



PARENTING FORUM NI
ALISON LOUGHLIN REGIONAL MANAGER

The Parenting Forum NI (PFNI) continually works to support parents in bringing up their children and promotes the well being of families. It recognises the diversity of parenting and represents the needs and aspirations of all parents, and those working with parents, so that policy, practice and public opinion is influenced effectively.

- An Independent Evaluation on the work of the Forum was completed in October 2005, which demonstrated a 30% increase in parents and 20% organisation membership over the year. Over 3,200 received information on the work of the Forum. The Forum successfully met all of the objectives set out by the funding bodies.
- Dissemination of 4 Newsletters and 4 Fact Sheets for parents on topics covering Child Trust Fund, Enriched Curriculum, Use of Mobile Phones and the Role of the Health Visitor. All fact sheets have been translated into Polish.
- Facilitated Consultation Sessions with parents on The Family Support Strategy, Safer Transport to Schools and Parents' Attitudes to School, Learning and Consultation.
- Co-ordinated Parent Week 2005 with over 160 events across the Province. The theme this year was Real Parents, Real Stories. The Annual Conference held in the Rosspark Hotel launched the week with 90 delegates.
- The National Occupational Standards for Working With Parents were approved by the Qualifications and Assessment Authority in May and launched during Parent Week. Over 3000 copies of the leaflet and CD have been distributed to date.
- Information seminars and sessions on the work of the Forum and Working in Partnership with Parents were held across NI with Sure Start Projects, Parent Support Groups, Fun and Facts days etc..
- Staff continue to represent the PFNI membership on various organisation and bodies in NI and lobby for positive change. PFNI lead on a number of UK wide initiatives through Parenting UK (formerly Parenting Education and Support Forum) and Life Long Learning.
- Work continues on the Europarents' Project and the website www.europarent.org was launched last year. Practitioners can access information on parenting in the other 12 European countries.

QUOTES TAKEN FROM EVALUATION

- "The consultations are more than consultations: they are an opportunity to raise issues of concern."
- "The Parenting Forum supports parents directly by influencing various groups of decision makers."
- "I learned as a result of the consultations."
- "The newsletters tell you what is going on in the community."
- "They [the Parenting Forum] are there for support when we need it."
- "The consultations gave me the chance to get a lot of things off my chest and were really informative."
- "I was able to express my opinions about issues and realise others have got similar problems."
- "Good opportunity to share problems: realise you've got a support behind you."

THE PARENTING PROJECT
SHIRLEY HAYES PROJECT WORKER

The Parenting Project has been extremely busy and demand for courses is on the increase. From April to February my post was part-time and from February I went to a full-time post.

AS EXAMPLES OF THE WORK FOR 2005/06:

APRIL - JUNE 2005 I facilitated five courses during this quarter for NICMA, EBCHIP, Homestart North Down and YMCA, Bangor. Overall 35 people attended the sessions and when we added the number of children they all had, we reached 89!

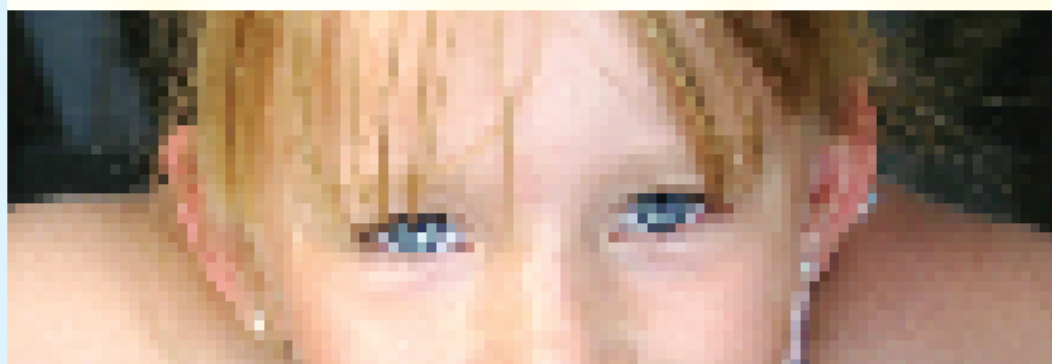
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2005 Over the summer months I ran three courses, gave an information talk on the Parenting Project to the Mater Hospital Psychiatric Unit and held interviews for the Parents Anger Management Programme (PAMP) course. The Parent Support & Guidance course started in Derry and continued on a weekly basis until mid December .

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2005 Three courses ran over this quarter, including PAMP. I also facilitated three training sessions for PAC volunteers

JANUARY - MARCH 2006 Two courses were held, one at the Mater Hospital Outpatient Unit for five sessions and the other at the Methodist Church Community Project for six sessions. Six training sessions were held for PAC volunteers and the Parent Support & Guidance course commenced in Belfast and Dungannon.

QUOTES FROM PARENTING COURSES PARTICIPANTS

- "Feel like I am not the only person in the world who cannot cope. I enjoyed sharing experiences with everyone in the group."
- "Learned that I'm not the only one who explodes at little things. I would have liked the course to have longer sessions and for more weeks."
- "It was enjoyable and fun learning things that you didn't know."
- "I was grateful that there was such a course on offer which was free, with childcare provided. Every little bit of information on making me a better mother is most appreciated."
- "Discovered that my child's development is normal and everyone is experiencing the same as me."
- "I enjoyed sharing with the group and realizing that I'm not the only grumpy old woman."



CHRISTINE CARLIN PROJECT WORKER

This has been an exceptionally busy and diverse year. There have been opportunities to do longer, tailored programmes for vulnerable families in the Magherafelt area funded by Home First Community Trust. In addition three specific programmes and workshops aimed at parents of teenagers were delivered in Ballymena, Derry and Enniskillen. The Derry group opted to continue onto a "Talking About Tough Issues" programme aimed at assisting parents to talk to their kids about drugs and alcohol and how to enhance protective factors. This was delivered in partnership with Divert, a Derry community group specialising in drugs education. Demand for programmes continues to grow with increasing interest from primary schools in the Western Board Area. The popularity of the innovative Health Promoting Homes programme in the West provided scope to work with parents on the personal development and self esteem component with six groups in Inverinstown, Strabane and Derry.

QUOTES FROM PARENTING COURSES PARTICIPANTS

- "Very well presented - overall great experience."
- "Parenting is the hardest job in the world, you enter this life as babies, grow up, fall in love, get married and have children with no experience whatsoever. You're never trained to be a parent but we do the best we can by learning by our mistakes and with a lot of help from professionals, like you, Christine."
- "I enjoyed meeting other parents, especially single parents, and knowing that I'm not the only one that makes mistakes."
- "Thanks a million for the advice, the laughs, the craic and letting us see we are parents of 'normal teenagers' after all."
- "Your parenting course has been fun and raised awareness of topics related to our children. Thanks for your input and support throughout. I have learnt a lot on this course."



THE MEN'S PROJECT
COLIN FOWLER REGIONAL MANAGER

The aim of The Men's Project (TMP) is to increase awareness of the issues facing men and boys in the north of Ireland and to promote their social inclusion. We focus, particularly, upon fathers and fatherhood. During the past year our work has included...

- Providing a "signposting service" to 85 individuals looking for sources of help.
- Directing 218 external groups to appropriate resources, support, research and contacts in the field of men's work.
- Supporting the establishment of network bodies such as the NI Father-Worker network and the Four Nations Men's Health Forum, as well as helping to sustain, consolidate and develop existing structures such as the UK Fatherhood Forum and the Men's Health Forum in Ireland.
- Disseminating the results of ARK's "Men's Life and Times" research module, and the five statistical fact sheets on "Men in Northern Ireland" that they produced for TMP.
- Updating and expanding our online directory of groups interested in men's work and issues.
- Contributing to Advisory Bodies such as the Gender Equality Advisory Panel (OFMDFM), Men's Health Reference Group (RCN), Regional Equality Liaison Panel (DHSSPS), Gender and Health Inequalities Research Project (ECNI), Young Men and Mental Health Initiative (HPA).
- Facilitating training workshops and presentations for other agencies on working with fathers and engaging with men (e.g. CINI, Home-Start NI, Northern Childcare Partnership, Fathers Matter, EBCHIP).
- Coordinating regional awareness-raising activities and events for Men's Health Week and Fathers' Day (June 2005).
- Supporting the development of new fathers' projects and men's groups.
- Completing, evaluating and presenting Kick Start 2005 (an eight month package of training and support for 18 organisations wishing to develop their work with fathers). Kick Start 2006 is, currently, underway with 17 participants.
- Helping to sustain the "Two of a Kind" initiative - the first formal dialogue between representatives of local women's work and men's work.
- Maintaining a high level of coverage for men's issues in the media.
- Providing regular updates on men's issues to key decision-makers and service providers.
- Undergoing an external evaluation.
- Maintaining and expanding the content of TMP's web site. This acts as a central information portal and showcase for local men's work (www.mensproject.org).

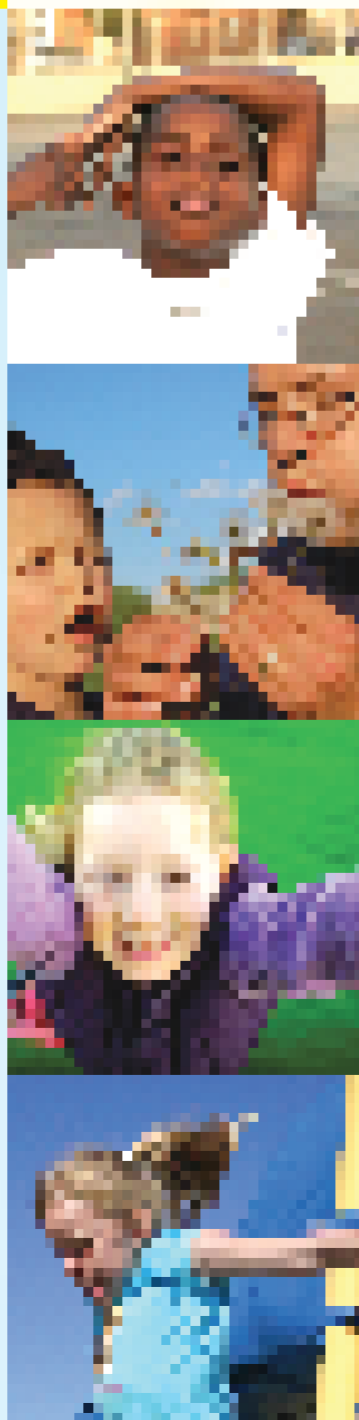
HELPLINE
GRAINNE MAGINNIS
REGIONAL MANAGER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HELPLINE SERVICES

It has been a demanding year for the Helpline and face-to-face support services. One key challenge continues to lie in recruiting enough new volunteers to maintain our current provision. However, the quality of the service goes from strength to strength, as evidenced by the excellent feedback from a recent survey of Helpline clients.

Credit for this is, of course, due to our extremely committed volunteers, and to their equally dedicated Supervisors, who deliver this unique service to parents and other family members. For its part, the organisation is committed to providing the highest standard of training and support to Helpline staff and volunteers, to help them meet the ever-changing demands of the work.

IN 2005-2006:

- The service dealt with 5246 contacts. Although this is down 7 % on the previous year, it does include a larger proportion of face-to-face contacts, which requires more time but allows greater engagement with the client.
- 27 new volunteers completed the updated Parent Support & Guidance course. A further 17 have recently commenced the programme.
- Existing volunteers attended 25 in-service training sessions across the four branches. A mixture of external trainers and PAC's in-house experts provided training on topics including anger management, domestic violence, parental separation, autistic spectrum disorder and bullying.
- Supervisors from all branches attended 3 'away-days'. The events provided invaluable opportunities for the team to exchange information, update skills and knowledge and address common challenges.
- A telephone survey of clients carried out in September showed that all clients were 'satisfied' (10%) or 'very satisfied' (90%) with the service and 97% felt 'better, calmer or reassured' after they called. 97% said they had received useful ideas or information. 80% put these suggestions into practice, and of these, more than 4 out of 5 said their problem had improved.



CONTACT DETAILS

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0808 8010 722

HELPLINE EMAIL
parents@pachelp.org

LOCAL HELPLINE NUMBERS
BELFAST: (028) 9023 8800
DERRY: (028) 7126 6663
DUNGANNON: (028) 8775 2900
BALLYMENA: (028) 2565 0099

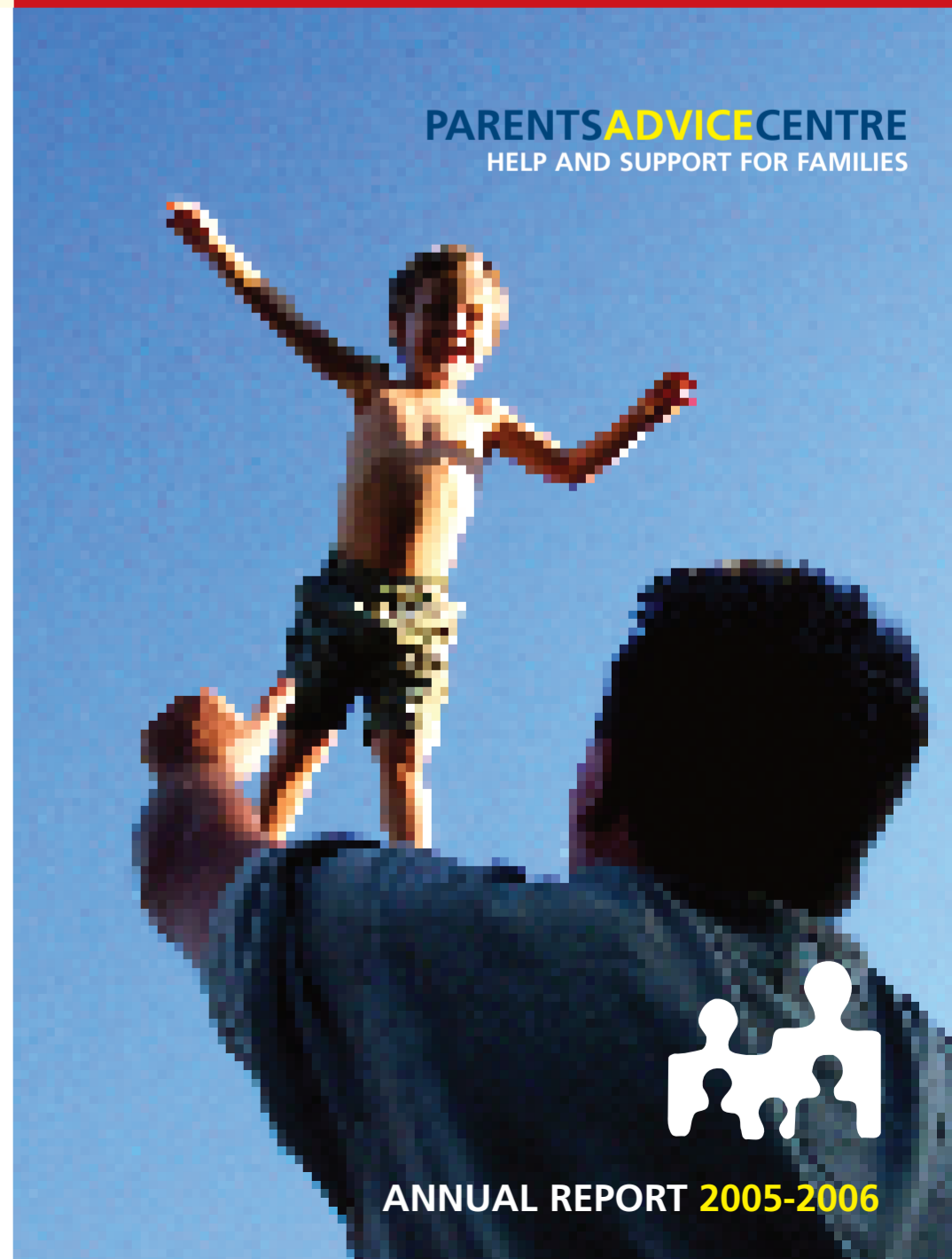
ADMINISTRATION BELFAST
Franklin House, 12 Brunswick St, BT2 7GE
Office Tel: (028) 9031 0891

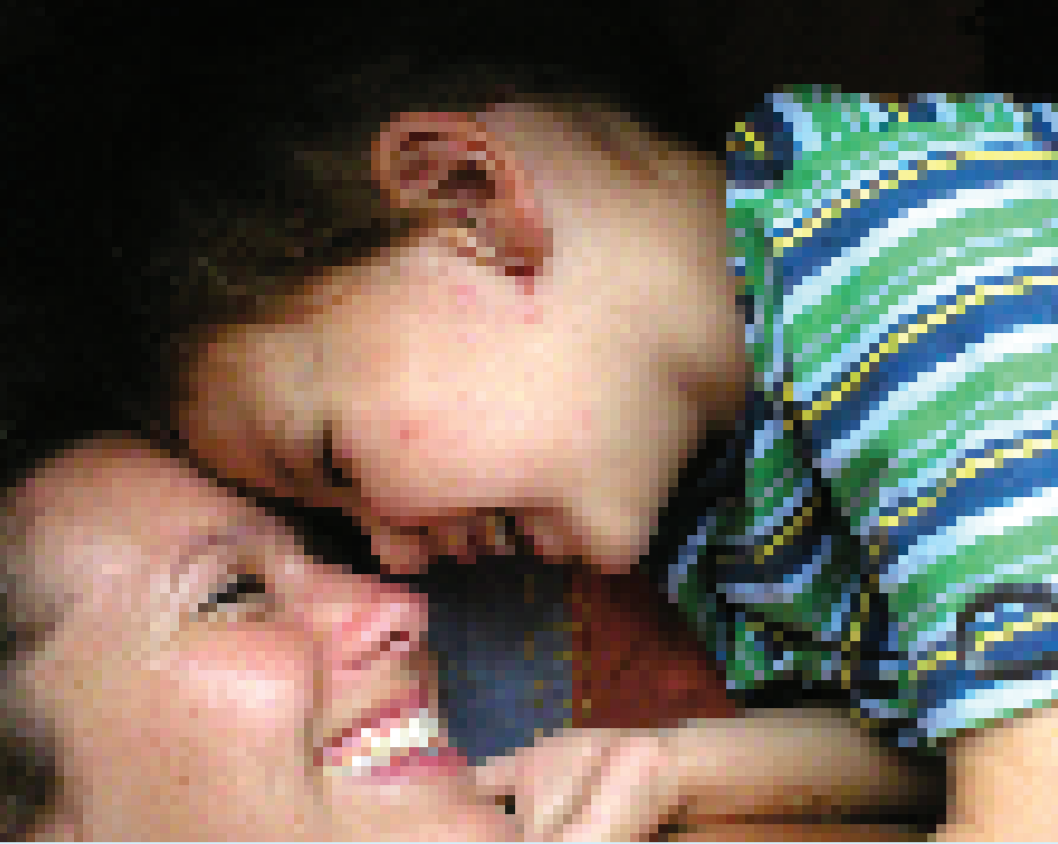
DERRY
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DUNGANNON
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Office Tel: (028) 8775 3630

BALLYMENA
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Office Tel: (028) 2565 0102

PARENTSADVICECENTRE
HELP AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES





THE ALTERNATIVES TO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT A PARTNERSHIP PROJECT WITH SAVE THE CHILDREN SANDRA COUSER DEVELOPMENT WORKER

The Alternatives to Physical Punishment training has increased its momentum since last year's report to the AGM.

Training was concentrated in the Northern Board area since April 2005. This was in response to our approach to the Board and Margaret Black's (Assistant Director NHSSB) interest and support in having the training in that Board area. The number of groups that completed the training in the NHSSB alone has been 21 (202 participants in total).

Over 600 participants have now taken part in the training overall. The type of organisations participating in training continues to be diverse. In the past year Community playgroup/school staff, private day-care staff, HSS Trust staff, Surestart staff and Women's Groups staff were all involved.

Training continued up to the Christmas period. Since the return after Christmas there has been an emphasis on the research and evaluation aspect of the project.

Save the Children has commissioned Marina Monteith, their Research Officer, to carry out an extensive evaluation of the Alternatives to Physical Punishment training, measuring its impact and effectiveness. Early indicators have shown that the training has been effective in meeting its original aims and objectives. Findings from the research are to be launched at a conference during the summer months.

Original funding from Save the Children was to end on the 31st March 2006. They have now agreed to fund the project for a further three months to the end of June 2006.

FINANCIAL REPORT HILARY MORROW FINANCE MANAGER

Our financial position improved during the year 2005/06. This was due to some 'one-off' funding and also an emphasis on reducing expenditure wherever possible.

During the year we made a substantial number of applications for funding to charitable trusts, government, local businesses and other funders.

Fundraising is continuing to take up an increasing amount of time. Monitoring of grants received is also becoming an increasingly time consuming activity.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us financially during the year.

QUOTES FROM CLIENTS RE HELPLINE

'I am very thankful for the advice and information I was given, it has taught me a lot. I have a lot more confidence in dealing with difficult situations with my daughter and have learned to listen and not to judge her all the time. I would certainly recommend your service to anyone I know who has had similar problems to myself.'

BOARD OF TRUSTEES - CHAIR'S REPORT. VALERIE MCGUFFIN

PAC looks forward to the launch of OFMDFM'S Strategy for Children and Young people which is expected in June. The strategy aims and outcomes will be to improve children's well being and life chances and most importantly be rights based. PAC will be particularly interested in the DHSSPS Family support and Parenting Strategy which is expected in draft form in September.

It is positive to see the government focus on children, but it is vital to have complementary policies and services, such as those of PAC, provided alongside children's services to meet the needs of family units holistically. Children cannot be viewed as independent of their parent/s or carers and parental responsibility cannot be delegated to schools or other professionals.

We have been subjected to a plethora of television programmes aimed at correcting children's behaviour. A new television channel is planned for babies and young children and we even have programmes on sale such as 'Baby Einstein' to stimulate and improve children's intellectual development. However useful or otherwise these tools may be, they cannot replace the care and nurturing provided by the parent/s in the child's own home. It is within the security of an emotionally healthy home, where boundaries are set and social skills are learned, that the foundations are laid for children to reach their potential. This is the challenge facing all parents. This is the task which is supported by PAC.

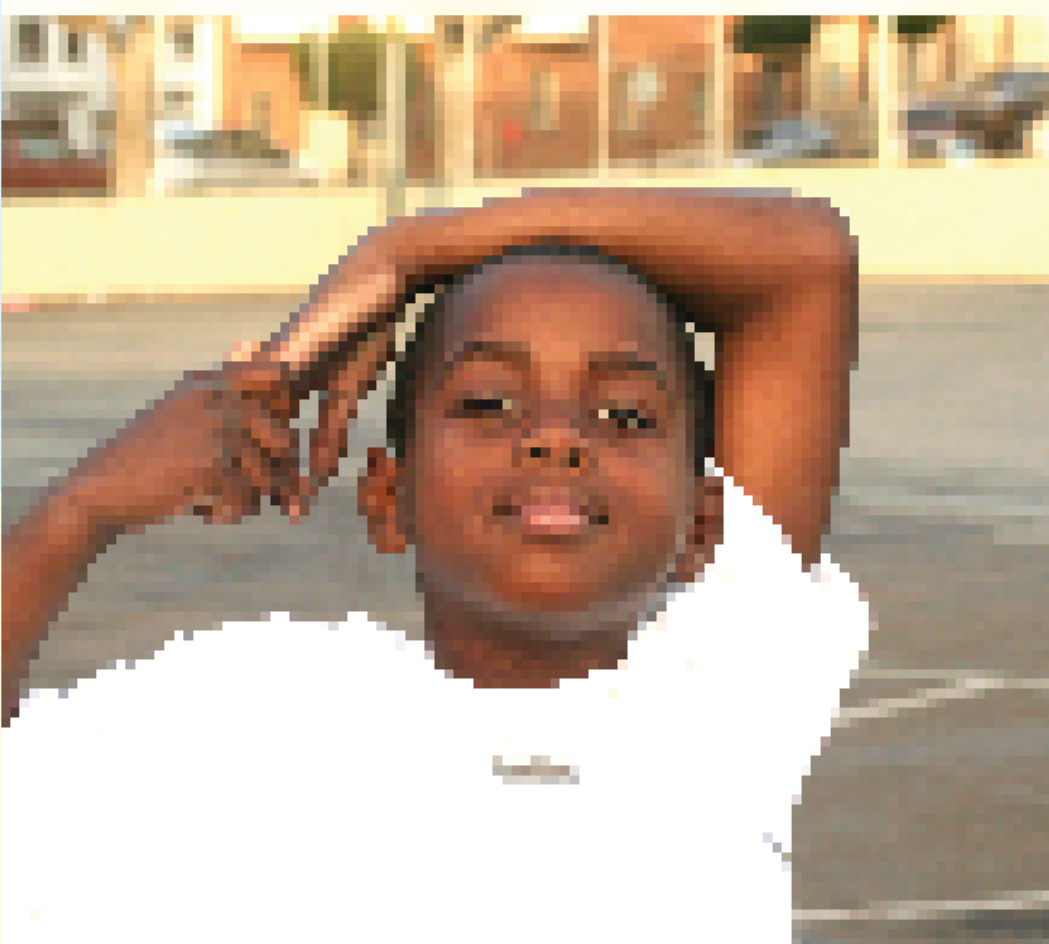
Unfortunately it would appear that only when celebrities such as Jamie Oliver capture public attention does government respond. Our children and parents deserve policy development which builds on knowledge and evidence based practice of what works for parents and children.

This has, as usual been a very busy year for PAC. The board recognises and values the dedication and commitment of all of the staff and volunteers who continue to provide frontline services and conveys its sincere thanks for their continuing support during ongoing financial stringencies.

PAC is dependent on the grants received from a variety of statutory bodies; the DHSSPS, EHSSB, NHSSB, SHSSB and WHSSB. and is grateful for their continuing support at a time when all budgets are stretched.

PAC Board has reviewed the procedures and processes of governance throughout the year in order to ensure effective and responsible management of resources, matching the effective operational management modelled by the Chief Executive and staff.

In a recent speech Beverly Hughes, Children's Minister for England said: "Parents and carers have the single biggest influence on their children's lives".



This must make us reflect on the importance of mothers and fathers in their children's lives and inspire and challenge all of us who provide services to make those services available and accessible to all parents.

Given this heavy parental responsibility, the services provided by PAC demonstrate our commitment to parents and their children, and make a valuable contribution to society.

QUOTES FROM CLIENTS RE HELPLINE

'It is an invaluable service you offer and it gives others peace of mind. I feel stronger and have the information I need to move forward.'

THE EMERGING THEME OF CALLS

BELFAST BRANCH An analysis of the types of problems dealt with by Volunteers in the Belfast Branch over the past year would indicate that we have seen an increase in the number of calls and appointments related to separation and divorce and its effect on family members. Parents have requested advice and support on maintaining good and positive relationships during and after separation/divorce and also alternatives to conflict when difficulties arose. Belfast Volunteers have also encountered a large number of requests for help from parents regarding alcohol/drug abuse and its consequences among young people. We continue to have many calls regarding problems about behaviour and emotional difficulties involving low self-esteem, bullying, discipline, abuse, aggression and teenage rebellion.

BALLYMENA BRANCH Over the past year Ballymena volunteers have noticed an increase in calls regarding school refusal, mostly affecting the 12 to 14 year olds. This problem concerns both boys and girls equally. We try to give support and encouragement to parents during this difficult time. We have also a lot of calls dealing with problems arising from parents separating, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and self esteem issues.

DERRY BRANCH Separation continues to be a prominent issue with an increase in male clients coming forward. Another major subject is teenagers and the management of their behaviour. There have been a number of calls recently where learning difficulties have been raised. Some have been to do with ADHD and others have been concerns around behaviour which on exploration was a "normal" stage of development.

DUNGANNON Calls are received from parents living in fear of confronting teenagers and young adults. The main issues coming up are aggression, physical abuse and an expectation of continued financial support. Part of their reluctance to confront this behaviour and set boundaries is the growing incidence of suicide.

BRANCH NEWS

BALLYMENA During the year Ellen McKernan, Staff Supervisor, and five volunteers resigned. Susan Roche replaced Ellen and we took on board five new volunteers. Training and Supervision took place throughout the year. The Branch Committee organised several social events and a fund raiser in the form of a Car Boot Sale. The branch continued to support Bryson House Christmas Appeal. Belfast also participated this year and assisted the Ballymena branch by supplying gifts for some of the children. Staff and Volunteers joined with the other branches at Greenmount College for an extremely enjoyable Away Day. Ballymena Volunteers also manned stands at various locations throughout the area.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT PIP JAFFA OBE

Without doubt the key requirement for all those working in the area of child and family support is to produce outcomes. Whatever the nature of our service we all need to prove that it makes life better for children and young people.

Of course this aspiration is one to which we can all commit but proving our contribution to the continuum of support services is not so easy. This is especially true when it comes to trying to assess the degree to which relationships and behaviour in families has changed.

Small changes particularly those around parental attitudes can make ongoing differences to children's lives. The parents who rethink their view on the use of physical punishment as a discipline method can reap the benefits when they turn to the alternatives. More importantly it is better for the children when they can be shown in more appropriate ways how to behave.

PAC business is about trying to bring about positive change whether on a policy and decision making level through our representation on various fora or with individual parents.

Similarly we aim to exercise our influence on parents' thinking through the many parenting programmes we run and the work of The Men's Project, the aim of which is to shape the thinking of planners to be more inclusive of fathers needs.

This year all aspects of PAC work was evaluated. Although this is an area which needs to be developed further to ensure that the services are tailored to maximise the best outcomes for children I do feel that the recent evaluations are very noteworthy.

The benefits to the clients of the helpline are the most difficult to judge. However we have surveyed clients and the results were extremely encouraging, clearly demonstrating that parents can be helped using this method of support with almost 90% of clients reporting they were very satisfied with the support.

It is high praise indeed that the external evaluation of The Men's Project considers it to be a 'unique service, with a reputation for very high quality work and a project which is very necessary.'

Similar findings were stated in The Parenting Forum external evaluation which said that 'recipients of The Parenting Forum services support the view that it is providing a unique and necessary service that is respected for its professionalism and is genuinely engaged in the process of listening to parents and advocating on their behalf.'

The evaluation of the work carried out by The Parenting Project, which delivers parenting courses, found that 'participants support the conclusion that there was a high degree of satisfaction with the training courses for both professionals and parents. Parents gained in confidence and felt more empowered.' These are both vital outcomes if the quality of children's lives is to be enhanced.

We are currently awaiting the findings of the evaluation from the Alternatives to Physical Punishment Project, a partnership with Save the Children. This work provides training to workers who are involved with family support on these alternatives. The demand for the course has been high and the evaluation is likely to indicate that workers' knowledge and skills have been extended and attitudes are being re-focused to come in line with protecting children and their rights by a non-physical approach to discipline.

As we conclude another years work in PAC and develop our projects I do hope this will be a year when the role of parenting and parenting support will gain its rightful place. We need the balance of prevention and intervention to be weighted in favour of preventative services so that parents and therefore children and young people will enjoy a better quality of life.

QUOTES FROM CLIENTS RE HELPLINE

'It made the difference between sinking and swimming. I feel I can live a life less fearful.'