

Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder Evaluation

Additional Study of the Involvement of Extended Schools

*Geoff Lindsay, Sue Band, Mairi-Ann Cullen and
Stephen Cullen*

*Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and
Research, University of Warwick*

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Research Team: *Professor Geoff Lindsay, Professor Sarah Stewart-Brown, Professor Hilton Davis, Dr Steve Strand, Dr Ray Evans, Susan Band, Mairi Ann Cullen, Dr Stephen Cullen and Chris Hasluck*

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses the role of schools and extended schools in delivering the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP). It is part of a larger scale evaluation of PEIP which is an initiative to fund local authorities (LAs) to implement one of three selected parenting programmes: Triple P, Webster-Stratton 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.

The study took place during September-October 2007 and mainly involved interviews ($N = 81$) with staff in all 20 PEIP LAs: 19 strategic lead officers, 38 facilitators and 24 head teachers or their representatives. The study was also informed by evidence from previous phases of the evaluation.

Main findings

- Two thirds of the schools and extended schools are involved in the delivery of PEIP: with fewer than 10% stating schools were not involved at all.
 - Providing staff to train and act as facilitators:
 - Providing venues for the programmes to be held
 - Identifying families that might benefit from attending parenting programmes
- The involvement of schools and extended schools is supported by LAs as part of their parenting policy
- Head teachers are central to the success of schools and extended schools contributing to the delivery of PEIP through their commitment to the Pathfinder and to the support of parents.
- The involvement of schools and extended schools in delivering PEIP offers a number of benefits to parents:
 - Facilitated access to parenting programmes and support to engage with the programmes
 - Local access to a programme in a mainstream community venue
 - Reinforcement from teachers to support their own development by attending a programme

- Easier access to a local support group of other parents attending the programme
- There are also benefits to schools:
 - Improved relationships with parents
 - Improved teacher understanding of the challenges facing parents
 - Improved behaviour of their pupils
 - Contributing to their own targets and development regarding, for example, the Healthy Schools and Extended Schools agenda
 - There are *potential* benefits also in terms of pupils' attainment because of the link between poor behaviour and low attainment
- Future and continuing development of the contribution of schools and extended schools to the PEIP has some barriers to overcome:
 - Lack of suitable facilities in some schools, e.g. creche or appropriate room to hold the group with suitable privacy, access
 - Releasing staff from other duties so as not to compromise the education of other pupils
 - Developing further the positive attitude of all staff to the role of schools and extended schools in supporting parents
 - Sustained funding beyond the end of the Pathfinder
 - Ensuring all potential parents feel comfortable attending a parenting group in the school.
- Currently many schools are contributing positively to the support of the PEIP, however, this contribution is and will be further enhanced by extended schools.

Recommendations

1. Schools, and in particular extended schools, should be central to the development of the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder and to the development of parenting support.
2. The financial implications for this development should be examined and budgets determined for the period following March 31st 2008.

1. INTRODUCTION

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, Families and Schools reports that there are already 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.

The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder is an initiative to fund local authorities (LAs) to implement one of three selected parenting programmes: Triple P, Webster-Stratton 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.

The Pathfinder funds 15 LAs (5 per programme) as the core group. In addition, three funded and two non-funded comparison LAs are in the study. These are spread across England. The programme started in the summer of 2006 and is due to end by 31 March 2008. This evaluation started in September 2006 and the final report is due by the end of March, 2008. The Pathfinder is designed to provide parenting programmes but underlying the rationale is the need to influence positively the behaviour of the children. The Pathfinder is designed to focus on children aged 8-13 years, although it is recognized that the benefits of improved parenting may influence younger and older siblings in the family. The severity of the children's problems, and whether parents voluntarily seek the support of the programme or are required to attend, are potentially key elements in how the programmes operate.

This is the second report from the evaluation. It addresses the specific issue of the relationship between the implementation of the Pathfinder and schools/extended schools. The 2nd Interim Report reporting on Phase 2 of the main study is being produced in parallel with this report.

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To assess the extent of the involvement of schools/extended schools in identifying and delivering PEIP support to families.
2. To look at current models being used to deliver PEIPs through schools/extended schools.
3. To identify any best practice/barriers in working with schools/extended schools to feed in to future recommendations post March 08.
4. To look at how PEIPs are working to support schools/extended schools to meet their objectives.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study took place between mid-September and late October 2007.

Interviews were held with 19 Local Authority strategic lead officers, 38 facilitators and 24 head teachers (or their representative senior manager colleagues, including extended school coordinators), a total of 81 interviews. Interviews were conducted by the three field researchers, each of whom has responsibility for one of the three programmes; recorded, with the interviewees' permission; and detailed field notes were taken using standard pro formas bespoke for each of the three groups. The interviews were designed to be complementary, overlapping in content but with variations both the limit the length of the interview, broaden coverage and optimise relevance. Interviews were mainly carried out by phone, by prior arrangement, with some conducted face-to-face on visits to the LA.

All interviews were analysed thematically and the results collated into the following sections of this report. All quotations have been coded in such a way to anonymise the interviewee: LAs are coded randomly 1-20; strategic leads are coded 'S' within that LA (e.g. LA 7-S); facilitators and head teachers are coded randomly within the LA (e.g. LA9 – F4; LA6 - H2).

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Involvement of schools and extended schools in identifying and delivering PEIP support to families

3.1.1 Development of extended schools

The extent of extended schools' involvement with the Pathfinder at this time is heavily influenced by the development of extended schools within each LA, and there was a substantial variation in this progress. For example, in some LAs all schools were reported to be extended schools whereas in another LA this applied to only a few schools. One lead officer suggested that there was a notable resistance to the extended schools agenda by some head teachers. In another LA, the development of its extended schools agenda had been by cohorts of schools. At the time of this study four of the five cohorts had become extended schools and the last was undertaking conversion. Other LAs that were 'in progress' were reported to be well on target to provide extended schools throughout the authority by 2010.

In one LA the lead officer had contacted all schools in the areas where PEIP was being offered, with comprehensive information about the programme and making it clear to schools that had yet to develop their extended services provision that *'this was one way of them putting a toe in the water to test how it could work in terms of the elements of the core offer, which is about providing access to parenting support'*. (LA2-S).

This had received a negligible response but the lead officer was of the view that the LA would be taking a more strategic approach to working with schools to develop extended services, heralded by the appointment of a new Head of Service post.

Head teacher interviewees provided a different perspective. Although schools varied with respect to extended schools status they were moving towards being extended schools or in an extended school cluster. Furthermore, non-extended schools in this sample were also engaged in a wide range of provision, offering more than school-day education for their pupils. For example, in one school, parents had access to before and after school childcare, the school ran after school clubs and the school buildings were regularly used by a range of community groups associated with the local church. Another school, the school had three community rooms which were *"used all day, every day"* and offered *"a massive range"* of

groups and activities. Others had Breakfast Clubs, wraparound childcare, ran adult education classes, including family learning, hosted parenting groups and one offered family outreach work and had a Parent Support Adviser.

At present, therefore, there is a very variable level of development of extended schools, with consequences for the interactions of the implications of this policy with PEIP. Nevertheless, there was substantial evidence from the lead officers of the desire to link the two initiatives. This is exemplified by one lead officer who stressed that the LA was keen to ensure that schools perceive the parenting strategy and extended schools initiative as linked, and to support sustainability by encouraging community involvement in the planning: *'We need to canvas the community first and say 'this is what we've been asked to do. Will you help us to shape what you think is needed in this community?'* (LA6-S)

3.1.2. Linking PEIP to extended schools

Schools were typically considered by LAs to have an important role to play in delivering the Pathfinder. The development of extended schools was frequently reported to be an enhancement of the relationship with PEIP. For example, in one LA the approach was to develop extended *services* in and around schools – clusters of schools each accessed a multi-agency team. The plan was that, where post-course support for parents was required, these teams would provide it. In some of the Pathfinder LAs, extended schools were reported to be well-developed with all schools being either an extended school or part of an extended school cluster. For example, in two LAs the extended schools manager sat on the local PEIP steering group.

Another strategic lead argued that it is easier to engage with a school that has chosen to be in the first wave of extended schools because, having a commitment to the school having a wider role in the community, *'they are further down the journey of thinking about how they can engage with the communities and with parents in particular'* (LA2-S). On a practical note, this lead observed that extended schools offer the advantage of having identified space that can be used for various purposes by the community or by parents. In this LA the eight recently set-up local area partnership areas all have a co-ordinator who acts as a strategic link between the school and external providers, ensuring that the full core offer includes parenting support, and making sure that schools know where to access parenting support.

Fundamental was the degree to which schools bought into the extended schools agenda. The importance of the head teacher in engendering a positive attitude was stressed:

Strategic lead: *“We have a mixture of responses from schools. Some schools are buying into this [the extended schools concept] and accepting that, yes, extended services, extended activity, can have an impact on achievement, attainment, targets, and are welcoming. Another set of head teachers are the people who are going to take an awful lot of persuading and are not coming forward.*

Interviewer: What do you think is creating that very different response?

Strategic lead: *I imagine it's down to personalities of head teachers. There are some head teachers who just want the school in its silo: they are safe, they are comfortable, are purists in terms of education, haven't read, haven't listened, haven't, in terms of their own professional development, taken on board the plethora of research that is out there that says that, if you get your parents on board and you do this stuff, children do better in school. It's as simple as that. Some head teachers accept that, understand that. Others, there is an awful lot of persuading to do. Head teachers and school governors are on their own – there is no duty to comply so the only thing we can do is win hearts and minds and some of those hearts and minds are very, very difficult to win over.” (LA4-S)*

The involvement of LAs' extended schools managers was important in moving the agenda on. In some cases the extended schools manager sat on the PEIP steering/planning group, so bringing the two initiatives together at a strategic level. However, in some LAs there was little overlap between the PEIP and extended schools, so reducing the opportunity to date, to develop the two in parallel. For example, in one LA where the extended schools manager sat on the PEIP steering group there was only one extended school cluster in the area where the PEIP was being implemented.

In some LAs a disjunction between the PEIP and extended schools was reported by strategic leads. One judged this to be due to a structural division in the LA:

We suffer a bit from having different heads of department here and the person that has been leading on extended school has been in a different work stream. I've been keeping him apprised of the Pathfinder. Also the person who has been in charge of

extended schools has been off on long term sick so we've had a bit of a gap. [...] Although it could all just dovetail and fall in to place without too much difficulty if somebody came forward and thought of a way of doing it. (LA11-S)

The lack of a strategic plan was also cited as a reason for limited development:

There isn't an awful lot of involvement between the PEIP and extended services at the moment, although we are about to embark on some work with our strategic extended services manager about how the PEIP can be incorporated into extended services. My one rider to that would be that in some particular situations in some particular schools, where there are extended services, we have had some success with offering parenting services because of the PEIP through their extended services. But that is piecemeal, rather than strategic. (LA16-S)

Given the variation in the development of extended schools it is not surprising that the engagement of PEIP with the extended schools agenda is currently also very varied. One LA had developed a model of delivery that was not connected to the school provision. The strategic lead commented:

We have had links with schools through particular programmes, but it has not been linked in any strategic way at this stage. We deliberately chose to go down a route to try and link in the YOTs (Youth Offending Teams) and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships really. So [the link] is not strong at all is the answer. (LA17-S)

In other instances, although not necessarily planned, the strategic lead officer could see how the connection between PEIP and extended schools was present in embryonic form and could be developed further. In one LA PEIP was implemented from the outset in conjunction with those schools that had attained extended school status. The schools in question were organised in cluster partnerships, and the PEIP was delivered under the aegis of the Children and Young People's Trust, based on three integrated locality teams in the city. Each of those teams has an extended services development worker, with the responsibility to link 'development work [including parenting] with schools and other partners in relation to extended services'.

In another LA PEIP was linked at the outset to the extended schools provision in the LA:

The extended schools manager has been part of the planning group who developed the Pathfinder. Obviously, extended schools co-ordinators in themselves would not be undertaking the [Programme], because they are very much in the facilitation role. However, [...] the extended schools co-ordinators have been fundamental in the planning and development. (LA18-S)

The Schools Advisory and Inspection Service in another LA had a team of extended schools co-ordinators tasked with ensuring that extended schools and schools in the city can access the PEIP. Each member of the team has responsibility for a cluster of extended schools and schools, and provides information and support for their cluster. This, in turn, is underpinned by the parenting support team, which acts as a 'one stop shop' for all referrals under the PEIP.

3.1.3 Identifying families

Schools played an important role across the Pathfinder in identifying families although different approaches have been evident. For example, in one LA, at first, only staff who had done the Pathfinder training were able to identify families which meant schools' involvement was limited to the small number of school staff trained. Over time, this was adapted and schools' role in this increased. In another LA, by contrast, a multi-pronged approach was used. Initially all schools were sent a letter asking them to "help with the identification of families". Once it had been decided where a Pathfinder course would be offered, schools in that vicinity were then visited by the facilitators and asked again to identify suitable families. In addition, the operational lead visited extended schools cluster meetings and conferences for head teachers so that schools were reminded about identifying families. This was regarded as having worked reasonably well:

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. That wasn't the case with all of them but that was the case with several. (LA3-S)

The usefulness of Parent Support Advisers (PSA) and learning mentors was also evident and these were seen as being the "really useful people in schools" in terms of getting appropriate referrals:

The PSAs have played a key role in identifying suitable referrals and also accompanying [core team] workers on the initial visits to do the introductions and ease the way in and help with engagement. Also learning mentors have done that, as well as PSAs. So they are the really useful people in schools, the PSAs and the learning mentors. (LA14-S)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was found to be useful for identifying families in some LAs. In both cases, schools were fully involved in these processes and thus in the identification of families for the parenting courses.

We felt it was important that there was a process that supported [identifying families] ... We linked it through our Common Assessment Framework, around the Team Around the Child so [...] parents are potentially coming through that route where schools are on board and supporting that and will be hosting those TAC meetings and would be involved within that. (LA5-S)

In another LA, transition information sessions involving 27 schools had proved a useful way of informing parents about the Pathfinder and had resulted in several parents expressing an interest in taking the course.

The facilitators were asked to rate the school involvement with the identification of parents for the groups. As shown in Table 1, this varied but was substantial - both the median and the mode values were 'quite a lot'.

Table 1 Facilitators' ratings of school's involvement in identifying parents from groups

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

N = 38

The overwhelming opinion of the facilitators was that the part played by the school was either helpful or very helpful. They spoke about the fact that primary school staff tend to

know their families and can identify those who may benefit most from a parenting group. They also referred to schools being able to follow through identification to be supportive of the children and parents on the group.

Facilitators also discussed using schools' existing systems, such as newsletters and other mailings, to advertise groups to parents and of how well the parenting groups fitted in to key agendas affecting schools, especially Healthy Schools and Extended Schools, including transition information sessions (TIS). One facilitator spoke of the TIS as "*a perfect opportunity to run a workshop around parenting*" which had acted as "*a brilliant recruitment tool*" (LA10-F2). Given the 8 -13 age group, parents were unlikely to be around in playgrounds at start and end of school as they often are for younger children so, for example, facilitators had joined in on existing school events to publicise the parenting group. One (LA10-F3) went along to the school funfair and ran a lucky dip stall, using this as a way in to providing information about the parenting group. This was successful, resulting in 21 applications.

Facilitators spoke about how useful non-teaching staff, such as PSAs, learning mentors or behaviour mentors, were in identifying suitable parents and encouraging them to join the group. For example;

A lot of referrals I've had for people coming to the groups I've done in the school, the behaviour mentor, because she has a really good relationship with the parents, she'll go out and say, 'We're doing this fantastic group. It's well worth coming along. You'll learn something.' Telling them about it. She's been the key really. (LA8-F12).

One facilitator, who also had a locality role in developing extended schools, had involved the three schools serving the area where her next group was to run in putting on a joint recruitment week. The idea was to involve the school staff in engaging with parents to encourage them to do the Pathfinder course:

I said to [the school representatives] 'I will facilitate the course for your parents. That's my slice of the cake. Your slice of the cake is to run a recruitment week. [...] Parents have different relationships with different members of staff. Even though the course is for 8 – 13 year olds, parents can build up really good relationships as their children have gone through the school with people say from the nursery, Reception, Y1, Y2. (LA10-F2).

In one of these three schools, the teaching assistant put together the following plan of activities designed to recruit parents:

Monday, they were going to display posters round the school entrances. Then there was to be playground sweep by members of the TA team to talk to parents and carers at the start of the day, 8.30 till 9.

Tuesday, target parents of junior children in breakfast club. Expression of interest sign up sheets. Member of TA team and senior management talk to parents and carers on the playground at start of the day.

Wednesday, Family Support Worker to highlight the course and handout publicity as part of her weekly drop-in for parents and carers. Member of TA team and senior management talk to parents and carers on the playground at start of the day.

Thursday, target parents of junior children in breakfast club. Expression of interest sign up sheets. Member of TA team to publicise the coffee morning [when the facilitators would be coming in to talk to parents].

Friday, collect in expression of Interest sheets. Members of the TA team to talk to parents and carers on the playground at start of the day and publicise the coffee morning. (LA10-F2).

Not all experiences were positive, however. A facilitator reported that in one school three parents who had wanted to participate were disallowed by a member of school staff on the grounds that they would 'put other parents off'. This attitude went against the LA's policy of inclusiveness, also against the aim of bringing in hard to reach parents, and might damage the reputation of the programme.

Two facilitators had had disappointing experiences of trying to use schools to help identify parents. In one case, flyers about the group had been sent to the school but the school claimed never to have heard of the parenting group and it proved impossible to access any pastoral care staff to talk to directly. In the second case, too, a number of efforts to recruit through the school came to nothing:

It's not been very successful, really. [...] They are well-intentioned, they listen to what's on offer, they think it's great but then the reality is that they have to put an awful lot of effort in to approaching individuals, convincing them of that, finding slots to do it. You can talk to the head teacher in a school but he's not necessarily going to

meet the parents you would want on a regular basis and so he's then either got to contact them or ask them to come in or whatever. I think to an extent it goes by the wayside. In one school we've made a couple of contacts, including me going to visit. We've produced an information leaflet for every parent in the school, because that's what the head wanted. Absolutely nothing came from it. (LA3-F9).

In one LA, the strategic lead observed that schools, as opposed to extended schools, were more 'precious' about wanting the Pathfinder courses run in their schools to be for their parents only:

For some schools, perhaps as opposed to extended schools, they are keen for their parents to access the service. perhaps extended schools are a little bit more aware of the need to meet the universal offer, if you know what I mean. I don't blame them at all, actually, for wanting to put their parents first but, from our point of view, the extended schools have got that – the bigger picture. (LA14-S).

Hence, the development of links between PEIP and schools/extended schools so far has been uneven, reflecting the stage of development of the extended schools programme. Nevertheless, there were many positive indicators regarding both practice to date and potential.

3.1.4 Providing venues

Across the Pathfinder schools are a common but not exclusive location for programmes to be run. This experience was generally seen as positive, according to the strategic leads:

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).

Support for running the groups varied from school to school so facilitators who had experience of running groups in different schools were not able to generalise but spoke about their experiences in specific schools. Interestingly, in five cases interviewees were unsure whether the school in which they were facilitating a programme was extended or not.

In one non-extended school using the school as a venue worked well – the library was private, in a separate building, and was set up by the school in advance of the session. By contrast in another school a library setting proved rather unsatisfactory. Facilitators needed to rearrange the furniture and find adult sized chairs, and hunt elsewhere in school for a projector: *“What we have struggled with in the school is to make the rooms comfortable and not to transport people back to feeling that they are in school again”*. (LA7-F10).

In another LA, building work to provide a Children’s Centre precluded the school, working towards extended school status, from hosting the programme. However, both facilitators regarded the village community centre as a preferable venue: *‘There was no question of other people asking ‘what are they coming into school for?’. It was on neutral ground, and we are using this again next time’*. (LA6-F15).

By definition, groups run in school used a room in the school but the supportive element was when this was provided free of charge. Several facilitators spoke about school staff (whether the head teacher or the caretaker) making sure that the room was accessible to the facilitators in advance of the group to set up and ensuring that it was set out appropriately, warm and clean and that it was locked up afterwards. Facilities to make refreshments were always provided also and in many cases the school provided the tea and coffee, plus, for example, use of photocopiers. The following quote illustrates facilitators’ views about the importance of having a pleasant space in which to run the group and of being able to offer refreshments:

That’s a condition of the venue because one of the principles we work under is that we want to be able to nurture the mums who are coming in and make them feel a little bit more looked after, make them feel more positive in themselves and valued. Part of that is about making cups of tea and coffee to welcome them and having a break with quite nice biscuits and doing it in a way that it feels as much a social occasion as anything else. As well as that, that tends to generate the social atmosphere. Because we’re breaking for a drink, people just chat amongst themselves. We found, last time, that quite strong links were made that way and then they’re in a position where they can continue that and maybe have some kind of support group afterwards on the basis of a coffee morning. And also, because the break enabled them to chat to each other, when they were doing the buddy phone calls to each other, it became a social network, as much as being part of the

programme. So we feel that is quite essential and so it is a condition that we need to have access to those kinds of facilities to be able to run a course anyway. (LA3-F8)

In some cases, schools were able to support provision of a crèche by, for example, making another room available, by including the children requiring childcare in an on-site crèche or nursery, sharing costs with the PEIP or by providing crèche workers. For example, (LA10-F1) had been provided with a room in a school which had appropriate toys and equipment for the four crèche workers, paid for by the PEIP, to use. In other cases, the PEIP made provision for childcare by, for example, paying for childcare in a local nursery (LA14-F5) or buying in a crèche service from mobile providers used by the LA (LA3-F8).

Those schools that had access to children's centre facilities, including crèche facilities, were able to draw upon them to provide for facilitators. The facilitators from LA19 had access to facilities provided by a charitable trust, and have run [Programme] using those facilities, but also use facilities on school sites where children's centres are co-located. However, provision of crèche facilities was a frequently mentioned challenge, for example at one school where the facility had not been 'Ofsted' for children under 5. This meant that the duration of crèche accommodation was limited to 2 hours, and the programme ran for the 2 hours without a break, with a meal at the end to include the children.

Several facilitators reported that crèche facilities had not been needed so far, but where a school has no facility for providing them, they anticipated their lack as a potential difficulty in future. While funding is made available through the Pathfinder for child minding, scarcity of child minders willing to work in the evenings was reported as a difficulty in one LA. The bonus of readily available crèche facilities is expressed in the following comment from one facilitator:

'I have a good feeling about the next programme with the crèche attached. I think it makes a big difference knowing that the crèche facilities are there and not having to worry about whether the parents will bring their children, because actually it won't matter. The service is there.' (LA2-F8)

One facilitator who had delivered the Pathfinder course with two teachers describes the difficulties faced by the teachers and how these were overcome and explains the reasons why the school management were committed to releasing these teachers to deliver the programme:

Facilitator: *It was quite difficult for them, given that it was a 17-week programme. It was a long commitment and it goes through the terms as well. That was quite difficult for them in terms of their teaching responsibilities. Towards the end, they just had time to deliver the course, they couldn't do any additional things. We did do the planning together but we did that immediately after the session. Time was a massive issue for the teachers towards the end. But we got through it and I think they've seen the benefits of it and were committed to it and the school was committed to their staff being released to deliver it and seeing how important it was. [...].*

Interviewer: *How did the school manage to release two teachers?*

Facilitator: *There was a newly qualified teacher who was shadowing this particular teacher, as it happened, for one term so she was covered in that way. They also used additional resources from the school so they might have two teaching assistants in for two hours in the morning doing some identified pieces of work but it took a lot of planning on the teacher's part to be able to do that and a lot of support from the teaching assistants. But I think it was able to happen because of the support from the management team downwards. (LA10-F2)*

This facilitator then explained that the basis of the school's commitment arose from having previously seen direct benefits arising from having had some of their parents attend the [Programme-] course for parents of 2 – 8 year olds:

We'd done two Basic courses at the school before and I think the reason they embraced the Pathfinder was around the fact that the other two courses had been so successful – successful in the numbers that completed the course but also, after the course, in that parents then became classroom assistants and wanted to volunteer within the school, the harder-to-reach parents were turning up for assemblies, were actually going in and standing at the door waiting for the children to come out as opposed to standing at the gates. (LA10-F2)

Some leads questioned whether schools were necessarily appropriate venues. They perceived parental discomfort sometimes about being in schools and preference for using community halls or church halls. *'That has to be respected, although we are hoping that*

through the extended schools agenda we can make parents see that they are community schools now'. (LA6-S)

Many facilitators did not identify any problems or barriers to working in schools. However, a number of issues were raised, although there were interesting examples of both identification of problems and suggestions of how to avoid them. For example, facilitators frequently mentioned the question of maintaining parents' trust in confidentiality as an important consideration when choosing a venue. This neutrality could be called into question by the choice of a school as the venue, and by the position of facilitators on school staff. On the other hand, a pre-existing relationship between a facilitator who is also, say, a learning mentor in the school and parents could overcome this problem. These are issues that can apply equally in relation to schools and extended schools.

In one LA two facilitators felt they were lucky to be running the programme somewhere that was not school based (in a village community centre):

'some of our mums, even though they knew us from working in school and had dealt with us, didn't want it to be school based – they didn't feel comfortable...they were thinking that we were going to go back and talk to the head about what was going on within the group..... For us it was good because we had a different hat on – the name badges came off and we were in a different situation and that was a great advantage for us'. (LA6-F515)

However, it was pointed out that the advent of the Children's Centre may well mean that in future years parents will perceive less stigma attached to coming into school as community activities will increasingly be held there, attracting a wide range of people, including those with no particular connection with the school.

Reference was also made to the need to keep a balance with respect to a school's involvement. While the school's input in identifying parents as suitable participants was welcomed overall, one facilitator commented that this role should not run counter to the aim of drawing in traditionally hard to reach parents, or counter to the LA's wish to offer a programme that is open to all.

3.1.5 Releasing staff for training

The involvement of schools was also evident from the number of facilitators who were school-based: of the 38 interviewed, 11 had been put forward for training by their schools. However, only two of the head teachers interviewed had been involved in developing the bid for the PEIP and involvement at LA subsequently had also been very limited: one represents head teachers on a parent education steering group and one led feed back to the LA's Pathfinder Steering Group.

The provision of school staff to train and then act as facilitators therefore occurred frequently although, overall, they were typically the minority among facilitators in the LAs. These staff included head teachers and senior managers, teachers including SENCOs, learning mentors, PSAs (in the pilot LA), extended school coordinator, teaching assistants, and parent partners although the distribution varied across LAs.

We have recruited some staff who work directly in schools to be trained in delivering, and those range from SENCOs to staff who are more working on the extended services agenda, so a sort of cluster co-ordinators, community development workers – so there's a number of staff themselves [and...] we've trained parents, and we have recruited some of those parents through school networks. (LA16-S)

This quotation also indicates how parents have also been recruited through the school as well as school staff. The use of school staff is varied. In some cases they were used as co-facilitators to work alongside a member of the Pathfinder's core team. This variation reflects the perspective of the different programmes regarding the background and prior expertise of potential facilitators rather than willingness of schools and their staff.

In LAs where the majority of involvement had been with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) or Youth Inclusion and Support (YIS) the schools were involved with providing venues but not staff.

We are finding that schools are a valuable venue, they are willing to offer rooms, and they are certainly valuable for referring parents, they can see the parents that should be referred, and that's been useful, but not in terms of releasing staff to do it. (LA12-S)

One strategic lead noted that schools had released staff for training and more were expected. These schools were keen to take part in the Pathfinder and were considered to

be further down the line to becoming extended schools and to have been involved in Children's Centre developments. This lead suggested that the whole extended school development is a big culture change for schools in terms of re-thinking the whole purpose of the school and the role of the school in the community. *'I think it is the ones who have got their head around that and are really committed to it and are extended schools that are open to becoming involved with the Pathfinder as well.'* (LA12-S)

Early positive experiences led to more school staff being put forward for training or renewed efforts to get more school-based staff trained. However, there were also a number of difficulties. Not all school-based staff who trained went on to deliver the programme. A number of strategic leads also made the point that, without funding to cover the cost, schools found it hard to release staff. For example, in one LA, a head teacher who had released two members of teaching staff to be trained and to deliver the Pathfinder course was reported as having later expressed regret and to have requested money for backfill:

We had a workshop for managers in the area in July and had three or four heads there but what was interesting was they were really positive about the programme but the head at [school name] realised that she was the only one who had committed that level of staffing to it [two teachers to deliver over almost two terms] and actually said, 'I've been a mug!' and has since asked for money. So there are hazards of getting [people together]. We were hoping that our most positive people would rub off on the others but it was probably the other way around! (LA10-S)

The potential resource issues also concerned release from teaching per se, balancing the potential gains against the loss of available expertise from the usual work, independent of finance.

I think it would be good to see, it's been interesting with the Pathfinder, for example, that we have had school staff who'd like to be trained. The issue then is are they going to be able in their work to actually act on that training? Is it realistic for a SENCO to deliver a parenting group? Some schools are really saying yes it is, and we will make that time available. With others, there is a real tension there because of all the other things the SENCO needs to do. (LA16-S)

Not all facilitators gave such positive views. Some facilitators who worked full-time in schools had not yet run a group. Two interviewees were concerned about how they were

going to be able to deliver a group and fulfil the requirements associated with their role in school. One facilitator was a learning mentor. The head teacher had put her forward for training on the PEIP on the understanding that the [Programme] course to be delivered was 12 weeks. In fact, it was much longer and did not fit easily with schools terms. In addition, the head teacher had assumed that, once trained, she would be able to run the course on her own and specifically for the parents of children in the school. In fact, the programme was designed to be delivered by at least two facilitators and the LA wanted each course to be open to parents from a given area, not just one school. In these circumstances, the head teacher decided that he preferred the learning mentor to use her time on work with the children and to give up on the idea of running a Pathfinder group in the school. Instead, parents could be signposted by her to the course at other venues.

Another facilitator was a deputy head teacher in a primary pupil referral unit (PRU). She was hoping to be involved with the delivery of the next round for Pathfinder parenting groups but was aware that her potential ability to do so was limited by the necessity of being on-site at school for four of the five weekdays. She felt “*apprehensive*” about the time commitment involved, pointing out: “*I can’t just drop things here at school and also I have to fit in with my head teacher*”. In her view, the issue of releasing teaching staff from schools to co-deliver a parenting group was always going to be a difficult one to resolve.

A very different concern was the suitability of school staff for the role of facilitator in the eyes of the parents who would attend the group. As one strategic lead observed

I would want...it could well be that the resources in the schools are used, the facilities, but perhaps they employ neutral, external people. I would still have a worry about [for example] a head teacher delivering [Programme] to some of our parents, when a lot of what I have seen of the programmes is a lot of the help that gets the parents there is about their own ability to offload [...] well, you're not actually going to say that [problems with child] to your head teacher, but you will say it to your parent worker, or your parent partnership worker, because they don't judge. (LA15-S)

3.1.6 Role of governors

Governors were often involved in the development of the Pathfinder in their schools and/or the LA's own parenting support group, and were supportive. For example, one head teacher commented:

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)

Another head teacher noted:

Our governors are brilliant [...] We are quite holistic in our approach. They are very encouraging. They do encourage us to get alongside parents. When we say, 'We've not done booster classes with the children after school but we've done this with the parents', they don't worry about things like that – they know there is another way to deliver things like that to the children but the group that are hardest to get through the door sometimes are the parents and they appreciate the importance of that work [...] There is an understanding within this area that it is a very needy area and that we are here for a reason. We are here to make things as good as we can for people and it isn't just about attainment and learning. The governors, although they like the results to be up, they understand the priorities are sometimes somewhat different. (LA10-H1)

while a third reported that a governor had attended the course:

I went to a governor's meeting and I explained what was going to be happening and they were really thrilled. One of the governors who is our health governor and our attendance governor etc, she went on the course as well because she wanted to see what it was about and she wanted to be involved in it. She said it was great! (LA14-H2)

3.1.7 Administrative Support

Overall, facilitators provided their own administrative support, often with the backing of the Pathfinder co-ordinator. In general, schools' input was confined to sending out initial letters to parents and collecting responses. However, most facilitators had the use of photocopiers, and one facilitator mentioned that at an extended school *'if we needed any extra things like pens or flipcharts, the school provided them and there wasn't any problem'*. (LA2-F8)

Conclusions

Across the LAs there was evidence of a substantial degree of involvement of schools and extended schools with the PEIP. Where this was less evident there had been a decision to link with other services, e.g. YOT. Nevertheless, school premises and facilities were frequently used and many school staff had been trained as facilitators.

3.2 Factors enabling schools/extended schools to support PEIP

In this section the factors enabling schools and extended schools to support PEIP will be discussed. Many issues have been raised in the previous descriptions of practice but here the positive elements, and in Section 3.3 the barriers will be highlighted.

Head teachers were judged by strategic leads to be central to the success of schools and extended schools. They had to be convinced of the benefits of parenting support:

The head teachers are key. [...] When you talk to heads, they quite often do know who the families are that they're most concerned about. So one of the levers, if you like, is that most schools have families where they know it's not right, they know that the kids aren't getting what they need and they sometimes try and refer them to Social Services and Social Services say, 'That doesn't meet our threshold' and this is an intervention that schools can use. Where schools understand that, it's very helpful. That's much easier at primary, where they do know the families, than at secondary. (LA10-S)

Head teachers and senior staff were important in demonstrating commitment, particularly crucial in supporting the facilitators and (where facilitators are members of school staff) ensuring that they are allowed sufficient time out to prepare for and run the programme.

Another strategic lead noted:

'(Name)has an extremely welcoming, almost larger than life head, and the parents just love him. They feel they own the school. If you have a head who is less confident they may unwittingly convey the message that it is his/her school, and not belonging to the parents. The ambience makes the difference to whether parents feel easy about using schools.' (LA6-S)

There was a question of the ethos of extended schools – where this was embraced by senior managers this was a crucial enabling factor. Also, schools that were already involved in the extended schools/services development, or that were already involved with their local community, were viewed as more aware of the complementary benefits of offering parenting programmes.

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.

The fact that we have a longstanding tradition of wanting to work with the parents helps. That philosophy, that mindset that you need to be open to see parents coming through the door more as a good idea. And to see that philosophy that we are a haven for the children but we wanted to move that forward into also being an oasis for the community. That means getting out there and finding out what's needed and being providers of that, being in the forefront of promoting good parenting, good relationships within the community, good relationships within the home, aspirations for the future. (LA10-H1)

The Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda was also seen by strategic leads as a helpful context:

There isn't any school that I've come across that, when I've talked about it, has said what an awful idea this is. Schools are very, very receptive to this and I think they recognise a school's limitation in supporting children. [...] I firmly believe the ECM

agenda has helped with all this. As someone who was a teacher for many years, I would feel limited at times. 'What can I do? I don't go home with the children. There's the weekends coming up.' Now, because of multi-agency working, and the way that, from a school point of view, you do know who is supporting [the family] and you can challenge as well whether that support is going in or not. There is more of a partnership working. (LA5-S)

A positive relationship between LA and schools was also seen as closely tied to this:

I think the general relationship between the local authority and schools is a key part to that [enabling schools to support the PEIP effectively]. I think it's about identifying the right people - both the right part of the local authority, the right people within that part and then the right people in the schools. I guess, engaging schools positively about the Every Child Matters agenda would be key to that. Obviously, I'm talking about leadership here and that is crucially important. (LA3-S)

The importance of strategic planning and the engagement of LA and school managers together with those from other services was also stressed:

You've got to get your sign up strategically. You've got to get your understanding there on how these things fit together and then you get your senior managers on board – whether they be senior managers in the local authority, partners, or schools. [...] It has to be done in a planned way. It doesn't happen by accident. (LA5-S)

In addition to these major issues it is important to note the importance of the more mundane aspects such as space. Schools were seen as familiar and practical locations:

Using the schools as the location, it certainly increases accessibility because they are familiar venues and practically as well. [...] It's easier to provide a crèche because it tends to be on site anyway. (LA14-S)

The importance of ethos as well as facilities was stressed, and having a broad view of the purposes of schooling, that incorporated supporting and developing the whole child. However, facilities were also a key factor: both were important. For example, one head teacher felt that the school's ethos, rather than its extended school status was helpful in delivering the Pathfinder, although he did concede that the school

has the facilities...If we weren't an extended school I suspect it would have been more difficult for them to run it in the school, but because we are, we're geared up for it.....The thing is that some schools that aren't extended so much don't have the dedicated place where these sort of courses can be run and booked in, and perhaps haven't got the staff who are so amenable to being put out a bit, like office and admin. staff who help to organise these things. In an extended school you're used to it. (LA6-H14)

The fundamental operations of schools with their communities were also judged to be important. For example, the quality of communication with parents, particularly where there were cultural and/or language issues required sensitive handling. Schools might also be seen as flexible and supportive (as above) but strategic leads also recognised that this was not always possible – flexibility was required to fit in with timetables, for example.

3.2.1 Benefits of working with schools and extended schools

The facilitators generally considered that working with schools and extended schools to provide parenting programmes was of general benefit to schools and communities. As with impact, facilitators were unable to give detailed analysis of benefits accruing, but they all felt that there *were* benefits. An educational psychologist facilitator noted benefits to school staff and parents, but felt that they were still at the stage where the benefits were 'tenuous':

The benefits are that the staff have become more aware of what is available for parents in the city. I guess it may also be that parents themselves have become, there may be some raised awareness of something that is accessible to them should they so desire to pick up the opportunity at some other point [!]. And I would say that one good thing is that we have got better professional links with the staff who work within the community end of the building, and they've been very helpful with supporting us, providing refreshments and so on, and making sure all the IT equipment was there. But those are tenuous benefits really. I guess those parents from outside this immediate vicinity have become aware of the premises and perhaps have a different understanding of what extended schools might offer. (LA1-F1)

The following provides a summary of benefits highlighted by facilitators.

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 consistency 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). This involvement might be the head teacher or other senior member of staff informing others about the programme and ensuring that a suitable room is made available, kitchen staff preparing refreshments, a school caretaker locking up after a programme (out of school hours), office staff providing extra cups or milk. This point is made by a facilitator in one LA who was unaware whether or not the school in question is an extended one: *'The school has been very accommodating, fantastic'* (6PEIP13) and by a facilitator in a different LA with reference to an extended school: *'The whole school community were very supportive in us making a success of the programme. It was like we were one of them and they would help with whatever we needed'* (LA12-F8).

A minority of facilitators were unaware, or unsure whether or not a particular school was extended or not, and in cases where they were delivering a programme in a non-extended school they had no direct experience of working with an extended school. Several pointed out that many schools, whether extended or not, are now offering activities outside school hours, e.g.: *'A lot of the schools that I'm noticing now are providing a lot of after school clubs and a lot of extended learning...and whether or not they're an extended school, on the list, or not, ...I don't know'* (LA2-F2).

As an exception, one facilitator delivering in an extended school was clear about the benefits offered by this type of school, suggesting that *'extended schools accept responsibility for making it happen and provide better support for this type of programme, with more potential for staff involvement, and they play a more active role'* (LA2-F2).

3.3 Barriers that inhibit schools/extended schools from supporting the PEIP

Strategic leads referred to two main types of barriers: practical and attitudinal. The identification of barriers was essentially a mirror image of the positive aspects also identified.

3.3.1 Practical issues

The nature of the school as a venue could be problematic. In some cases there was a lack of childcare facilities, e.g. a crèche. The possibility of addressing successfully issues concerning buildings varied. One head teacher was critical of a lack of appropriate planning of new school buildings:

[One barrier is the] physical capacity of the building to provide a space for it. We're a new PFI (private finance initiative) building and you'd have thought that PFI buildings would have been built with this provision in mind – they haven't. We only opened a year ago. We're on a campus with a high school and the Children's Centre and there is one community room which is very small and, within that, we have to partition off to run a crèche at the back of it. So, at the front, you might have an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class taking place and, at the back, you might have 2 year olds running around. That is a significant barrier - the fact that there has been this opportunity to develop a community resource and the two agendas were going hand in hand at the time in terms of Building New Schools and Extended Schools agenda but they didn't link up. It's frustrating because there is huge long-term implications from it because it constrains our capacity to do things. (LA14-H3)

However, other schools had addressed the issue of a crèche very successfully (see Section 3.1.4).

Timetabling constraints could be serious. Groups required a time allocation that needed to be respected: waiting for a room or being hurried out at the end of a group session was not appropriate. The focus of the Pathfinder on the 8-13 age range also presented challenges by not fitting easily with the age ranges covered by schools. This could be addressed more easily when schools came to own the initiative across a cluster.

Releasing staff was not an inconsiderable challenge but was not seen as necessarily any more or less an issue for extended schools than schools:

What we ask of staff in terms of releasing staff to co-deliver is quite a big commitment really, especially when we ask them to sign up to the agreement. But that would apply no more to extended schools or schools than it would to anybody else [i.e. other partners in co-delivery]. (LA14-S)

One head teacher was concerned about taking on a more substantial role:

Barriers are created for a number of reasons. Time is a big issue. There isn't always the time and the money within the budget to do things as quickly as you'd like to do it and when you do do things like train people up to the [Programme], it's very much

seen as a schools initiative. There is no funding. You don't get any funding for those people being out of school. You're not encouraged, there is no incentive. (LA10-H1)

However, another head teacher commented on demands given their present work:

I think the only barrier, if there is a barrier, is if we would be asked ourselves to take it on rather than just host. I know from the amount of time that [the facilitators] spent. They followed up parents that didn't come. They made extra phone calls. They asked us for extra time so parents who had missed a meeting could come and do catch-up and, as a school, we couldn't give that human resource. (LA10-H4)

A more fundamental issue was raised by one head teacher which encapsulates the tension of schools extending their work beyond children to parents '*...it does impact upon what we do, because we fit around them (parents); so it doesn't compromise the children's education, but we are aware that the things we do fit around it*'. (LA19-H18).

The purpose of a school, therefore, is a key issue. The extended schools agenda is changing conceptualisations but there continue to be a variety of views. This head teacher highlighted the tensions:

Within the educational community there are people that have very different perceptions of what a school should be or is. I don't think some people want it to move with the times. It's a case of, 'We should be here for learning', and it's understanding that learning is a holistic thing and isn't just about all those subjects we have in our timetable but to go beyond that. So I think there is still need for a greater understanding of that. I think the reason that is the case is that, despite all these wonderful things that are coming through, and despite the fact that we should be a learning culture, it's still very much attainment led. We are assessed as being successful on a very narrow sphere of attainment. We're measured against other schools on that very narrow sphere so I think that makes schools become less of the risk taker that they need to be in order to embrace the issues of the community. (LA10-H1)

Staff commitment varies with the elements of the programme implemented, as their time requirements varied.

If we want staff to be involved in this, there is the element of training and releasing staff. Particularly the fact that it is an 18-week programme, one-and-a-half days a week, it's a lot. However committed the school is, that's a lot to take off a member of teaching staff. I think what we have to do is not make a judgement if schools are saying, 'No'. It's not because they don't want to do it and I think we have to understand that. If I were a head teacher, I'd be questioning, 'Well, if that member of staff is doing that, who is actually then covering? And from a parent's point of view, I'd be concerned. So we have to work with schools on that. (LA5-SL11)

In one LA, a partnership agreement had been written up by the operation lead and was used as a written agreement from the managers of all facilitators that they would be released to deliver at least one course and for the associated supervision, amounting to 1.5 days a week for the length of the course.

[The operational lead] has this wonderful partnership agreement that she gets people to sign up to and that is very useful. You can't know how different things would have been without it but, based on previous experiences, I think it's been well worth doing and I would use it again. (LA14-S)

Although a number of practical issues were raised some leads played these down.

I don't think there is a barrier to [schools] supporting PEIP. The barrier to them being able to be facilitators and give up their time is time and resource. I can't think of any barriers that stop them supporting it at all. [...] The main barrier to engagement is the length of the course and the time for them to take on the co-leader role. It's awkward for them but not a barrier to them supporting it as a resource. (LA8-S)

Funding was crucial to replacing a teacher (or other member of staff) acting as a facilitator.

Funding could be a barrier. [...] In certain circumstances, I am putting backfill in to schools because what I recognise is, if a teacher is out of a classroom, they have to have someone in there to teach the children. (LA5-S)

The future development of funding through extended schools was also touched upon, even if obliquely. Implementing a parenting programme has a number of associated costs and the

budget needs to be sufficient to cover these. If extended schools are to take on a more central role they will need to take this into account and this will require careful development.

We haven't got huge numbers from schools delivering programmes, we've got some school-based staff. I can see that schools would find it difficult to free those people up without that budget being covered. [...] And some of the costs that you can't easily get away from, that you can't hide easily, are things like childcare support where that's going to prevent a parent from attending and - this isn't completely focused on schools but if you were to say to a school, 'Well, we're going to service your population but you've got to come up with the child care costs', well they'll tell us politely to go somewhere. The other cost is going to be around the mentoring and the supervision. Until we can get to a point where we can provide that internally, we're going to have to provide the cash to buy that in. Again, it's about not being able to go to schools to say, 'You're going to have to help us with that cost'. Those are some of the barriers. (LA3-S)

Another head teacher extended this argument, pointing to the impact of formula funding:

All my money goes on staff. Every penny I get, I spend it on staff, because that's the thing that is going to make the difference, it's what makes the difference to children, it's what makes the difference to parents. So, a barrier is resourcing for staff implications. It's people heavy. To do this sort of stuff, you need people. When you are funded through a formula which is driven by the number of children you have in the school it makes it twice as difficult. (LA1-H1)

3.3.2 Attitudes of schools

More important than these practical factors, though, were the attitudes of schools to parents support and the extended schools agenda. Some teachers were felt to see their role as to educate parents rather than to relate to parents.

I think the barriers are around attitudes, rather than anything else really. I think the barriers are around, if there is a senior management who doesn't see that supporting parents in this way is key to the achievement of the children in the classroom, then that is the biggest barrier. If that barrier doesn't exist, that is where schools seem to

be really creative and supportive in finding ways ... for example, we have a school which is well on board in offering support to parents in a range of different ways, and has got a great relationship with their local community centre, so they were right on board about using community centre rooms to run groups. But where you've got senior management teams who aren't yet engaged in supporting parents, or that wider support to improve outcomes for children in the education system, that's the biggest barrier of the lot. And most of the barriers are around, "it's not our job to be doing that, and we don't have time to take on another agenda, we have enough teaching the children. (LA9-S)

This variation in attitude was frequently noted. For example, the approach of some secondary schools was commented upon:

I think our secondary system has a long way to go to engage and have parents trust them in what they would do, so I can't really see them rolling out parenting programmes that would be well-attended, apart from parents that probably don't need it so much. (LA15-S)

The tensions between competing government agendas could also have adverse consequences, for example the need to meet targets:

Schools are target-driven and, if they have a pot of money that they can spend on anything they like, they are going to focus on the targets. If they are enlightened and recognise that parenting can impact on those targets, then they possibly will spend some of their money on parenting programmes. Other schools, where the hearts and minds aren't won over, will totally focus on teaching and learning and the targets and what you can do in school, without recognising how much impact the community and the family have on a child's willingness, aspiration, on learning outcomes. And of those that are won over and recognise that need, if they have an opportunity of funding parenting programmes or a new English block, they'll go for the English block.. I think the only way it will work is if it is ring-fenced money. (LA4-5)

Furthermore, schools could be wary of "yet another initiative" that may not have any longevity.

I think there is a danger of overload for schools and being seen as yet another initiative – I think that's where we need to get away from it being initiatives. [...] How I saw it is there are pilots, pathfinders and programmes and the feeling is that, with a programme, it's more likely to be here to stay and it's part of the landscape, as opposed to the other two. I think what we have to do is be very mindful that it isn't overload. If we are going to be rolling this out, first of all we have to know we've got the capacity to do that and we have to then feel that there is a longevity to it, that it isn't just a very short term thing. By the time we've got the schools on board, if it's then going to come to an end, you've got to question what has been the point.

(LA5-S)

3.3.3 Parental reluctance

Some of the strategic leads considered that parents may be reluctant to attend a programme run in a school. There might be negative associations with their own experiences as a pupil. There could also be unpleasant memories of visiting the school as a parent of a child in trouble. However, there was some confidence that the growing ethos of the extended school initiative would go some way to overcome these concerns.

There's got to be a degree of distance, a degree of trust really. Often the sort of parents we're trying to engage with the PEIP are the hard to reach, who don't like going into schools and have anxieties about going into schooled, and we're not running any of our programmes in schools. So, we've got a ... it comes back to children centres, to where people feel comfortable really, and I could see a real danger in the parenting programme becoming another arm of the behaviour management system really. (LA17-S)

3.3.4 Pressure points within the school year

The demands on schools at certain times of the year (e.g. SATs) and also external factors such as inspections could be problematic when running a programme, especially when it ran over many weeks.

3.3.5 Variation in roles of non-teaching staff

In our evaluation of the PSA Pilot we have reported on the substantial variations in roles between and within LAs (Lindsay et al., 2007). This issue was raised in the present study also, both for PSAs and learning mentors.

The PSAs have got so many different roles. Initially, with the PSAs, we had hoped that something could be built in to their job description before they went in to schools, that they would have a remit with the parenting work but that wasn't possibly because they are employed directly by the schools and so I think there are some differences around what they do. It wasn't possible to have a blanket remit where they would all be involved in [the pathfinder]. I suppose that could be a bit of a barrier, that PSAs, and learning mentors, do undertake different roles in different setting. Because of the arrangements here in [LA 8], with Education as a private company and then the schools, there are some differences and that could be seen as a bit of a barrier, that in some cases school work better with us than others. (LA14-S)

3.3.6 Staff confidence

It was recognised that some staff lack confidence in developing their role beyond that of, say, a teacher. The development of the extended schools agenda and parent support both recognise new approaches, new knowledge and new skills. Not all staff were ready for this and so there is a need for support for them also.

My own experience is that there is a learning curve or a training issue around school based staff, who have a critical role I think in terms of parents often turn to them first because they are some of the key professionals that parents are in contact with when there are parenting issues. And some of those school staff, and again there's huge variation, but I think some of those school staff do feel unconfident about that whole bit about talking to parents about problem issues in parenting. (LA16-S)

3.4. **How does PEIP support schools to meet their objectives?**

The people I have spoken to who do work in schools do tend to regard some parents as part of the problem, and haven't yet realised that working with parents means that they can be involved as part of the solution. (LA2-S)

This quotation from a strategic lead encapsulates the potential benefits for schools but also a major barrier regarding school attitudes. Put simply, at the very least the success of parent support through the PEIP may be expected to have a positive effect on pupil behaviour. But there is the potential to go beyond this and gain the added value of parents' own direct and indirect contribution to the benefits of the school. The PEIP is not the only method through which this may occur but it is an important resource. There is also a distinction to be made when considering the role of schools and extended schools. This concerns the point identified above – to what extent should schools see their role as offering parenting support?

3.4.1 Contributing to meeting the parental support element of the extended school core offer

Strategic leads made the point that the Pathfinder parenting course contributed towards meeting the extended schools core offer of parenting support.

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.

..... but the PEIP, because it can offer already trained practitioners in a recognised programme that comes with a whole body of evidence, that's something that schools, and senior managers that are involved in writing school improvement plans are very keen to see that they take a great deal of ... support from being able to say, "these people have been trained, they are fully accredited practitioners, they've come from this body of evidence, and here is some of the evidence" – that really supports people in schools in their school improvement plans. (LA9-S)

However, cautionary comments were also made. One strategic lead argued that:

There is a danger that what people can get away with is taking a fairly minimal approach and ticking a box and saying they are delivering parenting support. That's not what I want. I want something much more robust. [...]. Eventually, we probably want every cluster to be able to have a Family Resource Worker. A school cluster or a learning community would be a secondary school and its group of feeder schools, I suppose. But how achievable that is, I don't know. It's not a huge resource when you consider the level of need that is out there. One whole time worker for one secondary school with maybe a thousand pupils and a group of feeder schools. It's a drop in the ocean. But I guess we've always been looking to link parenting support and parenting programmes and things into that. (LA3-S)

Furthermore, the existence of the programme might limit schools' consideration of a more comprehensive approach to developing provision that was 'in the school regularly'.

The core offer includes 'swift and easy referral' and the evidenced-based parenting provision. What we're finding is that a lot of schools are saying they've got access to evidence –based provision and what that might mean is that they know they can refer to our courses and that, probably, is not really good enough." (LA10-S)

3.4.2 Improving outcomes for parents

Head teachers tended to be reluctant to comment on outcomes arguing that the programmes were at too early a stage to make judgements. However, those that felt able to comment were positive, rating impact at either point 3 (quite a lot) or 4 (a good deal) on a 4- point scale.

I've gone alongside some of the parents and they are talking about the impact but mainly at the moment the parents are talking about the impact that it's having on them in their change of attitude towards their children and the time that they give their children which is where I think it matters most. [...] One of the parents we got on the course came to me in July of last year and she was in floods because of everything that is going on with her son. To see her smile week in , week out, and to have that support from this group – there is still stuff happening but she's thinking about it differently. Before, where she would let everything really get her stressed, she's not doing that now. (LA10-H1)

3.4.2 Improving outcomes for children

Strategic leads argued that schools typically recognised the benefits of working in conjunction with parents to improve their pupils' educational outcomes. As one noted:

Schools in the main have been very positive about it; I think schools do recognise very clearly that some of the issues with the children in those schools that they're trying to manage, that that will be easier for them to address if the parenting component, if there is one, is also addressed. Or if the parents and the staff in schools are both working to address the issues the child faces, and that's a much more powerful intervention. I do think there is a lot of understanding about that in schools, and I think schools have been very positive about the parenting programmes. (LA16-S)

There is a need for schools not yet actively involved with PEIP to become aware of the benefits:

And, if it does work, they will probably think 'Yeah, it's helping'. Of course, they are all under the pressure to improve their key stage outcomes, aren't they, and the difference between the lower performers and the higher performers, they've got to narrow that gap, and they've got to reduce exclusions. Sold in the right way, it's going to give them a sense that it's another thing they've got to help them achieve all those things. (LA3-S)

One primary head teacher perceiving a good deal of impact commented that:

One parent feels empowered to take on the crèche for the next round, many of them have become members of the parents' association, have helped with a garden retrieval project in the school grounds during school holidays, they have become a very strong group of people (LA7-H16)

Another head teacher who thought there had been quite a lot of impact reported that '*some parents have said how worthwhile it's been for them personally*'. A third primary head teacher also rating 'quite a lot' of impact commented that :

parents that weren't necessarily engaged before are more engaged with the school, and are also keen to get involved more in their children's learning, to see what else they can do and how they can work more closely with them at home. They felt it important that Dads came as well, and I've not heard them talking that way before. They talk more about what they are trying at home, rather than solely about how the children were getting on in school. We hear more about how they are dealing with things at home, what is working and the strategies they are trying to put in place at home. (LA2-H15)

Another interviewee recording a quite a lot impact, an assistant head in a primary school, reported that the main impact was a broader contribution to the school, noting that parents from the programme had started their own Parents' Forum, for the purpose of fund raising to support other parents and encourage them to go on trips to cultural venues. This was particularly significant, as 99% of the parents were Asian, and reported to be unaccustomed to such visits. The key factor prompting parents to establish this Forum was, she felt: *'...an increase in confidence, (and) parents now talk to one another in the playground, where before they didn't. They feel empowered by that and that was the biggest change'.*

(LA2-H16)

This interviewee had noticed, too, a positive difference in parents' attitude to their own development: *'They are more involved with the community and are coming to me and saying: 'what can we do next? Can we do an English course, a computer course?' They feel they can go on a course now'* (LA2-H16)

The benefits are captured well in this extended quotation from one strategic lead (with the main points highlighted in bold).

*I think it's about the understanding that **by supporting parents, it will have a positive, knock-on effect with the child.** With certain children where parents are having difficulty with challenging behaviour, routines, things like that, where the parenting programme would be supporting, that does have a positive knock-on effect with school. Then it's about **having a consistency of approach** which is where it's really useful if you've got a member of staff [...] having some understanding of the content of the programme and being able to support the parent through that and the child. Another positive for schools is that some of those issues may be arising from **the parent's own issues**, not necessarily the child's, and supporting that potentially*

*will have a positive effect on the child. It won't be instant – with any of these, it won't be instant. Also the Incredible Years [includes a] focus on **supporting the parent in supporting the child's learning** and how you can do that in a really positive way. Again, that does have a positive knock-on effect with school. The whole **building positive relationships** – it's about acknowledging the boundaries and limitations of what you can do but, by doing it together in a collective way, is supportive. The other thing we are starting to do now is linking it to the Respect Agenda for those parents with Parenting Orders and Contracts. We're looking at it as almost a stipulation that, if you have a Parenting Order or Contract, wither through the community or through the school, you have to attend a parenting programme. Again, schools are receptive to that. [...] That will support schools because it **supports the attendance and, potentially, exclusions**, amongst other things. (LA5-S)*

3.4.4 Every Child Matters

The major policy initiative, Every Child Matters, was embraced by these strategic leads who saw extended schools as a positive support for the achievement of the objectives set out in this agenda. Parent support was a key element in this agenda and hence in the agenda of the extended schools. But LAs and schools have other policies and practices to which they must respond and there are often tensions between these as well as, in some cases, helpful mutual support. This issue is highlighted in the following quotation from a strategic lead:

We do have to acknowledge what the role of a school is and what a school is measured on. I do think the ECM agenda has supported this wider agenda for schools, as has the Ofsted Framework for Schools with the introduction of SEF (self-evaluation form) for schools. It starts to give some credence to all these additional things that schools are doing. [...] You also need those supporting schools, school improvement officers and others, to understand it as well. It's critical. [...] If our expectations are greater on schools through extended schools and all of this, there has to be that understanding then that you have to measure schools in different ways than purely on their SATs results. And, to be fair, looking at the reporting mechanism for Ofsted, that is reflected. You can't have it all ways, can you? I firmly believe that by working in this way, you do support that whole school improvement [...] but it doesn't happen overnight and if you don't keep a focus on it, it might be there, but then it will disappear. (LA5-S)

3.5 Looking to the future – how PEIP could develop in collaboration with schools/extended schools

There was strong support from all interviewees for the continuation of parenting programmes after March 2008. A large input of financial resources had trained these facilitators and not to continue would waste money. Their views also reflected the strong belief held that the parenting programmes were making a positive difference. Facilitators and head teachers argued that parenting programmes (and here they tended to refer to that in which they had been trained) should be part of the core offer of extended schools and, until 2010, schools. For example, one facilitator argued:

I think definitely long term it could be part of an ongoing parenting programme within every junior school, possibly even as early as reception age to start getting that way of parenting embedded into parents. (LA17-F)

Another commented as follows:

Facilitator: Ideally, it would be like a rolling programme: I like with [Programme] that there are the different levels of intervention, and I think that if there was something always available, and different levels of intervention available, it might become something that parents automatically thought that they would go to, like they would go to a parents' evening at school, they might automatically think you'd go to something about parenting as well.

Interviewer: So, just a standard part of the offer then?

Facilitator: Yes, yes. And making there be a word of mouth in the school amongst parents that, "yes, this is a good thing to go to, it's interesting it's helpful, we can all benefit from it", rather than it being, "your child is in a lot of trouble, you must be to blame" implication, when parents are asked to attend groups (LA16-F)

Head teachers were thinking ahead to the future development of their parenting programmes post- March 2008. Their comments reflected their positive views about the programme used in their school but also the need for evaluation and to use evidence to make a case for continuation:

First of all, in the extended schools cluster, the heads of five primary schools, have asked if I would run a group programme in one of their schools, in January [...] If that is successful, I think it would be supported and funded through our extended schools programme. From the school's point of view, I'm planning to evaluate it with the head teacher, and then take it to the governors, and I think we would be wanting to run a course each term, and therefore the school would continue to support it (LA1-H2).

Although adopting this careful approach, head teachers were also confident that their schools would want to take the Pathfinder forward and that finance would be found. They were, of necessity, looking to ways of achieving this and the extended services route was identified as an important source. For example, one extended services coordinator suggested that the schools in that LA receiving finance from extended services provision could pool their funding in clusters to increase capacity.

The cluster theme was put forward too by another interviewee, who suggested that the skills now available among the trained facilitators could be shared. For example, other schools in the cluster could use the facilitators as a resource by signposting to parents to a programme in a hub school.

Overall, the following comment is typical of others: *'We will continue with it, definitely, as a programme.....We have built sustainability in to ensure that it is not something that only happens while there is funding, and we are also looking at how it can be offered more widely....'* (LA2-F15)

The cluster theme was picked up by another head teacher as a means of supporting the continuation of their programme with which they were highly satisfied.

After March 2008, I would like to see that work being worked in clusters of schools. In most clusters there is a high school as well as primary schools so if they are working on a cluster basis supporting the schools and the parents they can be signposted from primary schools to high schools that can be part of transition where high schools are working more with primary schools and primaries more with high schools and parents seeing those schools working as a cluster supporting those families within that cluster. I think [Programme] plays a crucial part in that and I would dread to see it not being available for the clusters of schools because it is absolutely important. it plays such a crucial part in offering that support to the families. (PES HT 2) MACp13

A summary of ideas for development provided by facilitators includes:

- Parenting groups being rolled out in to each extended school cluster with schools then being able to share costs, resources, venues, childcare and staff time between them in order to offer a regular programme of parenting groups (with the Pathfinder course being offered at least once a year)
- Parenting groups being offered as part of a menu of support available in every cluster so that the Pathfinder course would be one of a range available
- Parenting groups being run in school but not by school staff, rather by “*a group of professional facilitators*”, thus avoiding issues about releasing school staff and also ensuring high quality facilitators with the time to support parents
- Non-teaching staff such as Parent Support Advisers and learning and behaviour mentors being available in every school and trained at least part of one of programmes so that they can support the recruitment of parents who would benefit, reinforce the positive approach in their own work with parents and/or children and offer on-going support through, for example, a series of follow-up coffee mornings
- Opportunities for teachers to learn more about the programme(s) courses so they can more effectively support the parents, and the children of those parents, doing the courses – for example, putting on a mini-course for teachers which would demonstrate how well the course used in the school could fit in with positive behaviour policies in schools
- Each LA having a full-time co-ordinator to accept referrals for parenting groups, to match up suitable referrals to suitably located groups, to ensure the course materials and associated resources were available and kept up-to-date, to organise venues and childcare and to ensure access to supervision for the facilitators

Despite these many positive judgements and creative ideas for sustainability, even development, there were also anxieties concerning funding. The PEIP had provided a very welcome input of necessary finance and, as shown above, ideas were being generated to access funds post- March 2008. Nevertheless, interviewees stressed that finance was important. In an unfunded LA comparison, for example, a head teacher commented that demand for that LA’s parenting programme, much of which was by word of mouth, far outstripped supply because of the very low funding base of the host service. Furthermore, cuts in voluntary sector organisations have limited the ability of partner agencies to continue to co-facilitate.

Financial support was identified as crucial and the current uncertainty was very problematic. Finally, it is worth noting these comments from a facilitator, concerned about the future: at the time of the interview, the position post- March 2008 was unknown.

We don't know what our future is. Nobody knows. It can be, at times, slightly demoralising. I do feel that that is something that somebody needs to say. The project is in danger of losing very good people, people who have committed to doing this, just because they won't give them any promise. In the end of March [2008] this project ends. We finish our groups in February. [...] So have we got to start looking around now for another job? It then unsettles the whole thing and you don't then deliver the programme with the confidence you did before because you may well be looking for another job and so tuning in to what you need to say at the next interview to get that next job. I think it shoots the project in the foot to keep hiccupping along and not giving anyone any long view of it. (LA8-F12)

Finally, this extended quotation encapsulates the general feelings of those we interviewed regarding the centrality of parenting programmes and their potential benefits in addressing major needs in society:

*[The school] is a school in an area of quite intense deprivation, we're in the 10% poorest areas in the country. I haven't read in detail the primary report that's just coming out that reflects the dismay that the profession has with the level of parenting, and what's happening in society at the moment. I think that these early intervention initiatives are **absolutely essential** . That schools have to be seen in the light that we are, if you like, the connector between what is happening in our society – macro – and what can be done at a micro level. In other words, what I can do with Mrs X actually can have a profound effect upon what happens with her children, and how they develop in a much larger context. And I think [...] that the work that this government has done on initiatives like Sure Start, and this sort of thing, are the way to the future.*

The problem is that they are very difficult to quantify, in the short term, and I know we are all about short term, "measurable outcomes". That's the thing where we're at at the moment, and you've got to have a leap of faith at some point, you've got to let certain people and give them years, you need 10, 15 years of this sort of thing. Not

just a one, two year programme. It's going to take a long while, because what happens to these children, that's what the measure is going to be. So, if you're looking for quick fixes – they ain't there. I think that these programmes are absolutely essential, I would like more, I would like schools to be given the opportunity to take the initiative on those. And it is wholly right that it's part of our responsibility.

*I've got no time for schools that put up the fences around them, and say, "ok, I'm responsible for children's academic [performance] , that's it, I've got to get them through their Sats". That is **wholly wrong**, we're about everything, and that includes parents. In fact, it is oh so important that we involve parents, and I'm not talking about sending the reading books home, getting parents into schools to sharpen pencils, and listen to readers. I'm talking about engaging parents at the most fundamental level, where they have faith in their school, where they can develop relationships that can be nurtured, and we can help parents [...]*

We are passionate believers here in the way that school interacts with the community. The trouble is, is that it is a long term strategy [...] I have generations of problems in this school, the grandparents of my children came to this school, and my parents came to this school. And they have got deep, deep seated issues, which are now visited upon their children. Education for years and years failed communities like this – absolutely failed. I know that is a generalisation, but this particular school failed this community. And we are reaping the rewards in anti-social behaviour, alienation, drugs, violence, and they are all about what has gone on before. To turn it round is going to take a long time. And we don't address this at our peril. (LA1-H1)

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study of the involvement of schools and extended schools with the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP) took place at a time when PEIP was becoming established but was still at a relatively early stage. Nevertheless it is apparent that there is substantial involvement with schools and extended schools although the degree and nature is variable. In many cases, the programmes are being run on school premises. School staff are included among the body of facilitators running the groups. Schools are also a source of advice and support for parents and also an agent for referral to the programmes.

In our concurrent evaluation of the Parent Support Adviser Pilot we have more evidence of the use of PSAs typically based in schools, providing a wide range of support for parents including signposting parents to parenting groups.

There are many benefits to this relationship between schools and extended schools and the Pathfinder. With respect to the PEIP schools are able to provide appropriate venues. These are even more appropriate where, as with extended schools, there are other facilities on site such as a crèche. Also, the extended school is able to normalise parenting programmes to some extent. Rather than going to a location just for a group, an extended school provides a range of activities, of which the parenting group is one.

The schools also benefit. There is a growing belief that the Pathfinder is effective and that many parents benefit. This in turn can provide a positive impact on the children's behaviour and development. Consequently, schools may reap the benefits of improved behaviour and, given the association between attainment and behaviour/dissatisfaction, schools have reasons to believe that attainment may increase also.

There are also challenges. Not all parents feel comfortable in a school building. Schools, even extended schools, must find a way to accommodate the sometimes competing agendas and needs of pupils, parents and other members of the community. The length of the parenting programmes poses a challenge in itself. There is also the key issue of financial support for parenting programmes following the end of the Pathfinder in March, 2008.

Nevertheless, the evidence from this study suggests that a positive relationship between the PEIP and schools/extended schools is possible and that it will contribute to mutual benefit.

Furthermore, the study has also indicated the importance of extended schools. These offer an enhanced opportunity to the PEIP. As they develop their role will become even more important. But, again, there is a reciprocal relationship as the PEIP can offer a contribution to the extended school's core offer to the community.

In summary, the future of parenting support will benefit from a planned development of links with extended schools. This will require maintenance and development of learning from those whose experience is with more traditional schooling. The extended schools agenda requires a number of different perspectives as well as knowledge and skills. Also, the development of extended schools will need to be undertaken in conjunction with the community. That said, this study provides positive evidence for the potential benefits of the relationship between the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder and extended schools.

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Ref: DCSF-RW036

ISBN: 978 1 84775 100 3

www.dcsf.gov.uk/research

Published by the Department for
Children, Schools and Families