughout; allows tradition and customs to influence parental goals.	Theme throughout; discussed in terms of respecting family values and encouraging positive cultural identity as way to enhance child's self-esteem
Teaching child about culture and family	50 mins.	May be covered in incidental teaching, conversing with children.	Theme, encouraged and part of individual goal setting.
Family/community violence associated with drug/alcohol abuse, depression, suicide, power, control & pride	3 hours 20 mins. Including 2 community speakers.	Theme included in drug/ alcohol and risky behaviour in the Teen Group programme.	Theme including discussion of effect of violence on children, limit setting regarding TV and computer game violence.

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Building community and protection.	2 hours.	Theme of intervention: safe and engaging environment and child safety and emphasis on what parents can do themselves as opposed to others.	Theme; big aspect of group approach – how to build supportive infra-structure in family and community.
Children's feelings; the spring effect	15 mins.	Theme: expression of emotion dealt with by encouraging children to express their feelings, opinions and view points on matters they are interested in, to family issues from the informal and incidental to planned family discussions.	Theme; emotion coaching is important part of training, as method of regulating emotions.
Empathy: parent and child	1 hour.	Incidental theme of course.	Theme; training involves watching vignettes of common parent-child interactions – this encourages parents to think about the point of view of the child – empathy for child is key aim.
Helping child's emotional development.	45 mins.	General theme of Triple P is emotional self regulation; children in a safe secure loving and predictable environment provides children with the social and problems solving skills that promotes healthy emotional development	Theme; open-communication and expression of feelings
Helping child manage money	20 mins.	Incidental if related to family/child problems.	1 hour Discussion of allowance, responsibilities, chores

	SFSC	Triple P	Incredible Years
Sharing family, ethnic, cultural and spiritual heritage	1 hour 15 mins.	Theme incidental throughout group process.	Theme; sharing in groups.
Committing to a plan of action	15 mins.	General theme; in relation to setting goals; signing a commitment at start of group program; planned activities.	4 hours. Goals set each week – self-monitoring checklist completed at the end of each session where parents choose their goal for the week and plan how they will meet their goal.
Child development and rules	0.5 hours.	Theme covered in relations to rule following behaviour	Theme; rules are covered above in session devoted to identifying household rules, responsibilities and routines
Teaching child political behaviour	20 mins.	Incidental if relevant to family issues, but general theme of negotiating and articulating ones viewpoint in an environment in which children are listened to.	Not covered.
Community action council	50 mins.	Not covered.	Not covered.
Smacking	40 mins.	Not covered specifically, but general theme of course that parents are shown better alternatives and learn to use considerably reduced corporal punishment.	Discussed in values exercise in relation to time out and other positive discipline strategies.

- For Triple P there are many different combinations of approaches possible, given 5 different levels, individual vs. group work and more specialist work with families of children with disabilities, teenagers and children in the child protection system. The table has illustrated Triple P by focusing the description on Level 4 Group Triple P, because this is common to all sites.

- We have not included content of telephone sessions, which are about reviewing progress on parenting tasks, nor content of the optional 2 hour concluding session, which includes progress review, future problem solving and goals.

- The Triple P sites are being trained to conduct a range of different programmes as follows:
    - Brighton and Hove:
        - Level 4 Combined Group and Group Teen.
    - Coventry:
        - Level 4 Combined Group and Group Teen.
        - Level 3 Primary Care Teen.
        - Level 4 Standard.
        - Level 5 Enhanced.
    - Cumbria:
        - Level 3/4 Combined Primary Care and Group.
    - Hillingdon:
        - Level 4 Combined Group and Standard.
        - Level 4 Stepping Stone.
        - Level 4 Group Teen.
    - Hampshire:
        - Level 3/4 Combined Primary Care and Group.
    - East Riding:
        - Level 4 Combined Group and Group Teen.
        - Level 4 Standard.
        - Level 5 Enhanced.

- Level 5 Enhanced Triple P continues on from Level 4 where the family are thought to require further assistance. This begins with a review session to tailor the Enhanced programme to each family. This is followed by up to 3 modules: Practice/Home Visits; Coping Skills; and Partner Support. Each of these involves a maximum of 3 sessions lasting 40-60 minute for Home Visits and up to 90 minutes for the others. Practice involves personalised review of the parents' implementation of parenting strategies; Coping is about parent's own depression, anxiety, anger or stress; Partner Support is about relationship adjustment or communication problems.

A2.1   Selection Effects

There is some evidence that those responding to the post-course questionnaire were not entirely representative of those completing the pre-course questionnaire. They were more likely to be drawn from the higher income groups ($\chi^2 = 17.3$, *df* = 5, *p* < .004) and a had a higher level of education ($\chi^2 = 16.5$, *df* = 4, *p* < .002). There was no substantial difference by ethnicity or parental or child gender.

However there were only small differences between post course responders and non-responders in the key child behaviour and parent outcome measures (Table A2.1).

Those who did complete the post course follow up were slightly less likely than non-responders to initially report conduct problems (*p* < .01) and had a slightly lower initial SDQ total difficulties score (*p* < .05). There were no differences between the groups in the parental measures of mental well-being and parenting attitudes and practices.

We conclude that while there is evidence of a greater likelihood of post-course response from more educated and higher income groups, the gains in the SDQ and parenting scores reported do not reflect a selective bias in relation to child problems or parenting skills.

Table A2.1: Comparison of mean pre-course scores for those responding or not responding to the post-course questionnaire

Measure		Mean	SD	N	significance
Emotional Symptoms	pre-course only	3.9	2.6	1082	ns
	Pre & post course	3.8	2.5	1051	
Conduct problems	pre-course only	4.6	2.6	1085	p<.01
	Pre & post course	4.3	2.4	1058	
Hyperactivity	pre-course only	6.4	2.7	1073	ns
	Pre & post course	6.1	2.7	1046	
Peer problems	pre-course only	3.3	2.3	1084	ns
	Pre & post course	3.3	2.2	1051	
Prosocial scale	pre-course only	6.6	2.4	1084	ns
	Pre & post course	6.4	2.4	1055	
SDQ total difficulties	pre-course only	18.1	7.4	1052	p<.05
	Pre & post course	17.5	6.9	1032	
SDQ Impact	pre-course only	3.2	3.0	1048	ns
	Pre & post course	3.0	2.7	1038	
WEMWBS	pre-course only	43.2	11.0	1093	ns
	Pre & post course	43.4	10.5	1063	
Parent laxness	pre-course only	22.3	6.9	1065	ns
	Pre & post course	22.0	6.6	1041	
Parent over-reactivity	pre-course only	22.2	6.6	1052	ns
	Pre & post course	22.6	6.3	1037	
Parenting total	pre-course only	47.3	11.8	1050	ns
	Pre & post course	47.5	11.0	1034	
BAP Efficacy	pre-course only	27.5	6.5	1076	ns
	Pre & post course	27.3	6.3	1046	
BAP Satisfaction	pre-course only	31.8	7.8	1075	ns
	Pre & post course	31.9	7.7	1049	
BAP total	pre-course only	59.3	11.2	1071	ns
	Pre & post course	59.2	11.1	1041	

Note: SDQ: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; WEMWBS: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale; BAP: Being a Parent.

A2.2 Reliability of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scales

Reliability estimates were calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Some of these are on the low side (< 0.70) but are acceptable given they are short scales with only 5 items per scale. The total difficulties scale has the greatest reliability and this measure should be preferred in any modelling of change or improvement, where measurement reliability is an important concern.

Table A2.2 Reliability of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Scale	number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Emotional symptoms	5	.71
Conduct problems	5	.71
Hyperactivity	5	.77
Peer problems	5	.62
Prosocial scale	5	.76
SDQ total difficulties	20	.83
SDQ Impact score	5	.65

A2.3   Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores for children 8-13 years only

A comparison was made of pre- and post-group SDQ scores for those children aged 8-13 years as this was the target group for PEIP. These scores were very similar to those reported for the full sample (Table 3.13).

Table A2.3 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores for children 8-13 years only

SDQ scale	occasion	mean	N	SD	Effect Size
Emotional Symptoms	pre-course	4.1	597	2.6	
	post-course	2.9	597	2.4	0.47
Conduct problems	pre-course	4.5	597	2.4	
	post-course	3.3	597	2.2	0.54
Hyperactivity	pre-course	6.2	592	2.7	
	post-course	5.2	592	2.7	0.40
Peer problems	pre-course	3.5	596	2.3	
	post-course	2.9	596	2.2	0.26
Prosocial scale	pre-course	6.4	594	2.3	
	post-course	6.9	594	2.1	0.25
SDQ total difficulties	pre-course	18.3	589	7.1	
	post-course	14.2	589	7.2	0.57
SDQ Impact score	pre-course	3.3	575	2.7	
	post-course	2.0	575	2.4	0.53

A2.4   Comparison of programmes: Measuring improvement

A2.4.1 Simple tabulation of mean score

Table A2.4a presents the pre-course means by programme type. There were significant differences between programmes on all measures ($p < .001$) except parenting laxness and parenting total score.

Clearly there was variation between programmes in child behaviour and parent need at the start of the programmes. In this context it would not be appropriate to simply compare the post-course questionnaires for each programme.

Table A2.4b presents the pre-course and post-course mean scores based only on those parents with a valid pre-course and post-course questionnaire. This gives a more valid basis

for a comparison of programme effects. A statistical comparison of these effects is presented next.

Table A2.4a: Mean scores on all measures for pre-course returns by programme

	SFSC			Incredible Years			Triple P		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Emotional Symptoms	620	3.6	2.5	458	3.9	2.4	1055	3.9	2.7
Conduct problems	627	3.8	2.5	460	4.8	2.4	1056	4.7	2.5
Hyperactivity	610	5.7	2.6	458	6.6	2.6	1051	6.4	2.7
Peer problems	621	3.2	2.1	459	3.5	2.2	1055	3.3	2.3
Prosocial scale	624	7.0	2.3	460	6.4	2.3	1055	6.2	2.4
SDQ total difficulties	595	16.2	6.8	451	18.8	7.1	1038	18.3	7.3
SDQ Impact score	593	2.3	2.7	454	3.0	2.7	1039	3.5	2.9
WEM Mental Well-Being	630	46.1	11.3	467	41.8	10.6	1059	42.3	10.1
Parent laxness	602	22.6	6.5	454	22.2	7.3	1050	21.9	6.7
Parent over-reactivity	589	21.8	6.2	452	21.8	6.7	1048	22.9	6.5
Parenting total	586	47.2	11.3	452	47.0	12.2	1046	47.7	11.2
BAP Efficacy	607	29.2	6.6	467	27.5	6.6	1048	26.4	6.0
BAP Satisfaction	606	32.7	8.3	466	30.8	7.7	1052	31.8	7.4
BAP total	603	61.8	11.3	466	58.4	11.2	1043	58.1	10.8

Note: SFSC: Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Table A.24b: Pre-course and Post-course mean scores by programme for those with a post-course return

	SFSC			Incredible Years			Triple P		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Emotional Symptoms	349	3.6	2.5	200	3.9	2.3	502	3.8	2.6
	354	2.6	2.1	204	3.0	2.4	503	2.7	2.4
Conduct problems	351	3.8	2.4	200	4.8	2.2	507	4.5	2.4
	356	2.8	2.2	204	3.3	2.1	501	3.2	2.2
Hyperactivity	342	5.8	2.6	200	6.5	2.8	504	6.3	2.7
	346	4.6	2.4	202	5.5	2.7	501	5.1	2.7
Peer problems	346	3.3	2.2	199	3.4	2.2	506	3.3	2.3
	354	2.9	2.1	204	2.8	2.1	503	2.6	2.1
Prosocial scale	349	6.8	2.4	201	6.2	2.1	505	6.2	2.4
	355	7.1	2.2	203	7.2	2.0	502	6.8	2.2
SDQ total difficulties	335	16.5	6.7	196	18.6	6.9	501	17.8	7.0
	344	12.9	6.7	202	14.6	7.1	499	13.7	7.1
SDQ Impact	340	2.3	2.5	197	2.7	2.4	501	3.5	2.9
	343	1.4	2.2	203	1.6	2.3	489	1.9	2.4
WEM Mental Well-Being	354	45.4	11.2	206	42.4	10.2	503	42.5	9.9
	357	50.5	10.3	204	51.5	10.1	495	50.2	9.3
Parent laxness	342	22.8	6.7	197	22.6	7.1	502	21.2	6.1
	343	19.2	6.2	202	17.0	6.2	496	16.5	6.2
Parent over-reactivity	334	22.3	6.1	199	22.1	6.3	504	22.9	6.5
	338	18.4	6.1	201	16.8	6.3	493	17.0	6.1
Parenting total	334	48.0	11.6	198	47.7	11.5	502	47.1	10.5
	339	40.3	11.6	201	36.1	12.0	494	35.8	11.2
BAP Efficacy	342	28.8	6.6	205	27.3	6.6	499	26.4	5.8
	350	30.8	5.9	203	31.6	6.1	493	30.7	5.4
BAP Satisfaction	342	32.6	8.2	204	30.8	7.4	503	31.9	7.4
	350	35.3	8.4	203	36.2	8.0	491	37.5	7.4
BAP total	340	61.3	11.4	204	58.1	11.6	497	58.2	10.5
	349	66.0	11.1	203	67.8	11.5	490	68.1	11.0

Notes: For each measure the upper line indicates the pre-course result and the lower line the post-course result. Only those parents who completed at least some elements of a post-course questionnaire are included.
SFSC: Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

A2.4.2 Multiple regression analysis for child and parent outcomes

A multiple regression analysis was carried out for child and parent outcomes. The results of this analysis are presented here in Table A2.4c and reported in Section 3.5.1 of the main report.

- Mothers made greater improvement than fathers in parenting efficacy and satisfaction
- Parents of older children (aged 14-20) showed less reduction (i.e. improvement) in parenting laxness and over-reactivity than parents of children aged 8-13.
- Parents of young children (under 8) reported slightly greater improvement in parental efficacy than parents of children aged 8-13.
- Parents from high income homes showed less reduction in laxness and over-reactivity than parents from low income homes.

With regard to differences between programmes the following statistically significant results were found:

- Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities was less effective than Triple P in reducing laxness and over-reactivity and in increasing parenting efficacy and satisfaction. However there were no significant differences between the programmes in improvement in child behaviour as indicated by SDQ total difficulties score or in improvement in parents' mental well being. While the differences between SFSC and Triple P were statistically significant they were not large. The standardised beta indicates the effect size was no larger than 0.13 *SD*.

Table A2.4c Multiple regression analysis for child and parent outcomes

Variable	Value	SDQ total difficulties			Parents mental well-being			Parenting laxness			Parenting over-reactivity			Parenting efficacy			Parenting satisfaction		
		B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE
	(Constant)	3.2		0.79	29.0		1.5	9.4		0.9	9.4		1.0	18.9		0.9	18.5		1.3
Baseline	Pre-course measure	0.7	***	0.03	0.5	***	0.0	0.4	***	0.0	0.4	***	0.0	0.4	***	0.0	0.5	***	0.0
Child	girl (vs. boy)	-0.6		0.35	-0.9		0.5	0.6		0.4	-0.5		0.4	-0.6		0.3	-0.2		0.4
Parent	mother (vs. father)	-0.8		0.55	1.1		0.9	-0.9		0.6	0.0		0.6	1.2	*	0.5	1.8	*	0.7
child age band	aged 0-7 (vs 8-13)	-0.6		0.39	1.2		0.6	-0.1		0.4	0.1		0.4	0.8	*	0.4	0.9		0.5
band	aged 14-20 (vs. 8-13)	-0.2		0.67	-0.4		1.0	2.2	**	0.7	1.7	*	0.7	-1.1		0.7	-1.2		0.9
Parent left school at 16 vs.	left school 17/18	-0.8		0.55	-0.9		0.9	-0.4		0.6	-0.9		0.6	-0.1		0.5	1.2		0.7
	attended FE	-0.1		0.43	-0.1		0.7	-0.4		0.5	0.0		0.5	0.1		0.4	0.4		0.6
	apprenticeship/trade	-0.1		0.76	-2.0		1.2	-1.2		0.8	-0.2		0.9	0.2		0.7	0.1		1.0
	university	-0.8		0.57	-1.2		0.9	-0.4		0.6	0.1		0.6	-0.2		0.6	1.0		0.7
Family income low vs.	Medium (£150-£250)	-0.1		0.42	-1.2		0.7	-0.2		0.5	-0.2		0.5	-0.2		0.4	-0.4		0.5
	High (£251+)	-0.3		0.41	-0.5		0.6	-1.2	**	0.4	-1.2	*	0.5	0.0		0.4	0.8		0.5
Prog-ramme	SFSC vs TripleP	-0.1		0.40	-0.9		0.6	1.8	***	0.4	1.5	***	0.4	-0.8		0.4	-2.2	***	0.5
	Incredible years vs. TripleP	0.5		0.45	1.5	*	0.7	-0.2		0.5	0.1		0.5	0.4		0.4	-0.1		0.6
	Sample size	1079			1090			1075			1066			1080			1078		
	Multiple r	*0.674*			*0.545*			*0.485*			*0.403*			*0.483*			*0.544*		

Note 1. Significance (sig): * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

2. For parenting laxness and over-reactivity improvement was indicated by a reduction in scores, so negative coefficients in the above table indicate relative improvement and positive coefficients indicate relatively smaller gains.

Comparison of Table A2.4d (for 8-13 year child sample) with Table A2.4c (full sample) indicates that there is no longer a significant difference between programmes for parenting efficacy and the results for Parenting Laxness, Parenting Over-reactivity and Parenting Satisfaction are all attenuated.

Table A2.4d Multiple regression analysis for child and parent outcomes where child was within the age range 8-13 years.

Variable	Parenting laxness			Parenting over-reactivity			Parenting efficacy			Parenting satisfaction		
	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE	B	sig	SE
(Constant)	9.28		1.20	9.92		1.29	18.63		1.2	19.07		1.6
Pre-course measure	0.36	***	0.04	0.29	***	0.04	0.43	***	0.0	0.54	***	0.0
Child= female	0.87		0.48	-0.40		0.49	-0.56		0.4	-0.26		0.6
Parent= female	-0.60		0.78	1.04		0.82	1.01		0.7	0.76		0.9
left school 17/18	-0.21		0.71	-1.01		0.74	0.20		0.6	1.41		0.8
attended FE	-0.47		0.62	-0.84		0.64	-0.36		0.6	0.52		0.7
apprenticeship/trade	-0.52		1.02	0.53		1.07	-0.04		0.9	-0.68		1.2
university	-0.75		0.78	-0.33		0.81	-0.24		0.7	0.60		0.9
income= Medium (£150-£250)	-0.19		0.57	-0.30		0.59	-0.39		0.5	-0.77		0.7
income= High (£251+)	-0.76		0.56	-0.84		0.58	-0.44		0.5	0.59		0.7
Strengthening FSC	1.68	**	0.52	1.21	*	0.55	-0.19		0.5	-1.53	*	0.6
Incredible years	0.70		0.63	0.88		0.65	-0.06		0.6	-0.53		0.7
Sample size	592			589			597			588		
Multiple r	*0.458*			*0.338*			*0.479*			*0.535*		

Note: Significance (sig.): * *p* < .05, ** *p* , .01, *** *p* , .001

A2.5 Parents' satisfaction with their parenting group

As reported in Section 3.5.2, ONEWAY analysis of variantce for difference in the mean scores across the three programmes revealed the presence of a significant difference ($p < .01$) in parent' satisfaction with their group. Pairwise comparisons of means with Bonferonni tests indicated the mean score for Incredible Years was marginally higher than SFSC ($p < .05$) and Triple P ($p < .001$) (Table 3.20). The comparison of Incredible Years with Triple P remained significant *($p < .01$)* after control for parental education, income and gender.

An item by item analysis indicated that the differences arose from Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q9, and Q10. Item by item results by programme are presented in Table A2.5. Generally, higher percentages of parents rated Incredible Years courses on the most positive point on the 4-point scale. This is likely to reflect the greater number of sessions for this programme.

Table A2.5 Comparison of the Parent's Satisfaction scale by programme

No.	Question	Strengthening Families				Incredible years				Triple P			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	4	2	3	4
Q1	How helpful has the group been to you?	0.8	0.8	26.7	71.7	1.7		19.7	78.6	0.4	0.6	32.0	67.0
Q2	To what extent has the programme helped you personally cope with the problems you had before you began?	1.1	5.0	36.4	57.5	0.4	5.5	22.7	71.4	0.2	6.0	35.8	58.0
Q3	To what extent has the programme helped with your child/children's behaviour?	0.9	7.7	46.3	45.2	0.4	7.6	37.1	54.9	1.0	10.3	48.2	40.5
Q4	How are your problems now compared to before the programme?	0.6	7.2	56.8	35.4		3.8	46.4	49.8	0.8	5.8	58.4	35.0
Q5	How respected did the group leader(s) make you feel?			20.7	79.3			16.0	84.0		0.4	18.4	81.2
Q6	How understood by the group leader(s) did you feel?		0.6	23.6	75.8		0.4	19.4	80.2		1.4	27.5	71.1
Q7	How honest did you feel you could be about your family?			33.2	66.8		0.4	24.5	75.1		0.4	23.9	75.7
Q8	To what extent did the group leader(s) make you feel good about yourself?		4.2	36.0	59.8		3.8	31.5	64.7		6.0	39.2	54.9
Q9	How interested were the group leaders in what you had to say?		0.8	23.8	75.3		0.4	19.7	79.8		1.0	16.7	82.3
Q10	How much control did you feel you had about what happened in the group?		2.2	60.3	37.4		1.3	53.6	45.1		2.2	67.3	30.5

Note: The scale ranged from 1 (most negative) to 4 (most positive). Descriptors varied by item to reflect the item content.

APPENDIX 3: Vignettes

This Appendix comprises a series of brief vignettes focusing on different themes arising from the evaluation. Examples have been drawn from all three programmes but are primarily illustrative of LA roll out rather than the particular programme.

The vignettes address the following themes:

1: Delivery through schools

2: An LA with a long history of delivering parenting programmes

3: Successful implementation not followed by strategic sign-up to continue post- PEIP

4: The importance of senior staff having relevant experience

5: Parents as facilitators

6: Successfully rolling out Incredible Years for parents of 8 -12s from a starting point of relative inexperience in the programme

7: Rolling out parenting programmes without ring-fenced funding available through PEIP: an unfunded comparison LA

Vignette 1: Delivery through schools

Local Authority background and the PEIP

The LA is characterised by contrasts. Economic regeneration has brought great opportunities for improving social and economic well-being in some areas, but unemployment and poverty persist in others. Minority ethnic communities, speaking almost 100 languages, comprise 70% of the under 19 population, which in turn constitutes 28.4% of the total borough population. Anti-social behaviour at street level has become of increasing concern in recent years.

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities was the programme chosen for implementation in relation to the PEIP, at the start of which there were already 22 people experienced in its delivery. A prime aim for the project was for the core team to support schools and community organisations involved in delivery, rather than to build an ever larger core team of facilitators. Over the course of the Pathfinder, individuals in other jobs were released one day a week to work with newly trained staff in schools, or in a few cases, in voluntary organisations. Additional funding enabled facilitator training for rollout to Children's Centres where SFSC has been piloted with parents of very young children.

Pre-PEIP position

SFSC had proved successful over a number of years in the multi-cultural context of the LA, at every level of need, delivered by a voluntary sector organisation in conjunction with the Youth Offending Team. The voluntary organisation provided specialist targeted support to families at high risk, including those with Parenting Orders, offering parents the choice of attending an SFSC programme or one to one support, and working very closely with the Multi-Agency Behaviour Support Team (MABST) and the Parents Advice Centre (PAC). These organisations collaborated to co-facilitate, share good practice, consider referrals and plan courses.

Strengths and sustainability

The LA was surprised by the positive response from schools wanting to participate in the project and found the following advantages in delivering the programme through schools, or a children's centre:

1. The school was aware of the nature of support available to parents; its staff (family support workers in a children's centre) were the ones who decided where parents' needs fit, encouraged by the Pathfinder team to do so diplomatically.

2. It was felt that this task was made easier by having a single programme on offer and that this made it easier to bring together mixed groups of parents (though where pupils were in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) parents would meet as a separate group).

3. The school staff trained to deliver the programme were often those involved in delivering Family Learning programmes. In this case, both activities could operate under a single parental engagement team, making the link between parental engagement in children's learning and in children's development. At the same time space and crèche needs could more simply be met.

Nevertheless, some logistical challenges emerged:

1. Many schools lacked the space to accommodate the 15 parents foreseen by SFSC so group size was restricted to 10/11 (seen by many as ideal).

2. The unplanned expansion of programmes had implications for even allocation of funding to schools for crèches and releasing staff

3. The sustainability of offering schools 100% funding was questioned. Some schools were allocating some of their own resources, others were reportedly too dependent on the Pathfinder team's support.

For the future, the LA has compiled a menu of support, outlining the level of help available to schools. It is hoped this will include access to the Race Equality Foundation's top-up courses, advice and support with delivering their individual courses, particularly where a replacement member of staff needs SFSC training. Replicating the model used over the course of the Pathfinder, the LA would hope to be able to offer school staff recently trained in SFSC the opportunity to co-facilitate at least their initial SFSC programme with an experienced facilitator from the core team.

Vignette 2: An LA with a long history of delivering parenting programmes

Local Authority background and the PEIP

The LA is a city with characteristic difficulties associated with youth crime, anti-social behaviour, and drug-related issues. There are also particular issues for some people within the city's minority ethnic community. The city had special status with regard to the Respect Agenda and anti-social behaviour.

In relation to the PEIP, the LA rolled out the Triple P programme. By the beginning of March 2008, the LA had a pool of around 60 trained facilitators (trained in levels 4 and level 5 of Triple P), with 18 further facilitators to be trained before the end of the Pathfinder. In terms of the national evaluation, the LA had, by the beginning of March 2008, returned 259 pre-course booklets, and 111 post-course booklets, which represented the second highest rate of return of all LAs participating in the PEIP.

Pre-PEIP position

The LA had a long history of delivering parenting programmes, stretching over 25 years to the early 1980s. Previously delivered parenting programmes included Handling Children's Behaviour, Family Links, and the Incredible Years programme. Although these programmes were offered on a small scale, the experience of delivering parenting programmes brought a number of benefits to the LA prior to the PEIP. There was a degree of familiarity among the LA's parents with the idea of parenting courses, the LA had developed a template for sustaining parenting programmes, and expertise and knowledge in the field of parenting. In particular, the LA was able to draw upon the extensive knowledge of its CAMHS workers with regard to the applicability of differing parenting programmes to the LA. The PEIP, with its focus on the parents of 8-13 year old children was seen to fit neatly into an existing framework of provision that was long established in the LA.

Strengths and sustainability

The LA developed a number of features that proved to be effective in the delivery of the Triple P programme during the PEIP. These were:

1. A single parenting headquarters, with a dedicated operational lead (who was trained in the programme at all levels of delivery being utilised by the LA), and dedicated administrative support. This parenting headquarters acted as a single referral point, through which all referrals and self-referrals passed. This was facilitated by a free phone number. The parenting headquarters therefore acted as a 'one stop shop' for parenting classes in the LA, recruited and arranged

training for facilitators, assessed referrals and self-referrals, undertook a variety of advertising work, matched facilitators to parents, helped arrange support for facilitators and parents, and facilitated supervision for facilitators.

2. A continuing information and publicity campaign throughout the LA, utilising a wide variety of methods – for example, leaflets and posters in GP surgeries, schools, libraries, shops, road shows at supermarkets, face to face presentations and information sessions for Social Workers and Learning Mentors, schools groups and Community Safety Officers, the Youth Offending Service, and high-profile awards ceremonies for 'graduating' parents which were attended by the local media.

3. The appointment of Assertive Outreach Workers whose role was to try and ensure that targeted parents remained on the programmes. If parents did not show up for a session they would be contacted by telephone within an hour of the session, and, if necessary, home visits were also made to encourage them to come back the next time.

Sustainability was built into the PEIP from the outset, with the LA utilising the model that it had developed over time. This model was based on two features:

1. The only contribution the LA made was the initial Triple P training for the facilitators, and crèche costs, or parent costs like travel.

2. Once trained, facilitators were expected to incorporate facilitation into their normal role (on the basis of one or two courses per year) in the case of facilitators from the voluntary sector, where the host agency recognised the benefit to themselves of the parenting offer, while LA staff were committed by their departments.

Vignette 3: Successful implementation not followed by strategic sign-up to continue post- PEIP

Local Authority background and the PEIP

The Local Authority is a large city divided into five districts. Like other large cities, it has areas of social deprivation and low aspirations. The population includes people from many different ethnic groups.

Pre-PEIP position

The LA's Children and Young People's Plan recognised as a weakness that there was no LA-wide parenting strategy. Workers in CAMHS, Children's Fund and those involved in a local parenting academy delivered Incredible Years Basic course for parents of 2 – 8 year olds. Other agencies delivered Steps, Strengthening Families or Escape.

The PEIP

The LA rolled out the Incredible Years programme in three districts. A team of workers was recruited on secondments or fixed-term contracts, augmented by colleagues from a wide range of agencies released through service level agreements. Those with experience of Incredible Years delivered the Pathfinder course for parents of 8 -12 year old from the start; others first delivered the Basic course.

Strengths

- Had a Steering Group of heads of relevant services.
- Built on existing experience in the city to establish a central team of group leaders.
- Created a stigma-free brand for the work which became recognised across the city.
- Established successful partnerships with a wide range of agencies based on clear service level agreements to release staff to co-deliver groups.
- Implemented the Incredible Years programme with fidelity, including supervision from Incredible Years mentors for all group leaders, resulting in successful recruitment and good retention levels (by the end of February 2008, there was a waiting list of 30-40 families).
- Worked in partnership with other agencies to signpost parents to other appropriate sources of support in addition to the parenting group.
- Ran monthly drop-ins for parents who had completed the course and produced a newsletter for parents which reaffirmed the principles taught during the programme.

- Had trained two parents who had completed the course as volunteers to support parents on future courses.
- Sent regular e-mail updates to partners across the city to keep them informed of developments.

Key issue: lack of strategic sign-up to ensure funding for sustainability

- The Council faced cuts in its budget. The unit cost of delivering the PEIP was deemed too much to core fund. (Local analysis gave a figure of £3000 per parent, including start-up costs. This cost would reduce as more parents completed the course).
- The Family Support and Parenting Strategy published before the end of the PEIP recognised the need for a continuum of parenting programmes linked to levels of need but did not identify any particular programmes to deliver this.
- The Strategy also identified the need to set up a Parenting Unit to oversee the provision of parenting programmes but did not allocate any funding to create this unit. There was also no budget for the Unit to spend which limited its role in this regard to giving advice to the Parenting Commissioner.
- The Parenting Commissioner was in turn limited to spending within the existing budget which meant that only work already funded from mainstream sources could be commissioned.

In this case, it seems that the Council's budget pressures have frustrated all attempts at securing funding for the future.

Vignette 4: The importance of senior staff having relevant experience

Local Authority background and the PEIP

The LA is a large county facing a combination of rural and urban difficulties. Wide disparities of income and wealth in the rural areas highlight social problems associated with the decline of industrial production. In addition, there are notable pockets of urban deprivation in four relatively large post-industrial towns. The county has a below national average minority ethnic population. LA officers believe that parenting issues are compounded by 'traditional' attitudes to children and families,

In relation to the PEIP, the LA rolled out the Triple P programme. The LA believed that it had trained sufficient facilitators to cover the county, which was divided into three delivery areas. However there was a relatively high level of wastage which led to one area being without any PEIP facilitators by the beginning of 2008. In terms of the national evaluation, the LA had, by March 2008, returned 26 pre-course booklets, and 10 post-course booklets. This represented the second lowest rate of return of the Triple P LAs involved in the PEIP.

Roll out plan

All the facilitators were drawn from a small group of voluntary agencies, who used existing staff with previous experience of delivering parenting programmes, and a knowledge of the Youth Offending Team process. Referrals were expected from Prevent and Deter Panels, and from self-referrals by parents. There was some confusion over the particular level of Triple P training offered to the facilitators, as children dealt with by the Prevent and Deter Panels were over the age of 13, but the facilitators were not, initially, offered Triple P Teen training. Strategic and operational leads were provided by the LA, although, in the case of the strategic lead, this role was, for most of the lifetime of the PEIP, filled by a seconded worker from a voluntary agency. In addition, the operational lead post appeared to have been envisaged in relatively narrow terms, primarily providing financial and administrative support for the strategic lead. In terms of plans for sustainability, the intention was to embed Triple P provision within Children's Centres.

PEIP roll-out, key issues

The experience of the roll out appeared to raise a number of issues in relation to the effective provision of the parenting programme. In particular, the following were notable:

1. The operational lead post was unique among those LAs participating in the national evaluation in that it was envisaged as a role primarily concerned with financial control and administrative support for the strategic lead. As a result, the

post holder was not trained in Triple P. This approach appeared to cause some difficulties, and facilitators argued that the role should have had a more clearly operational and service-delivery focus, with the post holder being Triple P trained. The multi-faceted nature of the Triple P programme does not appear to have been fully appreciated by the operational lead, which was, in itself, a result of the post holder's lack of training in the programme.

2. For much of the lifetime of the PEIP, the strategic lead for the LA was seconded to the post from a voluntary body outside the LA. In addition, the post holder was geographically based outside the county. It may have been that these aspects of the PEIP organisation in the LA were not entirely successful.

3. The LA appeared not to fully appreciate the complexity of the Triple P model. As a result, facilitators sometimes received training that was not immediately applicable to the parents that they intended to deliver Triple P courses to. In addition, the LA was slow to facilitate level 5 Triple P training for facilitators. It might be noted, however, that this LA was not the only LA that had difficulties in fully understanding the nature of the various Triple P interventions, and that most LAs believed that Triple P International did not provide clear enough guidance at the outset.

Vignette 5: Parents as facilitators

Local Authority background and the PEIP

This LA's six districts cover a very wide area and its largely rural nature and poor infrastructure underlie some significant issues. Traditional industries have largely died out, transport is often poor and many experience geographical and social isolation.   Many families live in small communities where traditional values are strong; engagement with these families is often hindered by resentment of outside intervention. Parents are reportedly more receptive to a parenting course delivered alongside developing links within their own communities, so it is important that parents can attend a local programme with people they know.

The LA rolled out SFSC for the PEIP.   A Parenting Fund bid had been secured by a partner voluntary sector organisation to develop SFSC, an initiative run in parallel with the PEIP, and which funded training for 13 parent facilitators who delivered SFSC for the PEIP. Three others were funded by PEIP.   Parent facilitators delivered alongside facilitators recruited from a professional background, e.g. from Children's Centres, from Family Services and from the Children's Fund, a few were Family Learning tutors, many worked in the role of Family Support Worker.

Pre-PEIP position

SFSC ran alongside other initiatives that were being developed across the county in terms of preventative work/ early intervention. Incredible Years had already been used by different professionals across the LA, though this was not joined up in any way. Family Services was developing alongside Social Care and considering support services to families and children up to the age of 12. Scallywags was offered under Family Services. The Youth Matters agenda engaged with older children/young people and the LA was looking at developing the Common Assessment Framework for county-wide implementation in 2008. The LA was keen to emphasize engaging local parents from the Parenting Fund as a holistic approach that could be worked into CAF.

Strengths of the model and sustainability
1. The combination of professional experience in dealing with families and input from parent facilitators was planned to make the programme more credible to families; using parents as facilitators was judged successful in de-stigmatising participation for other parents.

2.   In terms of sustainability a co-ordinator noted that parent facilitators '*kept the programme going in this LA*': by contrast with professional facilitators, they were available to deliver multiple programmes. As a consequence, the parent facilitators were now the more experienced in delivery of SFSC.

3. Some of the parents have gained employment since their training, e.g. working within Children's Centre settings and facilitating as part of their role.

4. It was also felt that the model had worked extremely well in encouraging at least some of the group to remain together on an informal basis in their own communities, supporting others, and encouraging other parents to enrol.

Some points for consideration

1. Particular care was needed in recruiting parents as facilitators. The PEIP co-ordinators approached parent groups for this purpose. Many parents were recruited from Children's Centres, others applied for the role following taster sessions. Those expressing an interest attended an individual informal interview before training to make sure that they were suitable for the project, and that the project was suitable for them. The operational lead commented: '*I went through everything with them rather than just setting them down and saying "right, will you be OK with it?*'' It was emphasized that there is a need to make all facilitators aware of what is expected of them in the role.

2. For some parents, perhaps out of education/work for a number of years, supplementary training on how to facilitate/work with groups (the focus of workshops offered by REF) is likely to prove useful; indeed, inexperienced facilitators in other LAs expressed the need for this.

3. Where on occasion it was felt that a specific target group might be too challenging for a parent delivering a first course, it was necessary to task two professionals to co-facilitate the programme.

4. It was important that parent facilitators should feel adequately supported by supervision. While for agency facilitators this was undertaken by their line managers, supervision for parent facilitators was carried out by the programme co-ordinator or a Pathfinder colleague, and this consisted usually of one to one meetings, with additional meetings to include the professional co-facilitator if necessary to discuss particular issues. At the end of the programme, the co-ordinator again met co-facilitators together to discuss outcomes.

Vignette 6: Successfully rolling out Incredible Years for parents of 8 -12s from a starting point of relative inexperience in the programme

Local Authority background and the PEIP

The LA is a large county divided into seven districts, with a range of problems similar to most other areas but '*probably not on the scale of many other areas*"' (strategic lead).

Pre-PEIP position

The pre-PEIP support for parenting was not co-ordinated at county level. A small number of CAMHS workers delivered Incredible Years programmes for parents of 2 – 8 year olds but this did not cover the whole county and there were no local mentors accredited to deliver Incredible Years training and supervision. A number of other parenting programmes were also delivered in the county, including 'Living with Babies', 'Living with Children' and 'Living with Teenagers'. These were 6-week courses delivered by professionals from a range of backgrounds, including Sure Start staff, health visitors, Social care staff, CAMHS workers and Barnardos workers.

The PEIP

The LA rolled out the Incredible Years programme. The PEIP was seen as an opportunity to develop a strategic, county-wide approach. A parent strategy steering group was set up, including representatives from all the existing parenting programmes.

To develop confidence and competence in the Incredible Years programme, initially 22 people were trained to deliver the Incredible Years course for parents of 2 – 8 year olds (Basic). Twenty of those went on to deliver 8 of these courses across the county. Of those 20, 17 were then trained to deliver the Advanced programme, going on to run 8 of these course for parents of 8-12 year olds (the PEIP target age-range). That cycle then started again with a further 25 people trained to deliver the Basic course, of whom most would go on to be trained in the Advanced course. By the beginning of March 2008, the LA had returned 142 pre-course booklets and 70 post-course ones including the courses for parents of 2 – 8s; this was the fifth largest number from all participating LAs and the largest among the 6 LAs rolling out the Incredible Years programme.

Strengths and sustainability
- Council context – judged to be 'excellent'; a history of children's services working together in strategic partnership; Children's Trust established in 2006; early piloting

of Local Area Agreements provided experience of pooled budgets and joint commissioning.

- Strategic leadership of the PEIP – a very senior figure in the LA's directorate of Children and Family Support who was also Parents Commissioner was able to engage service managers with the opportunities offered by the PEIP for improved outcomes for parents and children.

- Mentor support from Incredible Years to deliver with programme fidelity – mentors from other areas were bought in to deliver the training and supervision even though the usual Incredible Years practice is for mentors to work within their own geographic area only.

- Operational leadership of the PEIP – central planning of course logistics: venues, times, dates, crèches, recruitment of parents and of group leaders; ordering resources; non-mentor support of group leaders; disseminating information to partner agencies.

- Clarity from the outset about what was being asked of those who were selected for training in Incredible Years – in terms of explicit line manager consent, time released from job, personal characteristics, qualities and skills, and programme delivery.

- Multi-agency involvement at every stage – the initial bid, the PEIP steering group, the pool of trained group leaders, the group leaders delivering each programme, and the sign-up for post-PEIP sustainability from the Children's Trust Board.

- A catalyst for the developing the Parent and Children Strategy – and therefore written into the action plan going forward from April 2008 at the 'targeted/specialist' end of the needs continuum.

- Recruitment through '*every possible avenue we could think of*' (operational lead) including the Council's public relations department (press releases, radio interview), leaflets distributed by group leaders and centrally through services and agencies working with families, face to face recruitment by group leaders in schools and playgrounds, talking to staff in wide range of services working with families.

- Implementation with programme fidelity with resulting good levels of retention.

Vignette 7: Rolling out parenting programmes without ring-fenced funding available through PEIP: an unfunded comparison LA

LA context

This vignette reports on one of the two unfunded LAs in the study. The LA received no funding as part of the PEIP: all work reported here was therefore supported from LA core funds.

The LA is a small, mainly rural, unitary authority with 'small pockets' of poverty and social deprivation but not sufficient to attract additional funding from the government. Poor transport links exacerbate rural isolation. The Children and Young People's Plan identified teenage pregnancy, bullying and young people's concerns around relationships with peers and adults as areas to address. In certain geographic areas of the LA, there is a culture of low aspirations for jobs, for further education, for employment and an acceptance of domestic violence. Parenting support was seen as one important way of tackling these issues.

Parenting programmes offered

The two main parenting programmes used in the LA were **Family Links Nurturing Programme**, a 10-week structured parenting programme developed by Dr Stephen Bavolek in the USA, and **PFSS 'Parenting with You'**, a 5-week programme designed by senior staff within a local family support service offering a rnage of services to parents with at least one child aged 5 – 13 and who did not have an attached social worker. (The programme was previously known locally as 'Positive Parenting' - the name was changed to avoid confusion with a national programme of the same name).

The Family Links Nurturing Programme for parents is built upon four constructs (www.familylinks.org.uk): self-awareness and self-esteem, appropriate expectations, positive discipline and empathy. It is available for parents of children of any age but geared towards parents at Levels 2 – 3 (additional to complex needs). Family Links has been the subject of a number of evaluation studies (available on the Family Links website). Twice, the four-day training course for facilitators was funded by the LA through the Extended School Development Fund and a third course through the March 07 funding to LAs to develop parenting support in a strategic way. In total, 48 people were trained. By November 2007, 22 of them had co-delivered a course. The LA appointed a co-ordinator to oversee the delivery of courses for parents and to provide two-monthly group support and supervision for facilitators and, if required, one-to-one support. Systematic evaluation data from parents are

collected by the Family Links organisation.

The PFSS 'Parenting with You' parenting course covers five main topics: parenting styles; praise and reward; negotiation - boundaries, consequences and consistency; home safety; and love, respect and time together. It is built round four principles or threads that run through the course: consistency; aiming to be firm and fair parents; encouraging parents to spend time with their children; and communication skills. It was delivered by specific staff from a family support service funded through the Children's Fund. The facilitators were carefully selected as having the qualities and skills to engage parents in an open, friendly manner. Through the family support service, these facilitators received a wide-ranging programme of training and development and regular supervision. The parenting course was offered at Level 1 (universal needs) but was increasingly used by Social Care to support parenting skills in families where the children had been taken into care (Level 4 – acute needs). The programme was delivered in a relaxed and flexible style with plenty time for discussions and it was reported that it consistently achieved high retention rates (between 95% and 98%). In 14 months, roughly 300 parents had done the course.

Views about these programmes

Interviews with the LA's strategic lead and with operational leads and facilitators for both programmes indicated that these two programmes were seen as complementary and both were highly regarded. Parents' views (obtained through interview or written evaluations) were also very positive and included descriptions of improved parenting and resulting positive changes in children's behaviour. Fourteen parents who attended PFSS 'Parenting with You' also completed the CEDAR pre and post-booklets – these showed significant improvements (at the 0.05 level) for the children in three areas: conduct problems, peer problems and in the overall Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire total score. Significant improvements for the parents (at the 0.05 level) were in two aspects: mental well-being (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) and parenting total score (Parenting Scale).

Strengths

- Strategic leadership committed to developing a continuum of comprehensive and integrated parent and family support to meet different needs from Level 1 (universal needs) to Level 4 (acute needs), including access to individual support, to low key parenting support groupwork (such as PFSS 'Parenting with You'), and to structured, manualised parenting programmes (such as Family Links Nurturing Programme).
- In developing this continuum, attention was paid to quality assurance (using the National Occupational Standards for parenting support), monitoring and evaluation, training

(related to identified core competencies and skills and linked in to the local and national workforce strategy), referral processes across the tiers of need, and supervision and governance arrangements.

- A "bottom-up" approach to developing the over-arching Parenting Strategy with 70 people actively involved in working groups.
- A demand from some headteachers for parenting programmes to support the parents of children in their schools and a willingness to offer free venues, where school premises made this possible.
- Increased demand for parenting courses spread by word-of-mouth, especially for the universal needs course, PFSS 'Parenting with You', which frequently attracted mothers and fathers not accessing other services.
- Post-parenting course follow-up through organised get-togethers and/or signposting on to other groups and courses, including adult learning, Extended Schools programmes, and opportunities for volunteering.
- A willingness among services and agencies to work in partnership with each other to enable parenting programmes to be offered, despite a lack of specific funding to do so.
- Positive publicity in local press and radio which helped to 'normalise' parenting support.

Constraints

- Lack of ring-fenced funding – without this, the requirements of manualised parenting programmes (for example, for the training and supervision of facilitators, for every parent to have a course book) were viewed as barriers because of the costs involved.
- Operational costs were also a barrier to offering manualised programmes - releasing staff to prepare and co-deliver, cost of venues, arranging and cost of crèches and transport, cost of refreshments.
- Demand for the PFSS 'Parenting with You' course far outstripped the ability of the three lead facilitators to meet it, even with support from co-facilitators from other services, such as health visitors and Home Start.
- Trained co-facilitators not always able to persuade their own service or agency that delivery of parenting support is 'core business'.
- Lack of money to pay staff to run courses in the evenings in order to be accessible to working fathers and mothers.
- Unconvinced hearts and minds - some headteachers remained to be convinced of the need to work with and offer support to parents. They remained focused on the narrower educational targets of attainment in national tests and exams.

- Diffuse theme – parenting support does not easily sit in one service area within the LA but rather involves many staff from those in Early Years to those working to implement the Respect Agenda. Can be a strength in being everyone's business but there is a danger that it becomes core business for no-one.

- Difficulty in providing evidence of effectiveness of the 'home grown' programme, PFSS 'Parenting for You', due to lack of funding to pay for the systematic analysis of evaluation data which would then enable publication of results in a peer-reviewed journal.

- A fear (related to the point above) that 'entry-level' parenting programmes, that are flexible and adapted to parents' needs and knowledge levels, could be squeezed out by a government focus on (and by some professionals' desire to be involved with) higher status, better-evidenced, manualised programmes.

A Wishlist

- Ring-fenced money from the government to LAs to develop parenting support but which could, at a later stage of development, be devolved to localities and schools, once the impact is evident for all to see.

- Schools and other agencies choosing to pay for their staff to be trained in manualised programmes once the evidence of impact on parents and children was clear.

- Funding, perhaps through the Parenting Academy, to enable systematic evaluation of local programmes, such as the PFSS 'Parenting with You' course.

Appendix 4: Key learning from the PEIP to share with other LAs

Key messages from the strategic leads within each programme to other LAs – these messages are presented by programme (Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, Triple P, Incredible Years).

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	
Relationship with programme originators	Find out in advance as much as possible about the programme, including the prerequisites regarding training (LA12 would have liked to have known more before they began)
Outcomes	Worth doing – for example, *'a fantastic experience for many of the parents who have attended'* (LA2/S) but also a development opportunity for staff in operational services - local evaluations have provided positive feedback from parents and facilitators - works best at prevention level (LA6) - works well with parents and carers across wide ability range
Costs	Need to include costs for training, delivery and supervision - more costly than LA7 expected - cost of childcare - cost of refreshments - variable costs of staff from different agencies and services - cost of supervision from Race Equality Foundation
Referrals	Need to engage parents who are referred and keep them motivated until programme begins
Retention levels	These were 'higher than expected' in LA6 but varied by group in LA2
Strategic leader	Benefits from a strong strategic lead
	Parenting support programmes need to be offered as part of a menu of support, not a 'quick fix' solution - could be linked in to support for Family Learning
	Link in to the Government's preventative agenda, for example by involving schools, and the joined-up approach

	of Integrated Service Assessment and the Common Assessment framework
Operational management and co-ordination	Needs a centralised resource to co-ordinate and manage it, including administrative support, e.g. - to maintain overview of number of trained facilitators available
Delivery	Delivery through multi-agency teams was a strength - but needs to be built into their job roles and responsibilities - needs to acknowledge the time commitment involved in delivering a course (a day for first time delivery, less than that for repeat delivery)
	Parallel delivery of support for parent/s and child/ren worked well
	Using parents as facilitators worked well (LA19)
	3 hour sessions were too long for some parents and made childcare more costly (childcare for longer than 2 hours has to be provided by staff registered with OfSTED)
	Homework needs to be tailored to suit parents who don't live with their child/ren
	Group size of at least 6 works best
	Accessibility requires flexible delivery times
Supervision	Provided by Race Equality Unit (LA12) but as funding decreases, will have to be scaled down Line managers should be trained in SFSC Peer group support a possibility
Evaluation	PEIP too short to provide *hard* evidence of *longer-term* impact on children's outcomes
	Required rewards and incentives to get these completed

Triple P	
Relationship with programme originators	Difficult to establish communication with the HQ in Australia and website lacking in information therefore hard for LA leads to understand the five-level Triple P programme content in detail in order to plan the Levels required and the

	associated training and accreditation
Outcomes	It was worth the effort involved
Referrals	Ensure there are enough trained staff to cope with demand - referrals to Triple P parenting courses rose very quickly in one LA (a positive result but one that put a strain on the system because not all managers were willing to release trained staff to deliver courses)
	Ensure there is understanding of, and engagement with, the offer of the parenting programme across Children's Services so that workers encourage parents who would benefit to come on the courses – in one LA with no previous history of parenting programmes, recruiting parents was *'an uphill struggle'*
Delivery	Need to ensure a strong agreement is in place with middle managers to ensure trained staff are released to deliver the courses
	Consider the potential benefits of recruiting, training, supporting and managing non-professional parents as co-facilitators – this was piloted successfully in one LA (LA16) - benefited the parent co-facilitators because it acted as a stepping-stone to their further progression onto other employment - helped to recruit parents - helped to engage parents

Incredible Years	
Relationship with programme originators	Overall, very positive but some consternation that programme materials were changed during the Pathfinder and that these revised materials were charged for even when LAs had already bought the original version
Outcomes	It's worth the effort because it works for families of 8 – 12 year-olds - works for dads as well as mums - works for speakers of other languages with support of an interpreter - works for parents with disabilities

Cost	An expensive product when delivered with fidelity - costs can be reduced over time by investing in local staff gaining accreditation as group leaders (who can then offer peer supervision) and as mentors (who can then train other facilitators and offer consultation and supervision) - unit costs quoted by strategic leads varied depending on size and number of groups.
Funding	Learning and Skills Council may offer a possible funding route if courses are accredited as at L2
Strategic lead	A strategic champion at senior level helps to ensure sustainability and viability of partnership working at operational level
	Helps to be written into the Parenting Strategy because this is not a 'quick fix' or a cheap option but one that requires time and commitment
Operational management and co-ordination	Needs centralised administrative support and management - an operational-level lead is needed to ensure co-ordination of programmes, venues, childcare, transport, materials
Delivery	Think through the delivery action plan carefully before embarking on it - need to understand that programme length can vary depending on the complexity of the needs of families in a group - needs to be offered as part of a package of available support from services for children and adults, not as a stand-alone solution - need to consider the parenting support needs of carers (foster carers, kinship carers, private care providers) and of parents from different backgrounds, communities and faiths
	Because behaviours and interaction patterns are well-established between parents and their 8–12-year-olds, it helps to use facilitators who have experience of delivering the Incredible Years programme for parents of 2 – 8s where

	positive change happens more quickly
	Important to have middle managers onboard to ensure release of trained staff to deliver course – helps if this is planned ahead and clearly written in to work plans – clear service level agreements help – be open about the commitment and time required to plan, prepare, deliver, review and attend supervision
	Fidelity in the delivery is important but not easy to put or to maintain in place – requires commitment
	Helps profile of parenting programmes within the LA to have a physical base and an identity
Supervision	Think of consultation with Incredible Years mentors and regular video-based supervision of delivery as essential, not as an option – these underpin quality and positive outcomes for families
National evaluation	One strategic lead would have liked the evaluation to have included follow-up of parents some time after completion of the programme

Ideas for making materials still more suitable

The suggestions have been provided by a number of facilitators. However, it is important to note that these are opinions presented by facilitators as part of interviews and *not* the result of systematic investigation of each issue. Their purpose therefore is illustrative.

Strengthening Families:
- Set up transparencies as a Power Point presentation prior to programme delivery, or possibly prepare as a CD Rom. Most schools now have interactive white boards or computers, most no longer have OHPs. (1)
- Have a facilitator handbook with all the acetates in order, prepared in advance by an administrator (1)
- More interaction between parent participants
- More picture oriented transparencies, material in general
- Simplification of wording in some areas, and for UK based community

- Cut out the 'wordy bits' and streamline material so more manageable within time allocated
- Consider application of 'Rites of Passage' to UK client base

Triple P

- Support parents with literacy problems by producing brief checklists, using lower register language, for use in conjunction with or instead of the parent handbook
- Include picture based material to help with literacy problems
- Ensure video and DVD material includes parents with whom a UK, rather than an Australian, client base can identify
- Give attention to the perceived 'middle class bias' of the material

Incredible Years

Suggestions made by a single facilitator are noted

- Improve the use of vignettes - allow the option of using the vignettes without the narration to give facilitators scope to tailor them more specifically to their group (1), remove those which make it possible for parents to agree with the 'wrong' behaviour being shown (1), include vignettes that show single parents receiving support from adults who are not partners (1), encourage role play rather than simply watching the vignettes (1)
- Remove the American vocabulary
- Split the Pathfinder course into two modules consisting of the School-age Basic course and then the Advanced course
- Give plenty warning to facilitators if course revisions are to be implemented
- Change the order of sessions for the parents of older children (8 – 12s age group) – the work on communication skills covered later in the programme is fundamental to improving relationships with their children through special time, a concept covered from the start, and so ought to be at the beginning of the course
- Iron out the technical problems in the new DVD (2)
- Increase accessibility by routinely explaining in simple terms vocabulary and concepts that are likely to be new to parents when they are first introduced, for example, 'catastrophising' or 'validating the emotions'
- More time between sessions for parents to embed learning in practice at home (1)
- Session length of two hours was not long enough but was dictated by having to use child-care that did not need to be OfSTED-inspected (as is the case if sessions run over two hours) (1)

- For parents who have already done a Basic course, offer a short refresher course prior to them doing the Advanced course (1)
- Streamline the handouts – currently, too much repetition and separate bits of paper (1)
- Structure in two sessions on each of the core concepts of special time, praise and play, rewards and consequences – necessary for parents of children in the 8 – 12s age group