

**A Report on Parenting Programmes**  
*With particular emphasis on alternatives to  
physical punishment*

**Commissioned by The Save the Children Fund and the  
Parents Advice Centre**

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## **Introduction, context and methodology**

# **Auditing the parenting resources available in N. Ireland to support Positive Parenting**

## **Introduction**

Oscar Wilde once wrote that “children begin by loving their parents; after a time they judge them; rarely, if ever, do they forgive them”. At least part of that judgement has been related to a legacy within which issues around discipline were traditionally and inextricably linked to the use of physical punishment. Fortunately since Wilde’s day things have changed, parents are struggling with the task of finding new and more positive ways of dealing with discipline issues. Within this context, then, Save the Children and the Parents Advice Centre believe that legal reform to make physical punishment unlawful should be linked to a national public campaign to support parents in finding alternative ways of managing their children’s behaviour without the use of physical or emotional punishment. The aim of this audit is to examine what parenting resource materials are available at present, which promote positive discipline, to identify any gaps which may exist and propose solutions towards filling those gaps.

## **Context**

The audit is a contribution to the debate on physical punishment opened up as a result of the consultation document issued by the Office of Law Reform in Northern Ireland in January 2001. The consultation is an extension of the Government consultation on legal reform, which has been ongoing in England Scotland, and Wales throughout 2000. The process had been prompted by pressure on the UK government from the European Court of Human Rights. “In response to the 1998 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights concerning the repeated caning of a young boy by his stepfather (Av UK), the Government accepted that the law must be changed to give children better protection” (Children are Unbeatable, Briefing document January 2001). As it stands the current law in N Ireland allows parents to “use the defence of reasonable chastisement if they are prosecuted for assaulting their child i.e. punishment which is reasonable for parents to inflict”. Offences created through The Children and Young Person’s Act 1968, of assault, neglect, ill treatment and abandonment does not extend to the parents continued right to administer punishment.

The Children are Unbeatable Alliance, lobbying for legal reform to give children the same protection under the law as adults, set out the circumstances under which legal reform could be made possible within domestic law in the North. They propose that within the framework of European conventions there is a clear identification of the need to protect children from physical or emotional violence.

For example:

- Pursuant with Article 3 of the European Court of Human Rights, everyone has a right to protection from inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1995 recommended....that physical punishment of children in families be prohibited in the light of provisions laid down in Article 3 and 9 of the Convention

This is also set within the context of the ongoing consultation around the adoption of a Bill of Rights for the North.

It is important for both parents and those carrying out support and education work with parents be included in the debate around reform. However, any legal reform will only be realistically incorporated into practice if parents are given support and access to information around alternatives to physical punishment. Parents have many fears around what reform will mean practically in their day-to-day lives. For them the intervention of the state in their parenting decisions, particularly in relation to physical punishment creates added pressure in an already pressured atmosphere. There is a clear need to support parents through this transition. Although much parenting education is taking place across the North it is unclear, at present, which materials are available, which give positive parenting messages, what agencies are carrying them out and if all parents have access to them. The Parent's Forum N. I. have echoed this need for a central database of providers and materials they said, "there has been to date no formal research carried out into provision or the distinction between parenting education and parenting support. The Parents Forum N.I. are taking part in a UK wide survey into occupational standards for parenting education and support". One of the outcomes of this research will be to identify the providers and the programmes available to parents.

The audit is then set within the context of the clear identification of the need to ensure quality and accessible provision for all parents, and to support providers with access to the most appropriate and relevant materials.

## **Methodology**

The methodology for the audit included:

- Gathering of materials available to providers and parents from both statutory providers and community, women's and charitable groups
- Semi structured interviews with a broad range of professionals to gauge their experience of parenting resources available, which contain materials dealing with discipline issues. Using their experience to set criteria which the materials could be measured against
- Focus group interviews with parents exploring issues around the content and delivery of parenting programmes they had participated in. The groups also discussed through open-ended questions the positive parenting messages they had received.

- Correspondence and face to face interviews with key civil servants and all boards and trusts to ascertain the range and methods of statutory support for parents on parenting and parenting education issues, with particular emphasis on behaviour management.
- Assessment of materials available using set criteria. Each pack was then measured against the criteria set from the interviews with professionals providing parenting education and support.

## **Executive Summary**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Section One – professionals**

This section includes interviews with 17 key professional involved in offering education and support to parents with particular emphasis on positive parenting messages. The interviewees came from both statutory and voluntary/community backgrounds and used a wide range of different materials. They worked with parents in groups and one to one. Participants were asked to assess what, in their experience, they believed to be the core essentials for resources devised to meet the needs of parents around discipline issues.

### **Summary of findings**

The criteria set in this section are

- Materials need to be accessible/flexible
- They should offer alternatives to smacking giving parents the chance to explore different tools
- Offer alternatives to smacking which are age appropriate
- Offer multi-racial examples and explore issues of race, particularly materials appropriate for work with the Travelling community (identified as a serious gap, which has now been addressed by the production of a pack specifically designed for work with Traveller families)
- Explore gender issues
- Are suitable for families with children with disabilities (identified as a serious gap)
- Are suitable for parents from all social classes
- Acknowledge parents as the experts in their own children
- Explore the role of parents within the context of all the family relationships

Additional points raised – materials should:

- Offer support around issues for families with parents living separately including e.g. separation, divorce or parents in prison
- Involve some element of personal development

### **Section two – the parents**

This section outlines the main findings of five focus group interviews with parents. The groups came from urban and rural backgrounds, were from working class and middle class families and families with children with disabilities. The majority of the parents had received either one to one support or had participated in a parenting programme or group. Those who had accessed parenting support had received positive parenting messages and had the opportunity to try out different alternatives to smacking. The only groups whose members had not all accessed structured parenting

programmes or support was the group made up of parents with children with disabilities and experiences related from a self help group for men. The purpose of the interviews was to gain from parent's experiences what they believed to be the essential ingredients of accessible resources.

### **Main Findings**

- Parents came to programmes in the main through word of mouth, community/women's/mother and toddler groups, Health Visitors or day care facilities
- All the resources they encountered had given positive parenting messages and alternatives to smacking.
- The most helpful were those which: created a listening and sharing environment with other parents; allowed them to explore their own attitudes and feelings; explored the relationship with their children; allowed them to have fun; and gave them practical and realistic advice and support.
- The most unhelpful materials were those which: didn't relate or understand the pressure of their every day lives; were too middle class; were requiring a high degree of literacy; didn't take account of families of children with special needs
- Parents found programmes which were flexible, more accessible, helpful and enjoyable (they were more likely to keep attending)

General points raised were

- The responsibility for discipline is still left mainly to mothers
- Parents need access to continued support to keep reinforcing the messages
- Men felt they were still seen in the role of disciplinarian
- Little support was offered to all parents by statutory professionals with the exception of health visitors and that support was limited and parents had varying experiences
- The need for skilled facilitators was identified by both professionals and parents

### **Section Three – the statutory agencies**

Key Civil servants from within the Department of Education and the Department of Health were contacted for face-to-face interviews. The main issues arising from the interviews were:

DENI

- Most parenting education and support is provided by Educational Welfare Officers (EWO) working with individual parents on specific issues and some schools are providing teaching staff to run parenting support programmes in various forms

- The department overall sees children’s educational needs as paramount and parenting support is viewed only in the context of the general educational development of the child.
- There is an intention to look at formulating some type of good practice guide for working with parents. However, there was some concern about how this would work in practice.
- The DENI were unable to ascribe an agency, which would take the lead role in providing parenting support to all parents.

#### DHSS&PS

- Parenting support work is carried out in the main by Health Visitors, Social Workers, Voluntary Organisations, funded in part by the Department, and various health professionals.
- The DHSS&PS outlines a range of strategies and initiatives which address parents’ support needs, particularly those of vulnerable families.
- The DHSS&PS is committed to supporting all families in addressing their individual needs and will continue to work in partnership to address these issues.”

All Boards and Trusts across Northern Ireland were contacted and ask to provide information on

- Numbers of parenting programmes provided in most recent year available
- Support offered by professionals involved in behaviour management programmes in groups or with parents on an individual basis
- The range and number of parents accessing the programmes
- General information on methodology and materials used

#### **A number of key points emerge from the information supplied:**

- There is a lack of co-ordination in the collecting and collation of information across the region.
- A disparity exists in provision both within Trust areas and between rural and urban areas.
- Most statutory parenting support work is carried out by Health Visitors with heavy caseloads.
- Parenting support from statutory agencies is targeted mainly at families of young children or families encountering difficulties.
- There is a heavy reliance on voluntary/community sector organisations both in referral to programmes organised in community settings and in the use of materials devised by voluntary sector agencies.

#### **Section four – the materials**

This section lays out the information on packs available in the North including:

- Production organisation
- Organisation using materials
- Structure of course
- Target group

- Messages for parents with alternatives to smacking

Each course was then measured against the criteria above drawn from the interviews with key professionals.

***Information on the packs can be obtained from the Parents Advice Centre and Save the Children.***

## **Conclusion**

**The main recommendations arising from the findings of the audit are as follows:**

- **There is a need for a coordinated strategy between all government departments, but especially the Department of Education and the Department of Health in partnership with the voluntary sector and parents. This would include:**
  - Quality standards and guidelines
  - Resources for the voluntary sector to develop long-term programmes
  - Training in facilitation skills for both statutory and voluntary sector workers who support parents – already offered by Barnardo's
- **Calling programmes 'parenting classes' was found to be not very helpful, perhaps a need to talk about 'support for parents' which:**
  - Respond to need, use participative methodologies that are flexible, accessible and tailored to need
  - Are fun – work best in an informal learning setting
  - Reinforce parents own positive parenting practices/skills
  - Incorporate elements of personal development as part of all parenting support and especially for families of children with disabilities to deal with grief
  - Acknowledge social conditioning and own experiences of being parented
- **Agencies involved in parenting support and education should undertake training and policy development around the issue of physical punishment.** (Publications/advice from some agencies was questionable e.g. 'Positive Parenting Publications' materials have been cited by many agencies as worthy of use with parents, however, their policy on smacking is unclear and talks about being able to smack children 16 months to four years as long as it is not carried out in anger).
- **Balance an understanding of children's needs with information on child development in order to help parents to understand behaviour**

- **All provision needs to be grounded on children’s rights within the family**
- **Central to all parenting education and support should be the recognition that difficulties in families are normal . There is a real need to de-pathologise family support by statutory agencies. *ALL* families need support. For those who do not have support from family or friends, flexible support from voluntary/statutory sectors needs to be easily accessible in a non-stigmatising manner**
- **Training materials need to be developed and made available that speak to: men, lone parents, parents of children with disabilities, parents in the travelling community**
- **Leaflets and booklets promoting positive parenting should be available through GPs’ surgeries, post offices, and antenatal clinics**
- **Parenting support is often not needed so much *within* the home, but around negotiating with outside agencies – particularly for parents of children with disabilities, parents from the traveller community, etc.**
- **Save the Children and PAC could have clear links on their websites for ‘parents under stress’ to promote positive parenting**
- **PAC and Save the Children endeavour to follow up this report with all government departments to ensure the development of a coordinated approach**

## **Key Professionals**

## Key Professionals

### Introduction

In order to ascertain the criteria with which to assess the parenting materials available interviews were carried out with key professionals involved in offering support to parents, in different settings. In semi-structured interviews basic questions were asked to draw out what the professionals judged to be important elements for inclusion in materials designed to meet the needs of both trainers and parents from a range of backgrounds and with different needs, specifically around discipline issues. The interviewees came from various settings, both statutory and semi statutory providers, those working within the community and from charitable organisations.

The interviews included:

- Health Visitor
- Health Visitor (behaviour management)
- Development Worker, Southern Travellers Early Years Partnership
- Development worker, Derry Travellers Support Group
- Coordinator of Lifestart Programme
- Family Support Worker, Mencap
- Coordinator, Newpin
- Team Leader, Barnardo's
- Coordinator, Community Mothers Programme
- Social Worker, Family and Childcare Team
- Primary School Principal who facilitates parenting courses with parents of 5-15 year olds
- Family Support Worker NIACRO
- Parenting Faciliator/Trainer Barnardo's

The ranges of respondents interviewed were chosen to reflect the various settings within which parenting support could be carried out. Some worked with parents one to one or in groups, some brought parents out of their home environment and worked with them in a structured setting, observing and working through issues alongside their children, as with Newpin. All of those involved had gone through training that gave them a background for working with groups or individual parents but some had no specific training in working with parenting materials. Two of the agencies involved said they did not carry out work which was specifically focussed on offering support around parenting issues,(social worker and Mencap family support worker), however they both offered support, information and advice to parents on a range of topics specific to their designated area of work.

This then raised the issue of who or what agencies had specific remit to carry out parenting support, which would include issues around discipline and physical punishment. Within the statutory sector, health visitors are the only professionals who offer parenting programmes to **all** parents, including parents who have identified specific behaviour management problems and need extra support. The health visitors' remit, however, ends when the child is

four, although some have carried out work in schools. The Health Promotion Departments have a range of materials available to groups and health professionals which include parenting materials. Within some Board areas they also offer training in, for example, group work skills, presentation and facilitation skills, which can be accessed not only by statutory professionals but also by those wishing to provide parenting facilitators within the community. Social workers carry out work with families experiencing difficulties or with children in care, which broadly addresses parenting issues. However, when asked the social worker, in this instance, said that they would refer families on to groups such as Newpin, Lifestart or the Community Mothers programme or they would help them find parenting programmes within a community setting if available. Midwives also provide materials and offer advice to all parents which have elements of parenting support within them, for example the materials provided to all parents at anti natal clinics by midwives have information on issues around children's sleep patterns and feeding progress. However, these materials do not cover discipline issues. It seems clear that, in addition to work carried out by Health Visitors, the majority of parenting support programmes are provided by the voluntary/community sector, the larger charitable organisations such as Barnardo's, the Parents Advice Centre, and family support programmes such as Lifestart and Newpin.

The questions asked of the interviewees were designed to draw out information on the materials they use, why they choose those particular materials and how appropriate they are for work with the wide diversity of parents within the community. The central themes emerging would then be used as a framework for the development of criteria with which to assess the materials available to anyone wishing to provide parent support programme in the community, particularly supporting parents with discipline issues.

Laid out below are the general responses to the questions posed:

### **Question 1 What are the main materials you have used?**

The responses to this question showed that some agencies took an eclectic approach to the use of materials and drew on various resources to meet the needs of the group or individual parent. For example, the local Health Visitor interviewed drew her materials from resources devised by the Solihull Healthcare NHS Trust, and the Birth to Five book given to every new parent. She also culled individual exercises and suggestions from other locally available resources. Health Visitors who are trained to work with parents specifically on issues around behaviour management were trained to use materials developed by The Centre for Fun and Families (which use a behaviour oriented approach) as well as using the Solihull resources which all health visitors have access to.

The organisations with a specific remit to offer support to families in the community had all developed their own materials, which followed the ethos, remit and objectives of the organisation. For example Newpin run a structured programme which has at its core the emotional needs of the child in the context of all the family relationships. Their groups, here in the North, use

materials developed by their mother organisation in London and directly transferred for work with families here. Lifestart, on the other hand, use materials devised in the US but adapt them to suit the local context. Community organisations, and in this case schools, used materials which were locally developed, such as the Family Caring Trust's Parenting Programmes. In responses they stated that they used them mainly because they had training in the use of the packs and used them in tandem with other materials they had heard of through organisations such as the Parents Advice Centre (e.g. Steve Biddulph resources on parenting boys).

Some general points arose on which there was a clear consensus:

- Firstly that the materials needed to be adaptable and flexible enough to be dipped in and out of as required. And adaptable in the sense of facilitators being able take the central issues from the materials and reproduce them in a more accessible form.
- Secondly that parenting work required facilitators who were skilled enough to adapt the materials or use them subtly in different contexts as the need arose.

**Criteria: Materials**

- **need to be adaptable, flexible.**

**Question 2 Why did you use those specific materials. What was good/useful?**

In the main respondents stated that the materials were chosen because they were comprehensive and practical and offer a mix of information and advice in a form which was broadly accessible. Many materials used visual images, cartoons or quizzes to make the exploration of issues more accessible, fun and less threatening or 'preachy'. Many of the respondents felt the materials allowed parents the chance to share with other parents, "Parents are often feeling isolated in their role and value being able to listen and share with other parents", (Team Leader, Barnardo's). This was echoed by the school principal who felt that parents learnt much more by sharing with other parents, which broke down their sense of isolation and encouraged a sense of normality. In that parents experiencing difficulties realised when sharing with other parents that it is a part of the process of bringing up children, that most families experience difficulties at some time. There was a clear belief that work with parents had to be carried out in the context of all the relationships within the family therefore requiring materials which allowed parents to explore their own attitudes and responses as well as their children's. All of the materials involved gave some information and advice on child development. This was seen as important to all parenting work, but most importantly when talking of smacking and alterative forms of punishment. Parents needed to talk through what was appropriate behaviour for a child at a given age and that forms of punishment would also be age appropriate.

**Criteria: Materials**

- **should give practical advice and information, particularly on child development.**
- **should be set in the context of exploring relationships**

**Question 3 Which were the most helpful in terms of discipline?**

All the respondents said the materials they used offered alternatives to physical punishment, e.g. encouraging positive behaviour and ignoring negative behaviour, exploring the use of choices/rewards/consequences, consistency in applying punishment, positive parenting messages. Some respondents stated that their materials did not directly raise smacking as an issue but that the programme took parents through an “exploration of allowing children to make choices, rights and responsibilities” and inevitably “...get parents to realise the negative effects (of smacking) and that there are alternatives”.(Lifestart Coordinator). Some felt it was important to approach the issue from a human perspective, exploring the issue without making value judgements. One Health Visitor said that the materials they use “take a subjective approach – looking at what is rational and logical, doesn’t put people down” she went on to say “we explore smacking with parents, recognising the day to day pressure on families....we attempt to build up honesty and trust in an non-judgemental atmosphere while exploring alternatives to smacking”. A majority of the interviewees felt it was important to see the materials as guidelines rather than being too prescriptive. This, however, again required skilled, experienced facilitators who could adapt the materials to suit the needs of the parents. The Barnardo’s Team Leader believed there was an advantage to having a ready made programme which facilitators can pick up and run with. This can be particularly true for training parents within the community to run their own parenting groups as is apparent from some of the interviews.

**Criteria: Materials should**

- **Offer alternatives to smacking, giving parents the chance to explore the issues in a non-judgmental atmosphere.**

**Question 4 In what way do they offer support/help to parents in terms of discipline?**

Looking overall at the responses the content of the materials are giving very similar messages and explore similar alternatives to smacking. As stated above all looked at helping parents explore positive parenting messages, to a lesser or greater extent choices/rewards/consequences, being consistent in your approach, communication skills, age appropriate punishment, encouraging positive behaviour. The differences arose in the form and setting of the work. Some worked with parents one to one, as with the Health Visitors and programmes such as Lifestart and Newpin. Even within this there was differences in approach in that some were carrying out work from a psychotherapeutic and behaviour approach, some a practical parenting approach and some, as with Newpin, is based on breaking “cyclical destructive behaviour” within families using subtle intervention with parents outside of their home environment. Conversely, Lifestart sees the fact it is

home based as its key strength, in that it more easily explores issues of discipline and general parenting issues in the context of all the family relationships and involves all the family in problem solving strategies. In the community parents programmes tended to be more like self help groups with parents sharing their experiences, trying out the suggestions from the materials and bringing back discussion of their successes or failures into the group. There were two very strong points, which arose in terms of helping parents explore discipline issues. Firstly the use of the concept of children having choice and being encouraged to make choices was central to most of the work. Secondly it was seen as important that programmes explored the relationship between the child and the adult, encouraging the parent to see the world through the child's eyes or look at "what is going on with the child".

**Criteria: as above**

**Question 5 How appropriate were they in terms of the following, age, race, gender, disability, class and other disadvantage?**

Age

All of the respondents stated that the materials they used were age specific. The majority were targeted at toddlers or school age children, a few stated that they had worked with young teenagers. Newpin, for example, target families with at least one pre school child, however they then include other children in the family in the programme. Health Visitors remit ends at four years old and Lifestart also target families with children birth to five. The work carried out in the community has a broader age range and the Family Caring Trust materials used were targeted at five to fifteens. It was generally felt that all children in the family benefited from parents learning new skills and ways of approaching their parenting so the target age was in some ways incidental. It was also believed to be important that child development information be given alongside work on discipline

**Criteria: Materials**

- **should offer alternatives to smacking which are age appropriate in terms of the developmental stage of the target group.**

Race

Many of the materials used by the respondents were considered appropriate in terms of race because they had visual images or used multi racial examples. However, there was no discussion in the content of multi racial issues or differing cultural norms around discipline issues. The materials, which had been developed outside of the North, as stated earlier, all used multi racial examples because they were developed in more multi cultural environments e.g. Solihull, Centre for Fun and Families and Newpin. The Family Caring Trusts packs all have multi racial visual images and use multi racial examples. However the respondents who used the packs did not see it

as an issue within their community. Barnardo's stated that their parenting materials have been translated into Urdu for use within the Asian community. The main discussion arising from this question centred on the issue of accessibility of the materials for the Travelling Community. Outside of the Travellers support groups only two of the respondents said that work had been carried out with the travelling community. Lifestart has had some traveller families on their programme although they didn't state whether they were settled or transient families. One Health Visitor stated that her colleagues had worked with the women from the Travelling community and had some success in raising parenting issues in settings other than structured parenting programmes e.g. sewing groups. She felt that structured programmes were inappropriate for this work and alternative settings needed to be found. Workers from the Travellers Support groups interviewed both stated that the materials available were inappropriate for work with the Travelling community and new materials were being devised. (now available) They felt the materials currently available were inappropriate in a number of ways:

- were too advanced for traveller families – personal development programmes needed first
- were too literate – most groups of Travellers parents included some who could not read and write
- didn't reflect Traveller culture –
- were too structured in terms of having to be on time, having to concentrate through two hour sessions
- didn't recognise the importance of privacy within the Travelling community – having to share experiences could be problematic

In identifying this gap the Travellers Support Groups in partnership with Barnardo's, the Parents Advice Centre, NIPPA and the Coalisland Travellers Project have devised a new set of materials for specific use with Traveller families. The pack is now available and provides materials for use with families either settled or transient. The respondents from the Traveller Support groups both felt that the pack required skilled facilitators with knowledge of the Travelling community. In terms of discipline issues, one respondent stated that travelling children were more often hit than settled children, and that this was part of the rationale for putting together a new parenting pack. However, one other respondent emphasised the family centred nature of the Travelling community and underlined how protective Traveller parents are of their children. In order to address these issues the new materials will use appropriate and positive visual images, photograph, quizzes and discussion to raise issues and introduce messages around managing behaviour, positive reinforcement and other alternatives to smacking.

**Criteria:**

- **do the materials offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race e.g. is it suitable for use with families from the Travelling community.**

Gender

Only Newpin stated that they used materials, which specifically looked at gender issues, however, not specifically in relation to discipline. They use materials within their personal development programme which explore “how we treat boys and girls differently, challenging stereotypes, social norms”. Some respondents talked about attempting to include fathers in parenting programmes with limited success. The school principal stated that he used Steve Biddulph materials on raising boys in order to involve fathers in discipline issues and Barnardo’s stated that they had carried out some work around the role of fathers. Both, however, had difficulty recruiting fathers to programmes. One Health Visitor said in her groups she had only ever three fathers who came along to programmes and they didn’t come back after the first weeks.

**Criteria:**

- **Do the materials explore issues around gender**

Disability

In terms of disability the respondents all felt the materials suitable for use with families with children with disabilities. In contrast to the parents interviewed who stated that they could not find materials which recognised their particular needs, most of the respondents believed that the materials are appropriate for use with children with disabilities if they are adapted to meet the needs of the individual family, parent or group. Three of the organisations said their materials had been used successfully with families with children with behavioural difficulties. None stated whether the materials had been of use to families with children with other disabilities. None of the respondents mentioned whether they had identified specific discipline issues for families with children with disabilities.

**Criteria:**

- **Are the materials suitable for parents of children with disabilities**

Class

Only two of the interviewees identified any problems with the materials in terms of their class bias. One Health Visitor and the PS Principal had found the materials they used to be appropriate in terms of the content but that the examples used and tone of the pack was very middle class, particularly the resources dealing with discipline issues. Both stated that this had caused problems for some of the group participants and had put some parents off from coming to the groups it had a negative effect on their view of their own parenting skills. However, both had used the inappropriateness of the materials as a source of humour in the group and used them to break down barriers. One other respondent had echoed this stating that inappropriate materials can be used as a discussion tool to draw out issues within the group.

**Criteria:**

- **Do the materials exhibit a social class bias**

Other disadvantage

Literacy levels were clearly seen as an issue for the respondents, most had stated that they had adapted the materials, using handouts, visual images, cartoons to address literacy issues. The Travellers support group clearly identified literacy as a major problem with most of the existing resources. Many of the packs are extremely literate, particularly the Family Caring Trusts Parenting Programmes. Those working one to one with families felt more able to adapt their materials to suit the needs identified by the facilitator. However, literacy levels remain an issue to be addressed for groups putting together new resources, such as the Travellers Support Groups.

**Criteria:**

- **Are the materials accessible for parents with literacy difficulties?**

**Question 6 Does this weaken their message in relation to physical punishment?**

As stated some respondents felt that inappropriate materials can be used as a source of discussion or humour in the group. Others, however, felt good messages were lost by the use of examples and materials, which didn't relate to the group using them, as with the Travellers Support group and the PS Principal using materials in a working class community. Barnardo's believed that the strength of the materials they used was in their adaptability and that this would not weaken their message

**Question 7 Did the materials acknowledge parent's role as experts in their own children?**

The PS Principle did not feel that the Family Caring Trusts materials acknowledged parents as the experts rather saw parents as "learning". One Health Visitors saw parents as working in partnership with health professionals and "acknowledged that parents are responsible for their children". Another Health Visitor stated that "the materials acknowledged parents role and start from the basis of supporting and building on the positive aspects of parents relationship with their children". A core value for Barnardo's is that parents are the experts in their own lives and their own children. Lifestart and Newpin both see themselves in partnership with parents, helping them see the positives in their existing skills and supporting them to build confidence.

**Key Professionals - Additional Information**

In addition to the semi structured interviews above two informal interviews were carried out with Barnardo's and NIACRO workers who had undertaken specific parenting programmes with prisoners and their families. Laid out below are the main points arising from the interviews:

**Barnardo's parenting facilitator**

- We were working with men in prison in partnership with NIACRO

- We used specific materials devised for the work
  - flexibility was central
  - they were adapted to address issues arising from the group
  - we brought in other materials when it was relevant
- General issues being addressed were, helping to maintain contact with children while the fathers were in prison-Issues explored included:
  - How do I feel
  - How to make the most of visits with children
  - Exploring their role within the family
  - How to cope with change
  - Communications skills
  - Problem solving strategies
  - What is possible on visits
  - Taking time with individual children

The initial evaluation of the programme has shown that to some extent the fathers have taken on many of the positive views explored. The need for more time and resources to be given to future work has been clearly identified. The programme worked well with an all-male group, providing an opportunity for fathers to explore issues around all their family relationships. The need for more self-esteem work has been identified.

On physical punishment a few general points arose: Firstly that the men felt discipline issues were still being left to them, and secondly that both parents believed that the children, particularly the boys, listen more to their fathers.

Specific parenting issues addressed were:

(In this instance much of the case study materials were taken from Save the Children materials)

- Looked at methods of discipline
- What you enjoy about parenting
- Ages and stages
- Parenting styles (assertive, passive, authoritative parenting)
- Nurture and structure (using Steve Biddulph Soft Love/Firm Love)

## **NIACRO Family Support Worker**

Using Barnardo's trained facilitators NIACRO worked initially with parents at home. They then progressed to working with parents in groups, as it helped parents to focus on the specific parenting issues outside of welfare rights issues etc.. For the past few years they have worked with parents at home and in prison to provide group work support around parenting issues.

NIACRO worked closely with Barnardo's using a mix of Barnardo's materials, Family Caring Trust videos, SCF and materials devised specifically for the project. As stated above the course did not directly address physical punishment but it arose within the context of maintaining family relationships during periods of separation. From the work NIACRO has identified the need for parenting materials, which address issues of separation "coming and going" in young peoples' lives. This work, they believe, is most effective when carried out with the whole family both parents at home and absent parents.

Due to limited resources NIACRO is unable to continue this level of group work with parents in the near future. They are, however, devising an interim solution within which they will provide materials and resources for use by parents and will support parents to take up parenting programmes available within their local community. They will continue to support parents one to one.

### **General Points arising from the interviews with key professionals**

- **All the professionals saw issues around discipline being tied to general parenting issues and relationships and general parenting issues were tied closely to personal development/assertiveness and communications skills work with parents.**
- **All the professionals involved in providing parenting support had been trained to deliver the specific materials.**
- **All the professionals had adapted the materials to suit the needs of their work.**

## Parents Views

## Parents Views

### Introduction

Central to the discussion on parenting resources is parent's experience of accessing support and education around discipline issues within the family. An essential to establishing this core focus is the parent's experience of taking part in parenting programmes. To this end the opinions of five focus groups of parents were sought. The groups interviewed came from a range of backgrounds and experiences in order to provide as representative a cross-section as possible. The groups interviewed came from urban and rural communities, east and west of the Bann, from working class and middle class families and families of children with disabilities. We also interviewed representatives of a men's network which offers parenting support to fathers working within an ethos of self-help. The majority of the parents had received either one-to-one support or had participated in a parenting programme or group. Some of the parents (those with children with disabilities and the experiences shared by the representative of the men's group), had been unable to access parenting programmes or materials which they felt met the needs of or reflected their family experiences. The parents who had accessed support had all received positive parenting messages and had the opportunity to try out different alternatives to smacking. The parents cited experiences of a range of parenting materials

- Family Caring Trust's 0-5 & 5-15
- Barnardo's Parenting Matters
- Communications skills course for parents (Northlands, CHIP et al.)
- Parents Advice Centre, six week parenting course.

(Both the men's group and the families of children with disabilities had looked at a variety of parenting materials and found them unsuitable. However, they did find some elements of programmes useful, e.g. Steve Biddulph materials on raising boys).

Parents from all groups also shared experience of advice and support being given by professionals outside of the groups, for example, one parent had been given a structured programme of support by a child psychologist to address specific behaviour management problems with one of her children. All of the mothers interviewed had been given advice at some time in their parenting years by Health Visitors and one had help from a teacher around a specific discipline issue. The groups reflected the general experience of those providing parenting support and education being made up almost exclusively of women. The questions asked were general guidelines to the discussion.

Laid out below are the responses of the parents.

### **Route to parenting programme**

The parents had arrived at their particular course through different sources

- “word of mouth”
- a letter from the school
- suggested by the Health Visitor
- through a local community, mother and toddler or women’s group
- suggested by a teacher
- mother in law, friend or local community worker

The parents who had attended a group stated that they had gone with a friend rather than alone. None of them said that they went to the groups when they identified a specific problem but to get general support, and in the main, support with what can be defined as behaviour management issues. Many of the parents had undertaken a course in the past and had got “*so much out of it*” they returned for a second course. Those parents who were working said they were only able to take up the course because their child care facility had provided a crèche outside of normal hours.

An important element for all the parents who took up a course was being encouraged by a childcare or community worker that they knew to come along.

One of the main barriers for families of children with disabilities was the lack of experienced and flexible child care/carer support.

### **Materials used in relation to discipline**

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| • <u>Birth to Six,</u>                             | Family Caring Trust    |
| • <u>Five to Fifteen,</u>                          | Family Caring Trust    |
| • <u>Communication’s Skills for Parents</u><br>CAU | CHIP, FPA, Northlands, |
| • <u>Parenting Matters,</u>                        | Barnardo’s             |
| • <u>Six week parenting course</u>                 | Parents Advice Centre  |

In relation to discipline the programmes all offered the opportunity to discuss discipline, in the case of the Barnardo’s materials, looking at how discipline can be seen as a positive rather than negative concept. All either directly or indirectly created the opportunity to discuss smacking and alternative forms of disciplining children. Suggested alternatives were

- Talking through things without hitting
- Sitting them in a chair
- Eye contact when talking through problems
- Getting to their level – trying to understand them
- Rewarding positive behaviour
- Taking them out of the situation or distracting them
- Ignoring bad behaviour
- Stopping and taking time to calm down
- Consistency when you decide on a punishment
- Not taking their behaviour personally
- Telling them how their behaviour makes me feel
- Listening
- Communication skills
- Giving them responsibility

- Not smacking
- Grounding them but not for a long time – using 20 minutes/ or 1 minute for each year of the child's life
- Giving children positive messages about themselves
- Being realistic in your punishment
- Time out
- Coping strategies for problem times, e.g. bedtimes, children refusing to eat.
- Giving choices

The parents said that all of the programmes came across as being anti smacking. The programmes all encouraged them to try out and come back and share their experiences at the next session. The Family Caring Trusts packs had structured sessions with a parent's handbook, one parent said *"we had to read the book for whatever week you had to have the piece read for, then you came back and talked it through the next week"*. The Barnardo's course gave parents tasks to try out then come back and share their experiences the next week. The Parents Advice Centre (PAC) course had given parents the chance to identify the areas they wanted to discuss and the issues were addressed in the following weeks. The parents who undertook this course felt they had an important input into how it was facilitated which gave them more confidence and therefore they gained more from the experience. One parent said *"she (the facilitator) brought along materials that she thought were relevant to the issues she had raised, she gave us handouts we could take away, it was very much at our discretion"*.

### **Most Helpful**

There was, to some degree a mixed response to this question, although all said they had some success, if only for a few days.

The main successes for the parents were:

- Not taking things personally – being able to distance yourself from their behaviour
- Ignoring bad behaviour- e.g. Dealing with a child who bites
- Role play which allowed you to see how they feel
- Giving them responsibility
- Consistency – meaning what you say and sticking to it
- Rewarding positive behaviour
- Sitting in the chair (only with young children)
- Being realistic about the punishment you decide on
- Sanctions
- Coping strategies
- Changing the tone of your voice

Parents reported that the alternatives worked best when *"they were able to take time and calm down"*. One parent said, *"I used to go home at night (from the course) really calm, everyone was looking at me they thought something was wrong, but then they would calm down too, they couldn't believe it when I*

*didn't start shouting*". This parent stated that even just not responding worked to change the atmosphere in the house. She went on to say *"when they were fighting I would tell them how it made me feel when they fight, I used to leave myself in tears...gone please stop it you're really hurting me and they mellowed and I mellowed"*. For this parent the key was seeing her behaviour mirroring her mother's of years before and realising she needed to change the way she responded to her children. Ignoring negative behaviour worked well for other parents, particularly those with young children.

One parent recounted taking months of ignoring her sons biting before he stopped it. She had to recruit everyone in the family to the task, which was difficult since her older son was physically disabled and the younger one knew his brother could do nothing about it when he bit him. However, with persistence the whole family were able to show a united front and the toddler stopped biting.

One parent had support with particularly difficult behaviour from her young boy who was in primary two. She told how her child had been isolated even in playgroup and nursery because none of the other kids would play with him. When she got support from a child psychologist through a referral by the child's teacher, who was also in tears from the boy's behaviour in school, using rewards and consequences she was able to turn around the child's behaviour.

Most of the parents believed it was easier to use some of the suggested alternatives when the children were young. For example sitting them in a chair for 20 minutes only worked when they were younger, it wasn't appropriate for older children. However, smacking also seemed more effective when they were younger.

Giving children responsibility worked to change the relationship for another parent who said her child had been wanting to iron her own clothes and after taking part in a the course she let her. She said after listening to another parent on the course, *"I started my wee girl ironing, and she is still ironing and she's fourteen"*.

The use of coping strategies, which could be used to address a variety of issues, was found to be helpful for one group of parents. *"She came along with strategies that you could apply to anything, whatever the scenario, bedtime or feeding, I'm a lot more confident in my approach to problems"*. Interestingly, many of the parents from the rural area talked about needing and finding alternatives, which worked while taking children in the car. For one parent, changing the tone of her voice helped change her children's disruptive behaviour when she was driving them to school etc., *"going quiet rather than shouting really let my children know I was cross, it worked great in the car"*. Another parent cited sanctions as the best way of improving her child's bad behaviour when they were travelling; *"stopping her from going to the Brídíní's worked"*.

The sharing of ideas and experiences was central to the success of the course for all the parents.

In general the parents were realistic about the materials and felt that it was important to stress that each child was an individual and that what worked for one might not work with another.

They believed consistency was one of the most important and most difficult skills to practice. Overall parents felt there was a clear anti smacking

message in all the materials, however, they didn't feel judged for having smacked their children.

### **Most Unhelpful**

The parents generally found the suggestions and support helpful, however, they were realistic about the limitations of the materials. For some of the parents, mainly those with more than one child of primary school age, the pressure of daily life made it difficult for them to find the energy or time to create change. Many of the parents said they found it difficult to maintain the consistent approach over time. That their good intentions were swept away, especially during stressful periods. One parent stated that she found that rewarding good behaviour didn't work in the middle of all the confusion of rushing here and there, collecting children from school, shopping, cooking and all the other daily tasks. She said she had to *"keep on rewarding good or bad, the rewards got bigger every day"* the children expected to be rewarded. For this mother trying out new things seemed to work for three or four days and then they all fell back into the usual relationships where a smack was quicker and appeared to be more effective. Some parents felt that nothing worked for children who had tantrums. For one parent the tantrum took over the whole house and upset everyone until she stopped what she was doing and sat down with the child until he settled. The child continues to have tantrums and she has found little to ease the situation. For the parents who were working, the stress of life during the week was particularly bad with the demands on their time making life unbearable at times. One parent found that stress made her unable to cope with her child's behaviour.

*"I know the theory, but when you're tired and you come home from work and you know what you should do but you're just so tired and you shout, but it's just silly because it doesn't upset him, he just laughs at me. I really should go into another room of my own and just scream"*.

However, for these parents one of the most useful things to come out of the PAC course they took was their recognition of the need to limit the stressful times. For some of these parents it meant standing back and looking at where the stress was coming from and making, in some cases, major alterations to their family life. One parent found that the best solution was to move from full-time work to negotiating a job-share arrangement with her employer. For the rural parents the difficulties were mainly in accessing programmes and facilities in their area.

To some degree the parents felt that "real life" tended to make it difficult to carry through all the messages given in the materials. Conversely there is an obvious assumption in this that the materials don't reflect real life. There was a clear indication from all the parents that the issues around management of children's behaviour could not be divorced from other family issues and circumstances. The programmes, which gave them a chance to look at themselves and their whole family life and personal growth, were clearly the most helpful.

## Accessibility of materials

The parents who took part in the Barnardo's course were more than happy with both the form and the content of the materials and facilitation of the groups. *"They could have doubled the course"* one parent said, she felt she needed more time to discuss each topic. The parents felt the course jumped a bit to different topics when they could have spent at least one more session on each issue. Their experience of sharing and listening to other parents was again seen as one of the major successes of the programme.

Parents who took part in the Family Caring Trust's 5-15 programme, had some problems with the video. They felt it was unrealistic and very middle class. One parent stated *"it must have been made in England or somewhere, it definitely wasn't Creggan, everyone was so nice, nobody shouted"*. She felt that it didn't reflect parenting carried out under pressure. They also felt there was too much reading in the materials, and said they never lifted the book again when the programme was over. The use of humour was seen as important for the bonding of the group and to create an atmosphere within which parents were able to share openly. The Communications Skills course, which some parents had participated in, had been great fun and they reported being sad when it was over. With the parents who took part in the PAC course the facilitator has used videos such as Kramer vs. Kramer and Dave Allen as discussion tools. These parents found the humour, creativity, and informality of the course invaluable and broke down barriers. They felt the chance to socialise and discuss with parents in similar circumstances made the course relevant and fun. Having a chance to explore their own attitudes was an important element, which they said helped them step back from and see their own responses more clearly. Parents also enjoyed the use of role-play as a tool for exploring issues and trying to understand children's behaviour.

Although initially frightened of taking part one parent said *"I remember having to be the teenager and being able to do it because I knew what my young fella was like at that time, he was driving me up the walls"*. The rural parents had taken part in two courses, one using the Family Caring Trust pack and the second using a mixture of materials through Barnardo's 'Parenting Matters'. The parents felt both courses were helpful and gave the same central messages. However, the flexibility of the Barnardo's course worked best. One parent explained that with the first course

*"when you get the book in the first week there was a temptation to read it all, it was a lot to take in". With the second course the facilitator gave handouts each week "so you didn't get overwhelmed with all the information"*.

## Support Offered

All of the parents agreed that in the past they would never have looked for help because they believed it would have been seen as a judgement on their parenting. They felt Health Visitors were the most helpful and accessible of the statutory people, with a majority of them being offered advice, support or information at some time by a Health Visitor. However, the experience of health visitors was not always positive with many, particularly the parents from more middle class backgrounds stating that their health visitors were very

closed to what they were going through. One parent's experience was not unusual, she stated,

*"I had a health visitor who had no children of her own. I think she used me as a guinea pig – she didn't ask how I was, I felt like I was being examined, I nearly didn't answer the door to her".*

None of these parents were offered parenting programmes or support and almost all said they felt totally isolated when on maternity leave or in the first years of the child's life. This group of parents also had no access to community support and only accessed a programme when it was offered to them by their children's childcare facility. There was general consensus that teachers were unhelpful, with a few exceptions, that *"you only saw them when there was a problem"*. In general community groups, women's group or mother and toddlers were the main source of support and information for the parents.

It was stated that things had changed in the community and that workers from statutory agencies were more likely to see themselves as working with parents and listening to the community than in the past.

### **Parents Not Catered For**

The two groups, which had looked at parenting materials but found them inadequate to their needs, were the parents of children with disabilities and the self-help group for men. Laid out below is a synopsis of additional points arising from each of these groups.

### **Men's Group**

- Found structured programmes didn't work for fathers
- Many of the fathers they worked with were living apart from the mothers of their children
- Fathers tended to come for parenting support when in crisis
- Most of the support was given on a one-to-one basis or more usually within a self-help group situation which dealt with a range of issues including parenting support
- Much of the support is given within the context of general discussions around family break up and separated fathers
- Support and advice is given on family relationships particularly relationships with children
- Alternative patterns of behaviour are explored
- There is a problem with existing materials. *"The language and structure excludes men..."*, when probed he went on to say *"...The main problem with men accessing programmes is not with the materials or the settings but how you engage them initially"*.
- Men are still seen as the administrators of punishment, more and more men have a problem with this, particularly as it can lead to conflict between fathers and older sons.
- Men are more likely to take up support if it is offered one to one.
- Men as well as women can feel threatened in a mixed group. They feel it is important to initially do single identity work.

- There is a great need for trained male parenting facilitators.
- An ideal programme for men would be flexible; respond to issues identified by the men and would be men only.

### **Parents of children with disabilities from North-West area**

- The parents had children from all age groups – from toddlers to young people in their early twenties, with a wide range of disabilities.
- They had not found parenting programmes which suited their needs for a variety of reasons:
  - materials tended to overlook their children's specific and special needs
  - used case studies and examples which didn't relate to their family circumstances
  - felt there were issues around siblings which were not addressed, e.g. siblings seeing sickness as a way of gaining attention – siblings taking on a caring role or being given a caring role
  - bullying was a major issue for parents of children with disabilities
  - issues around allowing children independence
  - difficulties of disciplining a child with special needs – what was appropriate punishment
  - there was a huge issue around accessibility of courses, particularly with community/voluntary sector organisations being unable to provide adequate childcare/care support in order to allow parents to access courses.

### **Foster Parents**

The final group of parents interviewed are in a unique position in that they are already prohibited from smacking their children. From the moment foster parents successfully pass their assessment they cannot smack their own or their foster children. To a large degree they reflect the position all parents would be in if the U. N. Committee on the Rights of the Child succeeded in bringing about a ban on physical punishment in the home. For this reason their insights into the effectiveness of the alternatives to physical punishment are invaluable. Also in terms of the purpose of this report they have a particular experience to relate in terms of the effectiveness of access to behaviour management support and information. For example, foster parents have access to social workers and child psychologists who offer advice and suggestions on behaviour management issues, which most other parents would have difficulty accessing unless there was a serious problem within the family.

The group were predominantly from the North Down area and fostered at least four children at any one time (some had six at the time of interview). The children ranged in ages from small babies to young teens and most of the

parents had children of their own. The group was also unique in that there were more fathers than mothers present at the interview.

### **Alternatives suggested**

- Rewards and consequences (withhold pocket money, favourite toys, turn off radio/TV)
- Naughty chair (timed)
- Grounding (to bedroom)
- Star charts
- Alternative ways of getting rid of parents frustrations (hitting a cushion/ball)
- Consistency
- Encouragement/praise for good behaviour
- Suggestions for setting boundaries (e.g. in supermarkets)

### **Most helpful**

The parents felt that all the alternatives can work if you persist, are clear about the boundaries/rules, and are consistent in carrying them out. One parent gave the example of how using the naughty chair worked with the seven-year-old girl she fostered.

*“she was very defiant, if I asked her once, if I had to ask her a second time and she still didn’t listen I put her in the naughty chair...I had to be really consistent with it over a period of time... I just have to threaten it now...she’s more biddable now.”*

All of the parents felt it was important that the time on the chair was limited, one set of parents use a buzzer so the child wouldn’t have to keep asking if its time was up yet.

One of the most popular and effective methods of discipline for the foster parents was the use of star charts and rewards and consequences. The charts were used as a method of assessing whether there was a need for a reward or consequence, most of the consequences centred around withdrawal of something of value whether pocket money or radio/TV time. The chart was also a tool for building self-awareness in children, one parent said of the little girl she fostered

*“I would sit down with her at night, she’s five, and she would get stars or tick for being good or bad..if she stays in her room at night she gets a star..we sit down and I say ‘now what do you think about this morning’ if I think she hasn’t been too bad and she thinks she hasn’t been good we put a tick..and try to encourage her ‘well you were a wee bit good”*

The use of age appropriate punishment was also believed to be central to its effectiveness. In their experience the naughty chair was effective for young children but withdrawal of treats or favourite activities, particularly holding back pocket money was much more effective with older children, especially teenagers.

As one of the crisis points for parents of young children the foster parents had particular views on what worked when children had tantrums in supermarkets. One parent said that she had been advised by a child psychologist to take the children to the supermarket when she didn’t need to shop, fill the trolley as

usual and then abandon it when the expected tantrum arrived. The parent found this effective and after one or two attempts the children knew if they played up they would be taken straight home. Another set of parents, however, said the best thing to happen to parents was the advent of late night shopping without any children in tow.

The parents believed that all the alternatives can work even when under pressure if you are motivated and persist.

### **Most Unhelpful**

For the foster parents everything they had tried had worked to some degree. One parent, however, said *“on the good days when the wee one I have is in school they work but when she’s in defiant and disruptive mood nothing works and you just watch the clock til. bed”*

Although not all the parents were anti smacking and some had smacked their own children before they became foster parents, they believe smacking wasn’t necessarily about discipline.

*“In a lot of cases punishment is about revenge or venting frustration, rather than saying I want this child to behave better and what is the best way to achieve this”*

The difficulty with using alternatives, for them, was in the level of energy it took, *“there’s stress relief in smacking children and stress building in trying to do something else.”* They went on to say that *“there’s more brain power involved in not smacking, it’s a psychological battle”*.

Having said this they were clear that with support it was possible to make the alternatives work.

### **Support offered**

Foster parents are in a unique position in terms of support because each child comes to them with some form of support mechanism in place along with the opportunity to access more specialised support if required. The parents said they had support mainly from Social Workers and child psychologists. In some cases they received extra support when a child was used as a case study for Social Workers undertaking further training or education. They recognised the advantage of their position

*“We know about all these systems (alternative methods) because we’re foster parents..We get a child along with a Social Worker or they refer you to a child psychologist and they give you advice..where do they (ordinary parents) go and find this out.”*

Training offered to the foster parents in behaviour management was part of their six-week initial assessment process, after that it is given on a case-by-case basis. However, the prohibition on smacking is a theme, they say, in all their contact or training.

The two core points coming out of the interview with the foster parents were that the alternatives methods of discipline can work with persistence and energy. However, they underlined the need for support in finding and trying out these methods and they recognised the difficulties for other parents, particularly teenage parents in accessing the level of support needed.

## **The Statutory Agencies**

## Overview of Provision

To date there are few definite statistics on the numbers and range of parenting support being carried out in Northern Ireland. We know that there is a range of organisations, statutory and voluntary, carrying out a wide variety of support and education work. Within the voluntary sector agencies such as Lifestart, Homestart, Newpin, Parents Advice Centre, Barnardo's Parenting Matters and Gingerbread offer, one-to-one support, structured programmes and self help groups. Training in facilitation and use of materials is also offered by Barnardo's, Positive Parenting Publications and others. Statutory provision is offered by, in the main, Health Visitors with Social Workers providing support to families experiencing difficulties and a range of other professionals giving specialised support when necessary. However a full mapping of the parents support sector has yet to be undertaken.

In a report produced for the Parenting Education and Support Forum, which attempted to develop an occupational and functional map of parenting support provision in the UK, they were unable to provide exact statistics on provision in this region. However, they propose that a small research study carried out in Northern Ireland *"identified that there are at least 700 people working in the sector (both paid and voluntary)"*. They go on to say that this is believed to be *"easily an underestimate as not all agencies were able to provide data, and the figures do not include Social Workers or Health Visitors working with parents."*<sup>1</sup>

As part of this report we have attempted to gather information on statutory provision across the Health and Social Services Trusts and Boards in the region, the detail of which is outlined in the following section. However, these agencies also had difficulty in providing exact data.

There is also a lack of clarity in the definition of parents' support and parents' education which adds to the difficulty of producing a clear overview of provision.

It is clear then that there is an identified need for a mapping exercise, which would include information on provision, providers, materials used and which outlines the nature of support offered.

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<sup>1</sup> *An Occupational and Functional Map of the UK Parent Education and Support Sector*, A Report for the Parenting Education and Support Forum, Pye Tait, March 2001.

## Health and Social Services Trusts and Boards

All Boards and Trusts across the region were contacted and asked to provide information on

- Numbers of parenting programmes provided in the most recent year available.
- Outline the support offered by professionals involved in behaviour management programmes both to groups and to parents on an individual basis.
- The range and number of parents accessing the programmes.
- General information on materials and methodologies used.

### Responses

Of the 22 Health and Social Services Trusts and 4 Health & Social Services Boards, including Hospital Trusts, contacted, all 11 HSS Trusts responded, 3 Boards and 2 Hospital Trusts.

Both hospital trusts said parenting support work was not within their remit as their focus was on acute hospital care. Two Boards said they did not provide direct support but commissioned work from their local Trusts, and the third Board said they would come back with information at a later date. However, one of the Boards outlined the level of their financial commitment to parenting support work in the funding they award to voluntary/community sector organisations such as PAC, Gingerbread and TAMBA, and 5 Sure Start programmes funded in their geographical area.

In relation to actual provision it is imperative to underline that the responses received were markedly varied in how the information was presented. Some trusts gave very accurate detail of numbers of programmes and clinics run and were specific about the numbers attending. Others, however, referred only to 'several' programmes completed or were unable to provide concrete statistics of participants. Some trusts gave approximate figures of participants and programmes run or referred, for example, to running behaviour management clinics – run weekly with x number of families attending. For this reason there is a need for caution in drawing conclusions from the data received.

### Provision

Disparity in the Boards responses is magnified when we look at the unevenness in the character and content of the responses from the Trusts. For example, one Trust in the North-East of the region was unable to provide any information on their parenting support work, while a Trust in the greater Belfast area was able to provide a detailed report of both the structured programmes offered, and the clinical one-to-one behaviour management work undertaken within their area. This would suggest a lack of co-ordination in the collection and collation of information both within some Trusts and Boards and across the region. One Trust, working in the Northwest, for example, gave quite detailed outlines of some of its parents' support work being carried out by Health Visitors and Family Support Teams. However, from discussion with workers from voluntary/community organisations working in partnership with

the statutory health workers in this area the Trust failed to cite much of the work being carried out in community settings by Health Visitors.

There was also a lack of clarity in the definition of parenting support around behaviour management issues. Some Trusts give a relatively detailed outline of the support offered to parents in behaviour management clinics, structured parenting programmes offered to all parents and detail of partnership projects with other agencies, both voluntary and statutory. Other Trusts, however, offered very brief information on structured programmes offered by their Health Visitors. Also it is clear that within all the Trusts there is one-to-one support being given to all parents as part of the Health Visitors core duties in addition to social services working alongside families experiencing difficulties. However, some Trusts did mention this. This creates a difficulty in collating the information, as only some of this work will involve offering support with specific behaviour management issues.

From information gathered the greatest difference occurs when we look at the number and range of structured parenting programmes being offered from Trust to Trust. Of the 11 Trusts all had run some form of structured parenting programme in the past year. However, the numbers of programmes run suggests a remarkable unevenness in provision, ranging from 2 to 47 programmes run in the year to date, with the majority providing 4 and 7. The most stark discrepancy was in the information supplied by two Trusts in the greater Belfast area with one quoting only 2 programmes and the other outlining 47 programmes run in schools, health centres, family centres and behaviour management clinics.

In addition to the disparity within urban areas, there is a disparity in provision between urban and rural districts. Of the Trusts providing services in predominantly rural areas none provided more than a total of 7 programmes with some offering as few as 2.

Three of the Trusts and one Board referred to Sure Start projects offering parenting support within their area.

### **Providers**

Health Visitors are the main providers of parenting support and education outlined in the responses from all the Trusts and Boards, and also in interviews with the Departments of Health and of Education.

Health Visitors are carrying out a range of services from one to one clinical work to structured programmes both within Trust facilities and in community settings. The majority of the work with individual families falls within their core remit, which is to give support and information to parents of young children. There appears to be more scope for working with parents of older children in their provision of structured parenting programmes. From the information given, Social Workers, for example working within Family Support Teams, are the second most often cited professionals offering a range of support. Some Trusts talked of multi-disciplinary teams working in partnership to address a range of behavioural problems. One Trust said:

*“Parents who have children with’ multiple problems and low self-esteem’ tend to shy away from the ‘universal structure parenting programmes’.*

*Professionals work across a 4-tiered model which includes health visitors,*

*school nurses, social workers, clinical medical officer, adolescent psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, and nurse therapists.”*

Voluntary sector provision was also relied on by many of the Trusts, in terms of: referral to programmes offered by groups such as Barnardo's, PAC, Lifestart, Homestart; in the use of materials devised by voluntary sector organisations and partnership and or multi-disciplinary projects.

Only two Trusts mentioned Midwives as a source of support for parents even though the Department of Health saw them as one of the core providers of support. However, one Trust did give useful information on the range of Parentcraft and ante-natal provision within their hospital maternity unit. In this unit midwives worked alongside social workers, health visitors, and physiotherapists to provide a range of anti-natal parenting programmes including a 'Young Mums' programme targeted at the under-19s. Although such does not contain a remit for behaviour management work, it does create quite an important opportunity for contact with parents.

None of the Trusts responding included General Practitioners as part of their multi disciplinary approach, nor did any of the groups of parents interviewed feel that GP's are a source of support with behaviour management issues. However, the DHSS&PS cited them as *“playing an important role in providing services and support to new parents”*.

### **Participation**

All of the Trusts were asked to provide the number and range of parents taking part in parenting programmes. The collation of this information is problematic as Trusts provided which was not uniform. Some gave detailed numbers of parents accessing not only parenting programmes but also numbers attending behaviour management clinics; work carried out by social services for parents experiencing difficulties. Some gave details of Health Visitors' caseloads (which would include routine visits to new babies and young children, carrying out hearing tests and physical and developmental checks). Others were unable to supply any detail of attendance.

Again, unevenness in provision is shown in numbers attending programmes. The Trust which had 47 programmes, reported 434 parents attending through the last year. One other Trust cited 2 programmes with 16 participants within the same timescale. Across the region, from the information provided, 10 of the 11 Trusts had approximately 939 participants in total taking part in parenting programmes in the year to 2002. In addition, 629 families approximately were being given one-to-one support in a range of clinical settings. Given that every Health Visitor has a substantial caseload of work, for example, one trust said that their caseload covered 300 parents, the figures above for one-to-one sessions are clearly an under-estimation.

The provision of support to parents, both one-to-one and in groups seems to rise noticeably in areas where detail of Sure Start projects was given.

Information provided on the Sure Start projects by one Board showed that of the three projects detailed: one provided 6 Family Visitors who visited 1925 families, a Health Visitor who worked with 22 families, and a Young Parents Support Worker who supported 10 families; the second project support to 85 families, and the third had provided access to programmes for 123 families.

As Sure Start is a new initiative with many projects at the set up stage it will

be important to return to this in the months ahead to access the actual impact on provision.

Although figures have not been supplied for the range of ante-natal support offered across the region, the one Trust that did give detail demonstrates the potential for contact with parents. There were 74 sessions worked with 1,455 parents. The programmes were quite varied and included Parentcraft, early pregnancy sessions, 'Twins or more' anti-natal sessions, and 'Young Mums'.

## **Materials**

A wide range of materials is employed, however the core approach mentioned by most of the Trusts is Social Learning Theory. A significant number stated that their Health Visitors had completed an advanced diploma in Social Learning Theory and employed materials, which reflected this such as the work of Albert Bandura. Other materials most commonly cited are NCH Action for Children, Family Caring Trust, 123 Magic Effect Discipline for Children 2-12, and Handling Children's Behaviour. In addition to the Family Caring Trust's pack, many of the Trusts adopted/used materials devised by other charitable and/or voluntary organisations, such as Barnardos, the NSPCC and Homestart.

It is clear from responses that most agencies took a flexible approach to their use of materials. One Family Support Team had devised their own packs for work around self-esteem for both parents and children, and behaviour management work with teenagers.

The tools most commonly referred to in terms of alternative discipline were star-charts, use of rewards and sanctions, self-esteem work with parents and children, and behaviour modification.

## **Conclusion**

A number of key points emerge from the information supplied:

- There is a lack of co-ordination in the collecting and collation of information across the region.
- A disparity exists in provision both within Trust areas and between rural and urban areas.
- Most statutory parenting support work is carried out by Health Visitors with heavy caseloads.
- Parenting support from statutory agencies is targeted mainly at families of young children or families encountering difficulties.
- There is a heavy reliance on voluntary/community sector organisations both in referral to programmes organised in community settings and in the use of materials devised by voluntary sector agencies.

## Departmental Responsibility

Key Civil Servants from the Department of Education and Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety were asked to respond to a series of questions on the role of their department in supporting parents and their view on future provision.

- What parenting support is offered under the cover of your department and who is offering it
- Are there guidelines for the monitoring of standards –is anyone evaluation what has been carried out to date
- Do you think the department has a role in supporting all parents – in relation to discipline issues.
- Which agencies do you feel should take the lead role in supporting parents.

Laid out below is an outline of their responses:

### The Department of Education

#### Parenting education and support work provided

Within the Department of Education most parenting education and support is provided by Educational Welfare Officers (EWO) working with individual parents on specific issues. Some schools provide structured parenting programmes or drop-in facilities to parents, however, the Department reported a varied response with some schools having difficulty engaging parents. Referral to programmes organised by voluntary/community sector agencies such as Barnardo's and the Parents Advice Centre was also an option for some schools. The Department also provides a small pool of funding to each Board to promote parenting "but mainly for parents of children having difficulty with the system". These monies have been utilized in a variety of ways to date. "For example, the Western Education and Library Board has an EWO trained by Barnardo's to work with a particular groups of parents".

#### Guidelines and monitoring and evaluation of standards

Only two staff within the Department have responsibility for this area of work and would receive focused reports "from time to time" on monies awarded for specific projects. There is an intention to draw up a good practice guide informed by "experience gained to date". It was clear they felt this would require flexibility to take into account the needs of individual schools. From evaluation of previous parenting initiatives, any meaningful parents support programme would have to be long term and take into account the changing needs of the child, through different developmental stages. There are also experiences to be drawn on from past programmes and initiative "*Raising Standards in Schools, School Support Programme and the Discipline Strategy*". Within the Discipline Strategy, the Department has access to "a small amount of money available each year for schools to bid for programmes which in their view help improve behaviour in schools e.g...training supervisory staff and working with parents".

### **Role of the Department in supporting parents**

The central responsibility the Department carries is in promoting children's achievement and helping them reach their full potential. They see working with parents as vital to this and "gives them an opening for working with parents". The Department believed it was important to be flexible in its response as parents needs differ and many parents do not see structured programmes as the best way to meet those needs. Two key factors were needed to adequately respond to need. Firstly parents needed to be made aware of what support was available them in schools. Secondly, "schools needed to be encouraged to be more welcoming and engage with parents so when issues arise the groundwork is already done".

### **Lead agency in supporting parents**

The Department of Education sees its role in relation to parents support as a "facilitative one". To support those on the ground doing the work and "to make sure there are no barriers in the way of good practice". There is also a responsibility on the education system to respond to educational legislation, which affords rights to parents. It stated "to facilitate them (parents) in exercising those rights does place a responsibility on us". It recognises the need to work in partnership with other agencies both voluntary and statutory. However, it found it "difficult to ascribe a lead agency". The Department clearly saw the need for a strategic approach since it felt that by the time children arrive at pre-school patterns are set. "Up to the age of three, where a great deal of development occurs and patterns are set which can be unhelpful later,.. There is certainly a role for us, working with others, we can't deal with families in isolation, and children could already be presenting with problems." EWO's are at present available to respond as parents needs arise, however, the Department recognised the need for preventative work, which would establish relationships with parents before problems arise.

### **Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety**

*The DHSSPS response came in the form of a statement from the Family Policy Unit at the request of Minister de Brún.*

### **Parenting education and support work provided**

In its statement, the DHSS&PS outlines a range of strategies and initiatives which address parents' support needs particularly those of vulnerable families. These include tackling domestic violence; strategies on both drugs and alcohol; a programme for supporting pregnant teenagers; and the 'Investing for Health' strategy. It also identifies Sure Start as an initiative "introduced to help strengthen family life". It goes on to state "General Medical Practitioners and nursing professional also play an important role in providing services and support to new parents". In terms of support offered to new parents and parents of young children the Department say that Midwives and Health Visitors "have a specific responsibility to examine and monitor the development of young babies", and Social Services intervene when appropriate. Core funding of community organisations "whose services help the Department to further its policy objectives" is also seen as part of the Departments commitment to further supporting families.

**Guidelines and monitoring and evaluation of standards**

The DHSS&PS's statement does not address these issues.

**Role of the Department in supporting parents**

Although the statement from the Department does not directly answer this question it did state that: "The DHSS&PS is committed to supporting all families in addressing their individual needs and will continue to work in partnership to address these issues."

**Lead agency in supporting parents**

The DHSS&PS's statement does not address this question.

## **Conclusion**

## Conclusion

The audit has clearly identified issues, which both parents and professionals see as key to appropriate parenting education and support programmes. For both groups the need for programmes which are flexible, informal and which use humour to get across their central messages is crucial. Interestingly, smacking as an issue mainly arose within the broader context of discussion on discipline and in many programmes it was only addressed indirectly. Both parents and professionals recognised the importance of a non-judgmental approach, which avoided creating an atmosphere of guilt within the group and which supported parents' own positive parenting practices.

It can also be concluded that all those involved believed that provision was inadequate to meet the needs of all the variety of family groupings and family needs. Families with children with disabilities, fathers and families from the Travelling community being the most obvious examples. This is echoed by other evaluation and research of parenting support and education programmes both in Northern Ireland and in the UK. For example in the evaluation of 'Parents' Perceptions of Parenting Programmes carried out by Health Visitors' undertaken by the Down and Lisburn Trust, researchers stated "*The virtual non attendance of fathers in the current study appears to be a universal problem faced by facilitators of parenting programmes*" (Dr A Long et al, March 2001)<sup>2</sup>. In the UK also the predominance of white women on courses was a cause for concern for those offering parenting support programmes. Roker and Coleman surveyed 60 organisations offering group based 'parenting teenagers' programmes and found

*"The respondents were also asked to indicate whether there were parents they would like to reach, but who they had difficulty reaching. Over two thirds listed the following three groups, parents from ethnic minorities, fathers and parents whose children are excluded from school, or at risk. Also mentioned ... were Travelling families, parents with teenagers with disabilities and gay and lesbian parents"* (Roker & Coleman November 1998)<sup>3</sup>

As can be seen the findings of the audit clearly correlate with trends being identified by academics, health professionals and a diverse range of groups providing parenting support.

Our focus groups of parents also showed the willingness of parents to find support and try out new ways of interacting with their children. Many of our parents had undertaken at least two courses or programmes, recognising the need for continued support as children reach different developmental stages. There is a genuine acceptance by the professionals that parents need support yet there is still inadequate provision from statutory agencies to meet that need.

The fact that statutory responsibility for parenting support ends at five years and the existing provision relies heavily on health visitors remains a problem

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<sup>2</sup> Dr A Long et al, Parents Perceptions of parenting programmes facilitated by Health Visitors, Down and Lisburn Trust, March 2001, p.38

<sup>3</sup> D. Roker, J. Coleman, 'Parenting Teenagers Programmes: a UK Perspective', in Children & Society, Vol. 12, No. 5, November 1998, p.365.

to be addressed. There is also a lack of clarity by the statutory agencies around the issue of responsibility for parenting support after five years and little creativity in looking at which agency should take the lead in providing that support. Again, this is echoed by research carried out in the UK, for example, Roger S. Smith in 1997 states,

*“Good parenting is not in itself a direct responsibility of any specific department, although several are exercised by the perceived consequences of ‘bad parenting’, such as child abuse, juvenile crime, or school failure”.*<sup>4</sup>

There is a clear need for a strategic approach which makes real the apparent intentions of government to fully support all parents and clarifies the role of statutory agencies. However, this requires a creative partnership approach, which includes all stakeholders. In an evaluation of the Homestart programme carried out in 2000, Nick Frost articulates the need for a partnership approach,

*“No one service – be that social service workers, health visitors or the voluntary sector – can provide the full spectrum of provision encouraged by section 17 of the Children Act. All three have to articulate to contribute to a continuum of services, addressing the needs arising from different family structures, ethnic groups and geographical locations”.*<sup>5</sup>

Given the clear identification by our parents for the need for ongoing support, as much through school years as in the pre-school period it would be a serious omission to exclude educational professionals from having a role in supporting parents and therefore families. School is a central point of contact for all parents, as every child must attend, as a resource for supporting parents it is under utilised and as stated by the Department of Education there is inconsistency in how schools approach the issue of parental involvement. From information received from the statutory agencies there are gaps in provision geographically, with some towns having had no structured parenting programmes offered the last year. A disparity also exists between rural and urban areas and even within urban areas.

It can also be said that there is an over reliance by the statutory sector on voluntary and community organisations providing much of the parenting support programmes, facilitator training and materials. Given the funding problems within the voluntary sector this puts an extra burden on already overburdened organisations.

The parenting support offered at present is varied and our parents clearly recognised the value of it for them and their families. Both parents and professionals consistently cited the Parents Advice Centre and particularly Barnardo’s Parenting Matters as the main providers with the most appropriate materials and methods of facilitation across the North.

One of the most important issues to draw out of the audit is the lack of coordination and monitoring of materials, standards and statistics of existing provision in Northern Ireland. This is echoed by research highlighted recently

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<sup>4</sup> Roger S Smyth, ‘Parenting Education: Empowerment or Control’ in *Children & Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1997, p.115.

<sup>5</sup> Nick Frost et al, ‘Homestart and the delivery of Family Support’ in *Children & Society*, Vol. 14, No. 5, November 2000, p.338.

by the Scottish Parenting Forum. In a mapping exercise carried out by Henderson to quantify the support available to parents in Scotland a series of gaps were identified which included, *“a general lack of a strategic approach to service evaluation and development”*. Secondly, they point out that there is *“a high level of cooperation between services and sharing of information but little evidence of joint planning and delivery of support within and between sectors and amongst organisations providing similar services”*.<sup>6</sup>

The Parent’s Forum NI are moving towards working collectively with their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales to ensure uniformity of access and quality standards. They have identified the need for further funding to undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise.

## Recommendations

Laid out below are the recommendations drawn from examination of these materials by a roundtable group consisting of policy workers from the Parents Advice Centre and The Save the Children Fund:

- **There is a need for a coordinated strategy between all government departments, but especially the Department of Education and the Department of Health in partnership with the voluntary sector and parents. This would include:**
  - Quality standards and guidelines
  - Resources for the voluntary sector to develop long-term programmes
  - Training in facilitation skills for both statutory and voluntary sector workers who support parents – already offered by Barnardo’s
  
- **Calling programmes ‘parenting classes’ was found to be not very helpful, perhaps a need to talk about ‘support for parents’ which:**
  - Respond to need, use participative methodologies that are flexible, accessible and tailored to need
  - Are fun – work best in an informal learning setting
  - Reinforce parents own positive parenting practices/skills
  - Incorporate elements of personal development as part of all parenting support and especially for families of children with disabilities to deal with grief
  - Acknowledge social conditioning and own experiences of being parented
  
- **Agencies involved in parenting support and education should undertake training and policy development around the issue of physical punishment.** (Publications/advice from some agencies was questionable e.g. ‘Positive Parenting Publications’ materials have been

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<sup>6</sup> S. Henderson, ‘Supporting parents in Scotland: a mapping exercise’ (Scottish Office Central Research Unit, 1999), from Supporting Parents of Teenagers in Scotland: Research lessons, policy and resources (Scottish Parenting Forum, 2002).

cited by many agencies as worthy of use with parents, however, their policy on smacking is unclear and talks about being able to smack children 16 months to four years as long as it is not carried out in anger).

- **Balance an understanding of children's needs with information on child development in order to help parents to understand behaviour**
- **All provision needs to be grounded on children's rights within the family**
- **Central to all parenting education and support should be the recognition that difficulties in families are normal. There is a real need to de-pathologise family support by statutory agencies. ALL families need support. For those who do not have support from family or friends, flexible support from voluntary/statutory sectors needs to be easily accessible in a non-stigmatising manner**
- **Training materials need to be developed and made available that speak to: men, lone parents, parents of children with disabilities, parents in the travelling community**
- **Leaflets and booklets promoting positive parenting should be available through GPs' surgeries, post offices, and antenatal clinics**
- **Parenting support is often not needed so much *within* the home, but around negotiating with outside agencies – particularly for parents of children with disabilities, parents from the traveller community, etc.**
- **Save the Children and PAC could have clear links on their websites for 'parents under stress' to promote positive parenting**
- **PAC and Save the Children endeavour to follow up this report with all government departments to ensure the development of a coordinated approach**

## The Materials

| <b>NSPCC ‘TAKE CARE’ PACK</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>PRODUCTION ORGANISATION</b>  | - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children   |
| <b>ORGANISATIONAL USE</b>   | - Primary schools  |
| <b>STRUCTURE OF COURSE</b>  | - No stated number of weeks<br>Methodology consists of using pack consisting of four booklets focused on self, family, home, and safety, in addition to the teacher’s guide. Handouts and activities use child-to-child interviews, filling in questionnaires, drawing or painting pictures. |
| <b>TARGET GROUP</b>   | - Primary school children, key stages 1 and 2.   |
| <b>MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN</b> | - NO<br>Schools using this pack encourage parents to be aware and involved in the progress of the pack. However, the pack only encourages parents to see a school’s commitment to prevention of abuse, encapsulated in a school’s child protection policy                                    |

**Assessment against additional criteria:**

**3/ Is it set in the context of family relationships?**

Yes, the materials are seen as being more effective “if teachers, parents and governors are committed to working together for the children’s benefit. Also contextualise the wider family relationships “through helping children to understand about the family operate and how friendships are made and broken”.

**4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible?**

Yes, overall the pack is tightly structured but some of the materials are both adaptable and flexible e.g. the preamble states that the pack allows the “potential for wider adaptation and transferable skills”.

**5/ Does it see parents as trying their best but needing support?**

Yes, to some degree, see criteria 3 above, the pack is, however child centred rather than parent centred.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for families with children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, textual and illustrative multi racial examples

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy problems ?**

Yes, as the pack is designed for children it is very accessible in the simplicity of the materials used, it is not over wordy.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the pack ?**

No, but encourages readers to undertake child protection training.

**NB. Although this pack is designed for use by teachers it has much within it which could be used for work with parents and children, which is, why it has been included.**

| <b>‘BIRTH TO FIVE’ PACK</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Health Promotion Agency   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Health Visitors   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Methodology consists of booklets advising a range of activities from good communication to ignoring some types of negative behaviour.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 0-5 year olds  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>There are numerous strategies mooted relative to specific difficulties, e.g. around sleeping and waking, new baby additions, tantrums, biting and overactive children. Suggested alternatives include attention/time allotment, building routine and outdoor energy - burning activities. It also lists a number of DON'Ts such as over-reacting, giving-up quickly and not expecting too much. Maintains throughout that smacking/hitting has no long-term efficacy as an option. |

### **Assessment against additional criteria**

#### **1/ Is it set in the context of family relationships ?**

Yes, it includes issues around arrival of new babies, relationships between siblings, explores parent child relationships and relationships between parents.

#### **2/ Adaptability of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, in terms of its range and practical advice it can be dipped in and out of, each section stands alone. Workers could easily take themes and information from the book for use with parents.

#### **5/ Does it see the parent as trying their best but needing support ?**

Yes, the text and spirit of the book is supportive of parents while being gently prescriptive.

**6/ Does it explore issues around gender ?**

No, boy and girl growth rates are charted but it does not deal specifically with gender issues.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for families of children with disabilities ?**

Yes, there is specific information on dealing with children with special needs

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples to explore issues of race ?**

Yes, there are many photographs depicting multi racial families, however, there is little exploration of issues of race.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy ?**

Not particularly, the text used is quite dense and employs lengthy terminology

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the pack ?**

No, the book is given to every new mother by her Health Visitor, the Health Visitors are trained in the use of the materials.

| <b>‘LET’S WORK TOGETHER’ PACK</b>                                      |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Save the Children   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | National Childminding Assoc., child-carers, and as sub-title reads, “everyone who works with other people’s children”.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Half-day workshop<br>Methodology uses booklet, group discussion, questionnaire, flip-chart recording, examination of body language, role-play.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Childminders, nursery or family centre workers, playgroup, pre-school, crèche and after-school workers and nannies of non-age-specific children.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | NO<br>Does not mention smacking or hitting directly. Just focuses on getting those working <i>in loco parentis</i> to ignore challenging behaviour and notice and reinforce positive behaviour. |

### **Assessment of additional materials**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationships ?**

No, the focus is on child minders.

#### **4/Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

No, although drawn up with childminders in mind the materials “can also be used with arrange of people who work with young children, in a variety of settings”.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best but needing support ?**

No, not directly as it is focussed on people who care for other people's children.

#### **6/ Does it explore and explore issues around gender ?**

No, says the application of expectations and rules are suitable for both genders.

#### **7/ Is the pack suitable for families with children with disabilities ?**

No, not mentioned.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, there are representations of children from racial minorities. However, facilitators are urged to be sensitive to those for whom English is “not their mother tongue”.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy problems ?**

Yes, although for carers of other people’s children, the pack is easy to follow for people with literacy problems and facilitators are asked to give consideration to those who “don’t feel comfortable about writing”.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in use of the pack ?**

No

| <b>‘WE CAN WORK IT OUT’ PACK</b>                                       |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Save the Children  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting groups   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Half-day workshops<br>Methodology includes booklet and leaflet encouraging group and paired discussion, questionnaire, flip-chart recording, examination of body language, role-play.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents and those who work with Parents of under 8s  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Entire pack geared towards providing alternatives. It identifies acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, good communication, negotiation, provision of options, encouragement of problem-solving and praise. It doesn't suggest providing distractions or ignoring certain negative behaviour. Purpose is to focus on accentuating reward for positive behaviour, and addressing negative behaviour head-on, mainly through good communication skills. |

### **Assessment against additional criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationships ?**

Yes, stresses parent-child dynamic and also the place of child in the home.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, materials can be used with grandparents, adoptive parents and so on. It is also particularly flexible in that e.g. worksheets can be photocopied, sections dipped in and out off.

**5/ Does it see the parent as trying their best but needing support ?**

Yes, states that parents can't be with children 24 hour a day, that children are not little angels and that many parents "struggle to deal with children's challenging behaviour".

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues of gender ?**

No, its stance is the same as the "Lets work together pack".

**7/ Is the pack suitable for families of children with disabilities ?**

No, although some of the exercises may be adaptable it does not specifically mentioned children with special needs.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes as before representations of families from minority backgrounds and an urge to the facilitator to be sensitive to English as a second language.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy problems ?**

Yes, again encourages sensitivity from the facilitator and the materials are user friendly and easy to understand.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the pack ?**

No, however, there are facilitators guidance notes.

| <b>‘WE CAN WORK IT OUT’ LEAFLET</b>                                    |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Save the Children   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting groups  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Could be used for half-day workshop alone, but accompanies the pack.<br>Methodology gives practical tips by provision of ‘will smacking help ?’ to particular(wide-ranging) scenarios and then an alternative that ‘would work better’. Ends with a list of DOs and DON’Ts. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of under 8s to take home and read over.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Core of booklet offers a number of alternatives and generally discourages punishment. Says ignoring minor negative behaviour can work. Stress is on good communication, negotiation, giving options, warnings and encouraging problem-solving.                       |

### **Assessment against additional criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of the family relationship ?**

Yes, Gives examples of many parent child situation and wider family situations where discipline issue may arise.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the story-book layout could be adapted with ease to a number of different situations.

#### **5/ Does it see the parent as trying their best but needing support ?**

Yes, It realises that parenting is “one of the most demanding jobs we’ll ever do” and goes on to recognise the “days we’re pushed to breaking point”. The booklet gives practical tips to better parenting in the form primer.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No, shares the perspective of other Save the Children materials.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for families with children with disabilities ?**

No, not mentioned.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race?**

Yes, as in the other Save the Children materials.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy problems ?**

Yes as in the other Save the Children materials.

**10/ Does the pack display a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the pack ?**

No, for parents to take home and is an accompaniment to the previous pack.

| <b>‘LISTENING TO CHILDREN’ BOOKLET</b>                                 |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | This is basically a practical guide stressing importance of listening. Methodology is to section off booklet into different areas of listening relative firstly to age, to the family generally and to children with disabilities. Focus is upon allocation of time and space, avoidance of being overly critical or judgemental and it advises parents to spend time reading with their children. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 0-teenagers to take home and read over.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>In that the premise of the booklet is that listening strategies help parents who might otherwise resort to smacking or hitting. The opening preamble states that parents who can’t communicate well are more likely in times of frustration to smack or hit.  |

### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationships**

Yes, sees parents/child relations as the focus and “offers some ideas for ways to improve communication in the whole family”.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, is it flexible ?**

Yes, The bullet point presentation and neat sectioning throughout this booklet makes it both accessible and adaptable.

#### **5/Does it see parents as trying their best and needing support ?**

Yes, the booklet is part of the full stop campaign to end child cruelty and recognises its programmes must be designed to help and support children and families. Within this booklet, parents are encouraged to find time for themselves and receive support through sharing experiences with other parents in order to gain “confidence to cope with bringing up children”.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues of gender ?**

No, in the introduction it states clearly that “the booklet is non-gender specific and applies equally to boys and girls.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Yes it has a small section on “children with a serious illness or disability”.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, It has many illustrations of non-white groups and deals in a short section with what parents should do if their child is encountering racism or racist views.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes although it employs some longer words and difficult terminology, there are many illustrations as well.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, the content would appear to be equally accessible to all classes.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the pack ?**

No

| <b>‘PARENTING A ROUGH GUIDE’ PACK</b>                                  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting group, voluntary bodies, those working with parents on a collective or one-to-one basis.   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks, but 2 hours per session.<br>Methodology consists of using the pack comprising three booklets including general notes for group leaders, general notes for parents, and group activities. Format is use of flipcharts and handouts, group discussion, voice exercise, role-play, also asks parents to make a behaviour chart to monitor their responses to their children, relaxation activities, and use of smiles and ignoring techniques to draw out reactions in groupwork. At one stage (Activity 17), there is also a guided discussion. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 2-7 year olds   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>The pack discusses issues and scenarios, and encourages parents to find the messages themselves. Throughout there are practical exercises for parents to take home. The stress is on rewarding positive behaviour and good communication skills to address and counter negative behaviour.  |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, the pack explores situations in the home and in the family generally as well as parent-child relations. It says help and support from relatives who also care for their children is important, and additionally have a useful “mediation” role if problems arise.

**4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the materials recognise that “it is up to every parent in their own family situation, with their own uniquely individual children to find the solutions and ways of working which are right for them, and designed the materials with this in mind.

**5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, while recognising many parents need help with at least some aspects of parenting it says this doesn't mean that they can't function perfectly well most of the time without turning to experts. Pack is developed not to “undermine parents belief in their own ability to cope, but to support it.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Makes no mention of or illustration of issues around disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, the pack employs illustrations of different racial groups, but doesn't deal with race as an issue.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, the pack is simple to read and has many drawings.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, the content of the pack is equally applicable.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, but offers a helpline for information around issues.

| <b>‘WHAT CAN A PARENT DO ?’ PACK</b>                                   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Family Caring Trust   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes: parenting groups, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | 8 weekly sessions lasting 2 hours<br>Methodology uses an introductory video (25 minutes), a programme video (10 minutes a session), the the ‘Leader’s Guide’, participants’ handbook, and four audio tapes. Activities include small group discussion, role-play, relaxation sessions, and optional religious-reflection period. Winds up with a short socialisation forum. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 5-15 year olds   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>As well as a chapter specifically on discipline focused on the use of consequences and ‘firmness’, there are chapters focused on the alternative strategies of addressing needs, encouragement, listening, communication and involving the family.   |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, concentrates on relations between parent and child but sees a role for grandparents and the extended family. Says the aim of the course is to build genuine respect between family members.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, advises the “leader” to be flexible and adaptable with the pack which is intended as a “suggested script with guidelines” not a rule book. However, the pack is very structured and would need an experienced facilitator to adapt materials.

**5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, recognises parents may need support from a range of sources such as the “parent teacher associations, church, or local organisation which is interested in family life.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, does employ some drawings of different racial groups, but in its section covering religious belief, it is thoroughly Christian in content.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the pack feels that it is “written in simple language” and left out many good ideas in order to be “simple and practical”. However, the text is dense throughout and the illustrations are not very informative. Some of the tables and the “getting in touch” section are easy to follow and use simple terms. The pack itself recognises that parents will need “some skills” to take part.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes it appears to be somewhat idealistic in its content and parents felt the video to be particularly so.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Not in the pack although it is very structured so any parents can take some training in running a group. However, the FCT do provide a separate training pack for training facilitators.

| <b>‘MANHOOD’ PACK/BOOK</b>   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Steve Biddulph   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes, and men’s groups focused on raising boys.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No time scale<br>Consists of a book with chapters on different aspects of manhood ending in practical suggestions called ‘in a nutshell’. The section on ‘being a real father’ sets out a methodology characterised by emphasis on doing activities  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Men of children (mainly boys) from 0-adolescence.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Says that the essence is good communication and need to make children feel involved. However, Biddulph feels that the father should take the more disciplinarian approach and can even, with boys especially, adopt ‘a certain good-natured combativeness in order to get the message through’. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, the book explores all aspects of manhood and contextualises the father-son relationship within the overall development of the family.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

No, the section relating to fatherhood is focussed on raising boys, and although some of the material could be lifted, the book is generally a compact homogenous guide set within conventional chapters (one of our key professionals had found the materials of use with a parents group however).

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, there is a chapter on men’s groups which seems to recognise the need for support and encouragement from various sources “to make personal change easier).

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, Biddulph has a very gender specific approach and deals separately with fathers and sons and fathers and daughters, he also looks separately at mothers and sons.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, doesn't mention or deal with disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, looks at the role of fathers in different cultures but only does so fleetingly and frequently through the lens of looking at tribal societies.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the book is dense and not readily accessible or well enough illustrated for those with literacy problems. (However, there are tapes covering the same issues).

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, the context set by Biddulph is heavily influenced by Australian and American society and appears to show a middle class bias, for example when Biddulph talks about fathers creating a space of their own within the family home he has clearly little concept of the lack of space in most council houses.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No

| <b>‘RAISING BOYS’ PACK/TAPES</b>                                       |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Steve Biddulph   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes and men’s groups focused on raising boys.   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No time scale<br>Consists of 2 tapes (3 hours).<br>Side one examines development of boys in three stages, side two, the effects of hormones on boys psychology. Side three looks at the separate roles of the father and the mother. Side four looks at boys and sexuality. Methodology is basically to listen to the tapes. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Men of children (mainly boys) from 0-adolescence.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses teaching good communication and teaching control techniques.   |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

As in previous book.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, some of the tape is transferable and adaptable as it looks at different aspects and has distinct topics. However, by virtue of the form (an audio tape) there are restrictions on the flexibility of its use and the content deals only with boys.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, the tape realises men face many obstacles and difficulties in approaching parenting and need help and guidance to discard old stereotypical father roles and adopt newer, more understanding and “hands on” roles.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, The tape is gender specific - only deals with fathers and sons.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, doesn't mention or deal with disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, but looks at roles of fathers in tribal societies more than dealing with race in any specific manner.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, the audio tapes don't use complex terminology.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, as in previous book.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No

| <b>‘THE ASSERTIVENESS PROGRAMME’ PACK</b>                              |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Family Caring Trust   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes, parenting groups, statutory organisations, and voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Seven week programme<br>Methodology consists of using the two booklets (the “Leader’s Guide” and the parental handbook “Being Assertive”), and a video cassette. Activities comprise group discussion, role-play, use of video tapes, relaxation session and optional religious reflection. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Suggests questioning, openness in communications, listening, finding space for oneself, ignoring certain minor negative behaviour.   |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, concentrates on relations between parent and child but sees a role for grandparents and the extended family. Says the aim of the course is to build genuine respect between family members.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, advises the “leader” to be flexible and adaptable with the pack, which is intended as a “suggested script with guidelines”, not a rule book. However, the pack is very structured and would need an experienced facilitator to adapt materials.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, recognises parents may need support from a range of sources such as the “parent teacher associations, church, or local organisation which is interested in family life.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, does employ some drawings of different racial groups, but in its section covering religious belief, it is thoroughly Christian in content.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the pack feels that it is “written in simple language” and left out many good ideas in order to be “simple and practical”. However, the text is dense throughout and the illustrations are not very informative. Some of the tables and the “getting in touch” section are easy to follow and use simple terms. The pack itself recognises that parents will need “some skills” to take part.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, it appears to be somewhat idealistic in its content and parents felt the video to be particularly so.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Not in the pack although it is very structured so any parents can take some training in running a group. However, the FCT do provide a separate training pack for training facilitators.

| <b>‘PARENTING TEENAGERS’ PACK</b>                                      |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Family Caring Trust   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting, parenting groups, statutory organisations and voluntary bodies   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Six week programme<br>Methodology uses two booklets (the “Leader’s Guide” and the parental handbook, “What Can the Parent of a Teenager Do ?”), and a video cassette (15 minutes each session). Activities include group discussion, role-play, use of video tape, relaxation session, and optional religious-reflection period.            |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 13-19 year olds  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | NO<br>Violence against teenagers is not mentioned, but more the use of lectures, scolding, shouting, nagging, threatening and criticising is seen as the negative parental response. To these it stresses the alternatives of teaching consequence, the need for limits, being firm but proportionate, and nurturing responsible attitudes. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, concentrates on relations between parent and child but sees a role for grandparents and the extended family. Says the aim of the course is to build genuine respect between family members.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, advises the “leader” to be flexible and adaptable with the pack, which is intended as a “suggested script with guidelines”, not a rule book. However the pack is very structured and would need an experienced facilitator to adapt materials.

**5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, recognises parents may need support from a range of sources such as the “parent teacher associations, church, or local organisation which is interested in family life.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, does employ some drawings of different racial groups, but in its section covering religious belief, it is thoroughly Christian in content.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the pack feels that it is “written in simple language” and left out many good ideas in order to be “simple and practical”. However, the text is dense throughout and the illustrations are not very informative. Some of the tables and the “getting in touch” section are easy to follow and use simple terms. The pack itself recognises that parents will need “some skills” to take part.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, it appears to be somewhat idealistic in its content and parents felt the video to be particularly so.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Not in the pack although it is very structured so any parents can take some training in running a group. However, the FCT do provide a separate training pack for training facilitators.

| <b>‘FROM PRAM TO PRIMARY SCHOOL’ PACK</b>                              |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Family Caring Trust   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes, parenting groups, statutory organisations, and voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Seven or eight weekly sessions. Methodology uses two booklets (the “Leader’s Guide” and the parental handbook “From Pram to Primary School”), and a video cassette. Activities include group discussion, role-play, use of video tapes, relaxation session, and optional religious reflection period. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | 0-6 year olds but could be used, it says, up to 7 and even 8 year olds.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses the use of ignoring some types of negative behaviour, e.g. swearing, and encourages parents to take time out for themselves. It also puts forward praise and encouragement, listening and ‘play-listening’. Offering choices, teaching consequences and self-discipline also mooted.  |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, concentrates on relations between parent and child but sees a role for grandparents and the extended family. Says the aim of the course is to build genuine respect between family members.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, advises the “leader” to be flexible and adaptable with the pack, which is intended as a “suggested script with guidelines”, not a rule book. However, the pack is very structured and would need an experienced facilitator to adapt materials.

**5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, recognises parents may need support from a range of sources such as the “parent teacher associations, church, or local organisation which is interested in family life.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, does employ some drawings of different racial groups, but in its section covering religious belief, it is thoroughly Christian in content.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the pack feels that it is “written in simple language” and left out many good ideas in order to be “simple and practical”. However, the text is dense throughout and the illustrations are not very informative. Some of the tables and the “getting in touch” section are easy to follow and use simple terms. The pack itself recognises that parents will need “some skills” to take part.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, it appears to be somewhat idealistic in its content and parents felt the video to be particularly so.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Not in the pack although it is very structured so any parents can take some training in running a group. However, the FCT do provide a separate training pack for training facilitators.

| <b>‘PARENTING AND SEX’ PACK</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Family Caring Trust   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Anyone carrying out parenting programmes, parenting groups, statutory organisations, and voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Five weekly sessions. Methodology uses two booklets (the “Leader’s Guide” and the parental handbook “Parenting and Sex”). Activities include group discussion, role-play, relaxation session, and optional religious reflection period. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children, the pack says ‘from your child is born until beyond adolescence’.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | NO<br>Violence is not mentioned though the pack does talk of the inappropriateness of over-reacting, panicking, and enforcing ‘hang-ups’. It focuses on good listening and communication skills.  |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, concentrates on relations between parent and child but sees a role for grandparents and the extended family. Says the aim of the course is to build genuine respect between family members.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, advises the “leader” to be flexible and adaptable with the pack, which is intended as a “suggested script with guidelines”, not a rule book. However the pack is very structured and would need an experienced facilitator to adapt materials.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, recognises parents may need support from a range of sources such as the “parent teacher associations, church, or local organisation which is interested in family life.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, looks at and deals separately with work with male and female sexuality.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No mention or illustration of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, does employ some drawings of different racial groups, but in its section covering religious belief, it is thoroughly Christian in content.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties?**

No, the pack feels that it is “written in simple language” and left out many good ideas in order to be “simple and practical”. However, the text is dense throughout and the illustrations are not very informative. Some of the tables and the “getting in touch” section are easy to follow and use simple terms. The pack itself recognises that parents will need “some skills” to take part.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

Yes, it appears to be somewhat idealistic in its content and parents felt the video to be particularly so.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Not in the pack although it is very structured so any parents can take some training in running a group. However, the FCT do provide a separate training pack for training facilitators.

| <b>‘COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS FOR PARENTS’ PACK</b>                        |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Creggan Health Information Programme in partnership with the Community Addiction Unit, the Northlands Centre, and Family Planning Unit.                                 |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Creggan Health Information Programme  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | 9 week course<br>Methodology includes group and small group discussion, plenary group, role-play, questionnaires, and quizzes.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of children aged from 9 onwards but could be used with all parents, i.e. of younger children.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Focus is on getting perspective, good communications, listening skills, problem-solving, provision of choices, consistency, looking at rewards and negotiations. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, issues such as attitudes are all examined in the context of the wider family relationships, how parents related to their own parents and how wider society influences our relationships.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, materials are organised around specific topics and can stand alone. The use of handouts quizzes and questionnaires make the pack accessible and easy to use.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, sees issues of support as central to the pack and particularly so around difficult issues such as anger, disciplining teenagers and parents fears around their child’s sexual coming of age.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, and particularly in the section dealing with sex education and issues for parents arising from young peoples relationships.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Not specifically. It may not adequately address specific issues for parents of children with disabilities but provides a framework within attitudes can be explored. The communications skills elements would be suitable for use with parents of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race**

No

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, there is little or no reading on the course and any writing is done within small group work or individually so that parents with difficulties can access support from the facilitators.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, but training is offered to local parents in facilitation skills, presentation skills and group work.

| <b>‘EDUCATION FOR PARENTHOOD’ PACK</b>                                 |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | The Children’s Society   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Consists of 5 booklets (Units 1-5), exploring parenting aspects.<br>Methodology consists of accredited system of activity and resource sheets, use of discussion groups of differing sizes and one-to-one. Use of diagrams, questionnaires, interview and public survey work, wall displays (using photographs), visit to other places children are looked after. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Not stated, but appears to be teenagers and perhaps teenage parents.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | NO<br>Unit 4 deals with the law and physical abuse of children, and acquaints teenagers with how much violence in the home occurs in Britain, and in other countries and societies. Indicates how many countries and schools worldwide prohibit hitting children.  |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, sections of the pack deal with looking at “children, the family and the community”, as well as the extended family. Speaks of a “network of relationships”.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible**

Yes, each of the 5 booklets in this accredited course stand alone and can be easily adapted for work with parents.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, unit 2 specifically examines a number of necessary resources, including financial and community help.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Encourages some discussion groups (particularly around issues of personal expectations, particular units for single sex groups (pack is mainly aimed at young women).

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, although unit 5 looks at health and development, disability is not addressed.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, there is throughout a multi cultural approach of some depth which looks at numerous issues around birth and marriage needs for example, no mention of the Travelling community.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, as the pack is focussed on activities and directed at schools the material is quite accessible and the text used is well spaced out and simply phrased. (However, as an accredited pack it would require quite a high degree of literacy).

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, indeed, there is a lot of information on claiming a wide range of benefits.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

This is an NVQ training pack for use with teenagers.

**NB. Although this pack is not aimed at parents it has information and exercises, which could be appropriate for work with parents.**

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Parents Advice Centre  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parents groups, voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Consists of a handout, and methodology is for parents to read over suggestions and then try them out in order to parent more effectively. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children, but says that 0-6 years is an important developmental stage.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses good communication, positive parenting skills, setting a good example, saying sorry, withdrawal of privileges, and grounding.                          |

### Assessment of additional Criteria

#### Criteria

#### 3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?

Yes, the pack states that it is set in a context which recognises that “all human relationships are inter related and interdependent”.

#### 4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?

Yes, under headings such as Communication, Discipline and Behaviour the pack gives compact, adaptable and general advice. It provides a “broad overview which should be appropriate to most situations”.

#### 5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?

Yes, the pack was devised in response to parents requests for handouts on specific topics, problems.

#### 6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?

No, however it notes in the first section on “children’s needs” that parental attitudes and expectations are different according to the sex of the child. Reinforcement of these attitudes is an important factor in determining the child’s attitudes and behaviour.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, doesn't mention disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, doesn't mention race.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

In the available copy the text was dense and it had no illustrations or images and no simple handouts.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, the pack is a very general guide.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, but training offered by the PAC on other programmes such as the "Steps", accredited programme.

| <b>‘PARENTING MATTERS PROJECT’ PACK</b>                                |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Barnardo’s   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parent and toddler groups, community centre, parents/fathers groups, and those involved in caring for children.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | 6 to 8 weeks<br>Methodology involves discussion groups of various sizes, use of video, and role-play.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children and teenagers.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses encouragement, building self-esteem in children, developing good communication, setting boundaries, sharing responsibilities and understanding negative behaviour. |

## **Assessment of additional Criteria**

### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, the pack is designed with the aim in mind of helping parents “develop and learn skills which may help family relationships”.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the pack has been specifically tailored for use in a variety of settings, e.g. with parent and toddler groups, those wishing to be foster parents, parents who are separated from their children.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes. Stresses support needed for parents in local groups and in the community.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No. However, the section dealing with teenagers, “Living well with teenagers” deals with gender-specific issues.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Yes. There is work offered with the pack for parents with children with a disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes. As above, work is offered for groups from ethnic minorities.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes. Discussion takes precedence over text in the pack's format.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Yes

| <b>LIFESTART'S 'DISCIPLINE' PACK</b>                                   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Lifestart Foundation  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Lifestart family visitors   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Monthly visits of up to 5 years,<br>methodology consists of one-to-one meeting with parents and some small group discussion.   |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 8 months to 51 months children.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stress is upon consistency, being positive, specific, and rewarding desirable behaviour. Also suggests planning to fill a child's day, give a sense of order for the sake of building feelings of security and confidence, in addition to simply distracting children. Sometimes it encourages parents to ignore behaviour where possible. |

## **Assessment of additional Criteria**

### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes. Lifestart's focus is parent and child relations, but it also 'makes a positive contribution to the family as a whole'.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes. Within the structure of the family visitor-parent relationship, sections on 'anger' or 'parenting styles', for example, can be dipped into and out of as and when required.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes. Phase two of a Lifestart programme specifically addresses the 'needs of the parent' and throughout their 'para-professional' family visitors aim to 'work

with parents in a respectful way to enable them to develop their parenting skills'.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No. In their 1999 evaluation of 3 Lifestart programmes their failure to appeal to men specifically was seen as a weakness.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Yes, but this work has been piloted in the Hazelbank/Ballymagroarty area of Derry.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the pack is dense and lacks illustrations, however, Lifestart family visitors have a range of media which they endeavour to tailor to an individual family's needs and abilities.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Yes, but solely for their own in-house staff.

| <b>‘OH NO YOU DON’T!’ PACK</b>   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Early Childhood Development Unit, University of Bristol.  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Community Mothers   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Weekly or monthly visits for the first year and a methodology in which family visitors go through the materials, which employ cartoons, on a one-to-one basis with the parents. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 0-5 year old children.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Outlines basics of praise and reward and rewards sometimes, tolerance, timing, closeness, finding distractions and ignoring some negative behaviour.                     |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes. The stress is on parent-child relations but how children react to new baby arrivals is dealt with.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes. Each cartoon storyboard deals with specific behavioural problems and can be utilised in a variety of contexts, particularly because of the fact that they are very simple to follow.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes. The storyboards show a parent consulting with her doctor because of stress and recognises throughout how difficult it is for parents to find time.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No. Boys and girls are both used, but there is no attempt to deal specifically with gender.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No. There are some drawings of parents from different racial groups, but race is not addressed as an issue.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes. The cartoon storyboard layout and terminology used is very clear and simple.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No. The cartoon representations do not portray any one particular social class group.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Yes, but it is (for Community Mothers) in house training.

| <b>‘PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTING’ PACK</b>                             |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Centre for Fun and Families   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Health Visitors and Barnardo’s  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Methodology employs handouts and diagrams, and one-to-one discussion.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses use of the ‘time-out’, praise, reward, and effective communication. Also contains 7 points on the inefficacy of smacking. |

## **Assessment of additional Criteria**

### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes. Positive parenting is seen as essential to improving wider familial relations.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the layout is very accessible and can be adapted and used in a number of different ways.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes. In the context of being introduced by health visitors this pack takes notice of the pressures on parents and the need for professional support.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No, gender is not specifically addressed.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, disability is not mentioned.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, multi-racial imagery is employed but race is not addressed as an issue.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes. The aid health visitors and the simple layout make the pack quite accessible to those with literacy problems.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No. Health Visitors are trained already, though Barnardo's offer other parenting pack training.

| <b>‘SUPPORT &amp; INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF TEENAGERS’ BOOKLET</b>    |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Barnardo’s   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting groups and voluntary bodies.   |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Methodology is to read through the booklet, reflect and practice the recommendations.   |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 11 to 19 year olds  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Although it doesn’t mention hitting specifically, the booklet does make reference to ‘lashing out’, though it fails to state whether by this it means verbally or physically. Stress is on combating this tendency with good communication, recognition of boundaries, respect, teaching consequence, and being flexible. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes. Booklet recognises that teenagers may need someone, perhaps in the extended family ‘to look up to’, and generally the booklet makes clear that parents need all the help they can get during this trying time.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the booklet sets out compact coherent arguments in an easy-to-read form which parents can dip in and out of.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes. In the introduction it states, ‘parents of babies and young children are in regular contact with a health visitor yet parents of teenagers also need support’. It also sees the parenting advisory process as two-way and appeals for parents to give opinions on the booklet and make suggestions.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No, does not address gender issues.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, does not mention disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, has some multi racial images but does not address racial issues.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

No, the booklet comprises dense text and even the bulleted points feature very small type and lengthy terminology.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, but Barnardo's offer training generally.

| <b>‘TIME OUT FOR PARENTS’ PACK</b>                                     |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Positive Parenting Publications  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting groups, statutory organisations and voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | 5 week course based on the Positive Parenting pack comprising leader’s notes, hints on presentation, and master copies for overhead projectors. Methodology consists of using handouts, group and paired discussion, visual images, with optional sessions focusing on single parents, dad’s role, and understanding teenagers.                      |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of children of all ages but specifically 0-7s.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses rewards, discussion around negativity of smacking, time-outs, listening skills, setting ‘loving limits’, how to handle conflict with teenagers, but argues that their policy knows of no evidence that smacking from 16 months to 4 years does any harm, though it says that continual smacking or smacking in anger is problematic. |

**Actual pack unavailable – information above drawn from a promotional leaflet**

| <b>‘PARENT-TO-PARENT ON SPECIAL NEEDS’ PACK</b>                        |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Positive Parenting Publications  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Parenting groups, statutory organisations and voluntary bodies.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | No stated number of weeks<br>Methodology consists of using small group discussion and therapy sessions.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of non-age-specific children with special needs, but appears to be designed for younger children.  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Stresses rewards, time-out, listening skills, setting “loving limits”, and all in the context of “mother, don’t smother” ideas about the need for discipline with special needs children. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, sees child-parent relations as inseparable from wider family relations.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, use of handouts and illustrations make the pack easily adaptable.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, and furthermore sees that specific help is needed for single parents.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No, but does offer sections looking at the role of fathers.

#### **7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Yes. This pack is especially for families of children with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, the pack was designed largely for use in inner city areas of England and offers multi racial examples.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, textual use is minimal. For the most part, the pack is very visual.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, it was designed specifically to avoid class bias (see no.8).

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Yes. They have a policy of training (in this instance only parents with experience of parenting a child with special needs) in the use of their materials.

| <b>‘PARENTS MOVING ON’ PACK</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Parents Advice Centre and Southern Travellers Early Years Partnership   |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Travellers’ support groups and anyone carrying out parenting programmes.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Three one-day workshops or three two-hour sessions and guide to help from statutory bodies. Course uses booklet, flip-charts, illustrations, role-play and small group work. Also uses ice-breaking and winding down exercises. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of traveller children from early years to teenagers, and parents of children in this age bracket generally.   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | YES<br>Proposes numerous alternatives under heading “Seeing Red Without Seeing Blood”, including the time-out, communication and memory regress to remember the child as it was when a baby.                                    |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, there is a specific section “images and pictures of family life”, which addresses parenting in relation to the difference between image and reality within families.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes. Although specifically targeted at parents of travellers, the course states it is easily adaptable to parents in the settled community and the range of materials also permits the pack’s flexibility.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, there is an entire section focused on supporting parents.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, there is a section which specifically deals with women and their bodies/health, and attention is drawn to the importance of gender roles at the beginning of the pack.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, doesn't deal with disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, the whole pack is created for parents of traveller children and directly addresses issues relative to race.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, the pack concentrates on the need for a minimum of written material and uses simple and well-spaced out presentation, because of the high level of literacy problems among travellers.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, although the travelling community is normally defined as a working class community, the pack doesn't exhibit a particular class bias and is adaptable for other parents.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, but the pack contains a substantial list of both voluntary and statutory organisations which can offer help to traveller parents and groups supporting those parents.

| <b>‘THE DELTA PRE-SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROGRAMME’ PACK</b>                  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Western Education and Library Board  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Health Visitors and anyone else carrying out parenting programmes, including nurseries.  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Course lasts 5 to 6 weeks in half-hour to 1 hour sessions. Consists of two introductory booklets and three stages booklets which are age-specific (0-2 years), (2-3 ½ years), and (3 ½ -5 years). Small group work chaired by a teacher and supply of books for parents to take home and read to children. Illustrations are used throughout the pack. |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | Parents of 0-5s  |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN | - | NO<br>Doesn't address discipline issues at all, focus is on helping children learn and develop language skills.  |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes. The pack looks at parenting in the context of the entire family, and its particular relationship to the schools.

#### **4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

No, the pack is quite firmly focused on being used by Health Visitors and teachers.

#### **5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, sees help and advice for parents especially from professionals as essential.

#### **6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

No, doesn't address gender at all.

#### **7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

No, makes no mention of disability.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

No, doesn't address race.

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes. The use of various illustrations and key words as opposed to dense text makes the work quite accessible.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, the pack has no class bias.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

Yes. Health Visitors particularly can train others in the pack.

| <b>‘THE ALL RIGHT AT HOME ? PROMOTING RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY LIFE PACK</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| PRODUCTION ORGANISATION  | - | Barnardo’s, Children’s Rights Office, The Children’s Society, NCH Action for Children, NSPCC, and Save the Children.  |
| ORGANISATIONAL USE   | - | Professionals working with parents  |
| STRUCTURE OF COURSE  | - | Laid out as a guide with 9 sections and 15 activities and discussions, notes for facilitators, related to activities exploring children’s rights. Methods used include small and large group work, role play, development of charts etc.  |
| TARGET GROUP   | - | All parents, non-age specific   |
| MESSAGES FOR PARENTS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO SMACKING OR HITTING CHILDREN                                 | - | YES<br>Contains a section on “the right to protection from all forms of violence and abuse”, with a very clear anti- smacking message. Section contains activities for exploring issues around physical punishment with the emphasis on positive parenting, alternatives cited are rewards versus punishment, limit setting, having realistic expectations, consistency, recognising and acknowledging your feelings, knowing your own “flashpoints” and developing strategies for dealing with them. |

### **Assessment of additional Criteria**

#### **Criteria**

#### **3/ Is it set in the context of family relationship ?**

Yes, the “Central aim of pack is to promote understanding of the rights of children and to demonstrate that respecting rights can enhance the quality of family life”.

**4/ Adaptation of materials, are they flexible ?**

Yes, the pack is designed as a guide to be used as required, each section deals with a specific right and can stand alone, be incorporated into another parenting programme or the whole guide can be used as a course. There are very detailed facilitator's notes for each section.

**5/ Does it see parents as doing their best and needing support ?**

Yes, the introduction clearly lays out the pressures on parents and acknowledges that "most parents want to do their best for their children". Also, in some sections there are suggestions for involving the parents' groups in adapting materials.

**6/ Does it offer and explore issues around gender ?**

Yes, for example, in the section on the right to information and to hold your own views there are activities which clearly explore the differences in parents' attitudes to boys and girls.

**7/ Is the pack suitable for parents of children with disabilities ?**

Yes, the pack offers clear opportunities to explore issues around disabilities.

**8/ Does it offer multi racial examples or explore issues of race ?**

Yes, the pack gives the opportunity to explore issues of race, e.g. again in the section on information

**9/ Is it accessible to parents with literacy difficulties ?**

Yes, the activities suggested in the pack employ many group work, role play and discussion tools which do not require literacy skills.

**10/ Does the pack exhibit a social class bias ?**

No, the pack is suitable for use with all parents.

**11/ Offer training in the use of the materials ?**

No, the pack doesn't offer training but has very comprehensive guidance notes. The materials acknowledge the sensitivity involved in raising some issues with parents and are targeted at professionals.

## **The Materials – Additional Information**

### **Sure Start**

Sure Start is a cross-sectoral, government sponsored programme of support for children 0-3 and their families in areas of deprivation or need. The Sure Start Programme does not have specific materials but each project chooses available relevant materials offering a variety of support to families. Within each partnership statutory and community professionals carry out programmes to meet the needs of the 0-3 and their families in their geographical area.

For example the Sure Start partnership in Ballymagroarty/Hazelbank in Derry have local Health Visitors, Family Visitors, Lifestart, Community Mothers Programme and community workers all offering a range of projects to support parents in the area.

The Sure Start Partnership in the Dry Arch Centre in Dungiven use a range of one to one and group work support incorporating Barnardo's Parenting Matters programmes, The Delta Programme and in-house tailored programmes specific to the needs of individual or small groups.

### **Homestart**

The Homestart Programme is a home visiting initiative using trained volunteers to befriend families. Referrals are accepted to the programme from anyone, although, most come through local health visitors and social workers. Homestart will provide specific parenting support either one to one or in groups if the need is identified by a group of parents or if statutory professionals request specific support on a behaviour management issue. There are at present 18/19 Homestart projects available with plans for new projects in the near future.

Some Homestart projects have used materials provided by:

- Barnardo's Parenting Matters
- Family Caring Trust
- Positive Parenting Publications

Homestart has a no smacking policy and offer parents support to explore alternative solutions to discipline issues.

### **Bounty Pregnancy Guide**

Every prospective new mother is given a Bounty pack during her antenatal visits. Included in the pack is a guide for parents through the nine months of pregnancy and covering the first days and weeks after birth. The guide is divided into 14 chapters ranging from chapter one on 'You and your pregnancy' to chapter fourteen offering a list of sources of help. The only chapter in the book, which deals with looking after your baby centres on

breast-feeding. The book does not deal with any behaviour management issues such as sleep patterns or dealing with babies who cry a lot. However, the book does offer a list of agencies to support parents under stress, although these are in the main London or UK based organisations. The packs also include a range of leaflets sponsored by private companies, which offer advice and information on issues relating to pregnancy and small babies.

### **Internet Sources of information on Discipline issues**

A wide variety of useful information and advice is available to parents online. Parents need only type in discipline, parenting or spanking to access websites offering support particularly on alternatives to smacking.

Laid out below are examples of sites available:

- Better Behaviour – Dr Severe teaches us to behave so our kids will, too! Learn how to work as a team with your children. Includes a message board and the 10 most common discipline mistakes parents make.
- Get your ANGRIES Out! – A resource for helping children handle anger, including practical tips on conflict resolution and alternatives to punishment. Offers information for parents on dealing with anger and many more features focusing on anger management issues.
- Ten Reasons Not to Hit your Kids – An article on discipline by Jan Hunt.
- 10 Keys to Successful Parenting – An online guide focussing on disciplining in a way that teaches responsibility by motivating our children internally, building self-esteem and making them feel loved.
- 9 Things to do Instead of Spanking – 9, thoughtful ways to handle a challenging situation with your child without spanking or physical punishment.
- Parenting Matters – Promoting a democratic style of parenting that is firm, yet fair, as well as mutually respectful. Addresses a variety of discipline issues and includes tips on handling children's aggression.
- Project Nospark – An organisation offering effective disciplinary alternatives to spanking by equipping parents and caregivers with knowledge and understanding of the myths of spanking.
- Temperament.Com – A guide focusing on behavioural individuality in infants, children and adults. The site is intended to be a clearinghouse for research and practical information about temperamental characteristics, to be used by parents, students and professionals.

All the sites offer alternatives to smacking most concentrating on building children's confidence and self esteem, using choices, consequences and rewards and encouraging parents to understand their child's behaviour. Some sites appear to be better than others, in that some are preachy and use guilt and melodramatic language to get parents attention.

For example, in "Ten Reasons not to hit your Kids" Jan Hunt, explains how "hitting children teaches them to become hitters themselves" she states, "virtually all of the most dangerous criminals were regularly threatened and

punished in childhood". While its possible research may uphold this statement it would seem contradictory to instil fear in Parents as a way of raising their self-esteem and confidence as parents. Conversely, in "Ten Keys to successful Parenting" Kathy Kavols clearly understands the stresses of daily life on parents and much more gently takes parents through steps to building children's self esteem.

One of the main problems with all the sites, however, is that they require a significant degree of literacy and understanding. It is also the case that not all parents will have access to a computer and the medium does not lend itself to the essential element, which the parents in this audit identified, the value of sharing experiences and knowledge with their own peer group.

A new website available to parents in Northern Ireland is the Netmums site. Although it is at present a mainly Belfast based site it is expanding daily as more parents access it. The site offers a range of information and advice and provides an opportunity for parents to interact with one another, share experiences and give information on what is available locally. The site provides a potential forum for parents and professionals to discuss behaviour management issues and exchange information on relevant tools.