

Seasons Greetings from all at the Parenting Forum!!

Editorial

Hello and welcome to the December edition of the Parenting Forum Newsletter. This is our bumper edition full of news and useful information along with some details about the 12th annual Parents' Week which took place from 17th to 23rd October. Parents' Week is a celebration of the valuable work that organisations do to help families in all their shapes and sizes and allows parents to examine how they can be more effective in family life. It's also an opportunity for Parenting NI to ensure that families and parents are recognised and valued and that issues affecting families today are kept at the top of the political agenda. The theme this year was 'Family Friendly' and this was the first year Parents' Week was organised as an all Ireland event in partnership with Parentline. In addition, the week was supported by Ulster Bank as part of their MoneySense financial programme.

Once again Parents' Week 2011 was a huge success with over 500 events recorded across the province. A very big thank you to all the groups who organised an event, big or small – it is you who help to make Parents' Week in NI the biggest in any area of the UK. We'd also like to thank Ulster Bank for supporting Parents' Week this year. There are some photos and articles on events during the week included in this Newsletter.

We launched Parents' Week 2011 with our annual conference, which took place in Grosvenor House Conference Centre, Belfast on 17th October. The morning proved to be an excellent opportunity to gather information and hear personal experiences from our speakers and also a great networking opportunity for all our delegates. Included in this newsletter is a short Conference Report giving a flavour of what took place.

The Strategic Advisory Group made up of parents and representatives from across the community and voluntary sector continues to work hard on behalf of our membership. Some of the members from last year's group have moved on and we now have several new members on board. We would like to thank all those who have been and those who are now members of the Strategic Advisory Group for their time and efforts on behalf of parents throughout NI.

Our Star of the Season this edition is Coleraine Sure Start. They've just celebrated their 10th Anniversary and you can read about their growing success and extensive list of programmes in this Newsletter.

As you know, we're always looking for new members, so if you would like to take the opportunity to sign up please get in touch with Pauline on tel 028 9031 0891 or email pauline@parentingni.org to ensure you're kept up to date with interesting developments.

Lastly, on behalf of everyone at the Forum, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Calling on parents to join new Parents' Groups linked to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and its Planning Groups



Parents are the most important people in children's lives therefore the Parenting Forum is seeking representatives to form new Parents' Groups in Northern Ireland. Earlier this year a new Northern Ireland partnership was set up to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland. This partnership is called the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and it oversees a number of planning groups across Northern Ireland. One of the mechanisms needed for the planning process to work will be the participation of parents in the planning processes. The active involvement of parents in planning is essential to ensuring that the plans are right.

Who are we looking for?

- Have you something to say about issues affecting your child(ren)?
- Would you like the opportunity to share your experiences and opinions?
- Would you like the opportunity to make a difference to how people view / think about parenting and the issues and needs which are important to children?
- Or if you have a child with a disability or come from an ethnic minority community living anywhere in Northern Ireland we particularly want to hear from you.

You live in

County Antrim, Armagh, Fermanagh, Londonderry or Tyrone

The time commitment....

To come to a two hour meeting 3-6 times a year

If you answered yes then you could be who we are looking for: individuals who have a little time, a lot of interest, a willingness to share their views and ensure that the voice of parents is heard. We are seeking nominations from parents across the Northern Ireland in both rural and urban areas, and from all backgrounds. We will cover Childcare of up to £20 per meeting and any travel costs you may incur.

Interested....

If you are interested in finding out more, or being nominated, download a form from our website <http://www.parentingni.org/projects/parentingforum/pag.asp> or telephone 028 9031 0891 and we will send you out a nomination form and further information. Once you complete your nomination form, the referees will be contacted and if there are no difficulties then you will be invited to join the group. In the event that we receive too many nominations, an independent group will carry out selection of members.

If you have any concerns or questions, then please feel free to contact Alison McNulty or Pauline Martin on 028 9031 0891 or email pauline@parentingni.org

Parenting Forum Annual Conference



The Parenting Forum launched Parents' Week 2011 with our annual conference on Monday 17th October in Grosvenor House Conference Centre, Belfast. Almost 80 delegates attended the conference, many travelling from across the province. Under the theme of "Family Friendly" delegates heard presentations from a range of speakers covering topics such as Child Cohort Studies North & South and their messages for parents, the growing need for family friendly working policies and the difficulties faced by many parents in trying to balance their work/life relationship. There were also interactive workshops on:

1. Special Needs & Disability Within Education

The purpose of this workshop was to give an overview of the special educational needs framework and recent developments in policy; practical strategies for parents on how to engage within both to help address the needs of children and the challenges faced.



2. Education

This was an interactive workshop focusing on creative parental engagement strategies/activities within school settings.

3. Ethnic Minorities

This focused specifically on the participation and engagement of Travellers and on the challenges of working with the Travelling community and ways of overcoming these.

4. Mental Health

This workshop looked at the delivery of therapeutic family support in a community organisation and working with issues arising out of mental health.

You can see more information on delegate discussions during the workshops at <http://www.parentingni.org/projects/parentingforum/parentsweek.asp>

BELB Parent Support Programme

Picking up the theme of promoting family friendly schools during Parents' Week, BELB Parent Support Programme worked in partnership with schools and the Ulster Museum to promote activities that would enable parents to support their children's learning.



BELB Parent Support Programme and St. Vincent de Paul P.S. hosted 'LET'S ...do tea' (Learn, Engage, Talk, Share). A tea party theme was developed and parents were introduced to a range of fun, interactive activities and resources that would support children's communication, numeracy and literacy skills. The activities and resources developed could also be replicated in the home setting.

The PSP also worked in partnership with the Ulster Museum to engage parents from St. Kevin's P.S., Holy Cross N.S. and Holy Cross Girls P.S. in a 'Fashion Fun at the Museum' workshop. This incorporated a tour of the Museum and an art and craft based hat-making workshop (nothing



suitable for weddings!). The purpose of the morning was to promote the museum as a learning resource for families and give parents ideas as to how they could develop children's skills at home.

Both activities lent themselves to generating a lot of discussion around the issues that families face on a daily basis but did so in a very informal, relaxed and fun way.



Celebrating Ten Years!

Star of the Season!!!!



Coleraine Sure Start Partnership was established in 2001 in order to provide support to families living in the Coleraine area. Little did they think then, that ten years later, they would be providing many more services and celebrating their success!

Elaine Donnelly, Programme Manager comments,



'When our Sure Start began ten years ago there were only a couple of staff members, and services were very limited – they delivered Self-Defence and Cooking classes in the early days! Now we offer a wide range of services and have over forty staff delivering Sure Start activities in community and early years settings all across the town. October

was a hectic month for the staff and families involved in Coleraine Sure Start. We have celebrated our ongoing efforts with a Staff Conference, a Civic Reception and finally a huge Family Fun Fair event for families. I would like to thank everyone who assisted with the organisation of these events, and all the families who support the work that we do, and come along to our clubs, groups, programmes and support sessions.'

Coleraine Sure Start Partnership works with families with children aged four and under and aims to



promote the development of pre-school children to ensure they are ready to flourish when they get to school. They are a partnership organisation that delivers a wide range of support activities to parents and families living in the areas of Coleraine: Ballysally, Harpur's Hill, The Heights, Killowen, Millburn, Windyhall and the town centre. Activities include Ante-Natal Programmes; Teen-Ante-Natal and Parenting Programmes; Parents and Toddlers; Baby Massage; Baby Yoga; free home safety equipment; drop-in groups; Breast-feeding support; the Sure Start Two Year Old Programme; Family Visiting Team to name but a few!

Contact 028 7032 1032 to find out more.

Parenting NI asks everyone to go the extra mile!



As winter fast approaches most of us will be looking forward to rugging up in our favourite coat, indulging in some warming comfort food and spending at the winter sales but for many parents and families it is an unwelcomed stressful time. Last year Parenting NI received over 5,000 calls from parents who needed support and stresses that most parents at some point in bringing up their children need support. Pip Jaffa, Chief Executive said, 'It is better to seek help when difficulties begin to emerge, though we consider it never too late and would always encourage parents to contact us rather than try to struggle on.'

Following the organisation's recent name change, Parenting NI has introduced several new fundraising initiatives, some of which are geared for schools and youth groups. There is a range of initiatives for the under 5's, primary schools, secondary schools as well as colleges and universities all with the common theme of asking groups to go the extra mile for this worthy cause. The charity has also launched its Penny Miles Christmas Appeal. – did you know it takes 80,468 pennies to stretch one mile?

Anne Holland Business Development Manager for Parenting NI commented, 'If your group nominates Parenting NI as your charity of the year or stages a beneficiary fundraising event, the charity will offer your parents a free talk from our Parenting Education department which will highlight our services and where your parents can seek support if need be. Nobody ever said being a parent was easy! We hope you will get involved in some way or another – we need your support – please go the extra mile! And if you have any questions, please just ask!'

Check out how you can get involved on the charity's website for details www.parentingni.org. For a fundraising and information pack please call:

Parenting NI on 9031 0891 or email: fundraising@parentingni.org



Ulster Bank MoneySense

The gift of financial education for children

In the current difficult economic climate, there are increasing pressures on families. Helping parents make informed decisions about their money has never been so important with managing money and making ends meet being a key issue for most families. In addition, teaching these money management skills to younger generations has become critical in light of reduced incomes and rising living costs.

To support parents across Northern Ireland, Ulster Bank in partnership with Parenting NI has developed a new family friendly booklet "Making the most of your family budget" that gives sensible and practical tips to help parents budget, manage spending, know where to find out about benefits and how to encourage children to develop good money habits. This new booklet was launched during Parents' Week which ran from the 17th - 23rd October 2011 and involved lots of "family friendly" activities taking place across Northern Ireland.

So do parents think that personal financial education is important for children?

Recent research from Ulster Bank indicates that an overwhelming majority (95%) of parents consider it important or very important that their teenagers learn how to manage money, with a majority suggesting that formal learning in schools supported by practical learning at home as the most effective way to achieve this. This research will help inform the ongoing work Ulster Bank is doing in financial education for schools, families and communities.

So any help for parents for Christmas?

With advertising on television, radio and press already in full swing, it can be difficult for parents to manage expectations of their children especially when Santa is on his way.

Here are some pointers that you may find helpful:

- Set a budget for gifts - you'll be surprised what bargains can be found in shops especially in pre-Christmas sales
- Go online-you can make savings on gifts and some offer free delivery and return service
- Investigate fun and inexpensive activities that get your family in the "Christmas spirit" e.g. visit local Christmas markets, Christmas Carol concerts

Remember there's lots of advice and support available-check out www.parentingni.org for more helpful tips or to download a copy of "Making the most of your family budget".

Butterflies Breastfeeding Support Group is starting in Woodstock Library on Tuesday 5th December and will meet weekly from 10.00am to 12.00pm

The aim of the group is to offer advice, support and information on breastfeeding, for pregnant and breastfeeding mums.

Are You: Thinking about breastfeeding? Doing well? Having problems? Starting? Stopping? Drop in and meet us!

No appointment is necessary!

And even if you're not having any problems please stop by for a chat and light refreshments, it is always nice to meet other breastfeeding mums!!

The group is run by East Belfast Sure Start Midwife Nuala.

For more information Tel: 028 90963399



Help for Families Facing Bereavement

While Christmas is a wonderful, magical time for many children and young people, it can be the darkest time for others, particularly those who have suffered the loss of a parent or sibling.



Victoria was just 14 when she was called out of class the day before Christmas holidays to be told her father had died. She had no way of preparing for that devastating news or the waves of shock and grief that followed. Like most young people, Victoria wanted to protect her grieving mother, so it was difficult to express her own grief.

Then Victoria's Mum told her about Cruse Bereavement Care, and she agreed to try it out. "Getting support at Cruse made me feel less trapped and scared," Victoria says. "It helped me understand my feelings and hold onto the good memories I have of my Dad."

Through 8 Area offices across NI, Young Cruse provides a safe space where children aged 4-18 can begin to work through their grief in their own way, often using the language of play and art more than words. In early 2012, Cruse will offer 1-day awareness-raising sessions to parents and carers wishing to learn more about supporting bereaved children.

For more information, contact www.cruse.org.uk/NorthernIreland or Young Cruse Coordinator Elaine Roub at Elaine.roub@cruse.org.uk (02890-792419).

OuterWest SureStart, based on the Stewartstown Road in Belfast, is committed to providing quality services for families with children aged 0-3 years, including expectant parents.



One of the programmes being run by OWSS is the Baby Massage and Babbling Babies class.

During the 6 week course, the Midwife takes parents through easy-to-follow techniques designed to stimulate and relax baby. The benefits of Baby Massage for both parent and baby are easy to see during the class with babies visibly responding to a range of strokes designed to aid digestion and promote bonding.

After the massage, the Project's Speech and Language Therapist delivers a 'Babbling Babies' programme which is designed to promote good interaction skills with baby. Every week a different topic is discussed such as talking to your baby, singing songs and rhymes and sharing books with your baby with practical activities to demonstrate.

Feedback from parents has shown the benefits of this multidisciplinary way of working in providing them with an opportunity discuss their babies' development in a supported environment with professionals on hand to give advice.



For more information on this programme or any of the other services we provide, contact the OWSS office on 028 9030 7640.

family support NI.gov.uk

Helping You Find the Services You Need

On 22nd June 2011 Health Minister, Edwin Poots launched a new regional website www.familysupportni.gov.uk

The website enables the public, practitioners and service planners to access information on a wide range of organisations providing services to support families at local levels in Northern Ireland.

The site provides information on Family Support services including child minding, daycare, disability, domestic abuse, drug/alcohol misuse, mental health, social care for children, leisure, support for young offenders and others.

The Family Support NI website aims to ensure that all parents who need help or support can find the service they

need and how to access it, no matter whether this service is provided by a statutory, private, community or voluntary organisation.

The Family Support Website Team is now contacting services not currently on the website with a view to including them on it. There is no charge for including details of any organization or service on this website.

If you wish to have your organisation details included on the site; wish to publicise events or services your organisation is holding or have any queries about the website please contact us at :

Email : info@familysupportni.gov.uk
Tel : 0845 600 6483



ParentingNI

Parents Anger Management Programme

"Have you ever regretted the way you have acted with your child when angry" (8 Week Programme)

Often children are the target of their parent's misdirected anger. This programme explores the impact of parental anger on children. It helps parents identify what triggers their feelings of anger, how they can be more aware of their thinking and how they can manage their behaviour in a more positive way.

Sink or Swim

Positive Parenting for Parents with Mental Health Issues (6 Week Programme)

When a parent becomes mentally unwell, it can be difficult for them to explain to their child what is happening. This programme provides practical tips and factual information to support parents in making positive changes to meet their child's needs and improve family life.

Managing Children's Challenging Behaviour (4 Week Programme)

Children's behaviour is as unique as the individual child. This programme will help you to understand why children can be disruptive and it will give you practical tips on how to deal with challenging behaviour and how to reinforce positive behaviour

Parenting Apart (4 Week Programme)

This 4 week programme is aimed at parents who have separated, are separating, divorced or thinking of divorce. The workshop will provide practical advice and guidance on what children need to know, and what parents can do to meet their children's needs.

All programmes are currently available to community groups across Belfast and for further information contact Sharon Clarke at Parenting NI on telephone number 90 310 891

Parents need support too. We can help.



HELPLINE
0808 8010 722

keeping parents at the heart of what we do
help@parentingni.org | www.parentingni.org
A Charity: Inland Revenue No. XR93772

Parenting NI is now offering local appointment services in Omagh and Enniskillen

Parenting NI is now delivering appointments in Omagh and Enniskillen, to extend the network of outreach sites throughout Northern Ireland which includes Armagh, Ballymena, Craigavon, Newry, Derry, Coleraine and Magherafelt.

As the regional helpline for parents in Northern Ireland (Freephone 0808 801 0722), the service offers parents and family members support and guidance on how to cope with the many pressures of parenting. In 2011 the Parenting NI helpline received over 5,000 contacts from parents facing issues such as separation and divorce, how to cope with teenage aggression and dealing with alcohol abuse.

Parents can access all services via the Freephone Helpline, by making an appointment in the Belfast city centre branch or an outreach site or simply by talking through concerns on the telephone. All of these services are completely confidential and free of charge.

For further information on the range of services which Parenting NI offers visit the website www.parentingni.org or if you have a family issue you would like to talk about call **0808 801 0722** / email help@parentingni.org

Parents need support too. We can help.

HELPLINE
0808 801 0722

help@parentingni.org
www.parentingni.org
A Charity: Inland Revenue No. XE92772

Senac – Special Educational Needs Advice Centre
Advice, Information & Advocacy

The Special Educational Needs Advice Centre has redesigned their website. The new simple design is brighter and more interactive. Through the website parents can now directly request an information pack or send us feedback about our service.

SENAC run an independent confidential telephone line offering advice on all aspects of the statutory framework of SEN provision in Northern Ireland. We offer parents and carers help with understanding the school based stages, interpreting IEPs, drafting letters to schools or Education & Library Boards, and checking proposed Statements of Special Educational Needs. We also offer an individual advocacy service and will accompany parents to meetings if appropriate.

We specialise in educational advice but our Useful Links section on our website also signposts parents to many other organisations and services which meet different aspects of children's needs.

Call our Telephone Advice Line on: **028 9079 5779**

CHILDREN CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE FOLLOWING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE



The Christmas period results in additional pressures on parents and in particular if the relationship has broken down or separation is being considered. Family Mediation NI urge parents who have made the decision to separate to seek help with negotiating their way through this emotional mind field, even if they are separating and remaining in the family home due to the recession. Family mediation can help assist with a new way of communicating, planning for the future as separated parents and most importantly communicating with their children and supporting them at this difficult time.

1. Do not criticise each other in front of the child.
2. Give each child and young person loving permission to love the other parent.
3. Have age appropriate conversations

with your children, separation or divorce does not mean goodbye to one parent.

4. Do not use your child as the 'messenger' to communicate with the other parent.
5. Allow this respect and tolerance for the "other" part of your child's life to stretch to extended family involvement
6. Do make sure children both know that they are not in any way responsible for what happened and they are not responsible for your well being. You are.
7. Do remember children are not possessions to be fought over. They need the love and protection of both parents.

For an independent, impartial mediation service contact FMNI on **02890243265**



How Ulster Cancer Foundation Helps Children

The Ulster Cancer Foundation (UCF's) Family Support Service offers emotional help for children and young people when a significant adult is diagnosed with cancer. The charity provides group and individual support to help children cope during this difficult time. Through drama, arts, play and support, the children can address their fears while also meeting others and having fun. It's also a time for families to come together.

UCF's Art Therapy Service is open to children who have cancer and those whose parents have cancer, providing an outlet for feelings that are hard to put into words.

UCF has a number of healthy schools programmes such as the Smokebusters Club for P6 and P7 pupils. Teachers can sign up to

this free club that arms pupils with information and develops positive attitudes and skills to help them resist pressures to smoke.

There's also interactive storytelling and activities about healthy eating and exercise for nursery, P1 and P2 children, a Fit Factor challenge for P3 and P4, and Sun Scientists for P5. For further information on these services please call Leonne Morrison at UCF on tel **028 9066 3281** or email leonnemorrison@ulstercancer.org

Photo shows - Banana A-ppel: Donaghadee Primary School children Cody Thompson and Abbie Brown take part in a healthy eating lesson with Professor Nutri and Maeve Fox, UCF

Send a Letter from Santa
A magical Christmas starts with a Letter from Santa. Order yours today.

Visit: nspcc.org.uk/santa
call: **0845 839 9304**

ChildLine
0800 111111

NSPCC
Northern Ireland

WIN A TRIP TO LA-LAND
Suggested donation £5

Charity to spread festive magic with Letter from Santa

The NSPCC's 2011 Christmas fundraising campaign is off to a festive start with parents, carers, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends arranging for the special child in their life to receive a personalised Letter from Santa!

Each year the charity helps to spread some extra Christmas magic to local children by arranging for them to receive a personalised letter from Santa. For a suggested donation of £5 a family member or friend can nominate a child or newborn baby to receive the special letter in time for Christmas.

NSPCC local fundraising manager, Karen Walker, said: "Last December when lots of children were excitedly getting ready for Christmas and looking forward to the holidays, there were many others who contacted ChildLine to talk about issues such as family relationships, bullying and abuse. This is why, in ChildLine's 25th Anniversary year, we want to raise as much money as possible through Letter from Santa to help make sure we can continue to be there for all children and young people whenever and however they need us."

Visit www.nspcc.org.uk/santa or telephone **0845 839 9304**. Orders can be received until 16 December and letters will be sent out between 28 November and 19 December.

ChildLine
NSPCC
NORTHERN IRELAND
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

ACCORD

Christmas is a time for family and friends, a time for giving and receiving - reflecting on the year past, and preparing for the one ahead. We are aware that for many couples, Christmas can also be a time of great stress, and in the midst of unemployment, debt, or job insecurity, for example, it is just another problem, another thing to worry about. ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service has professional counsellors available throughout the island, married people who know the joys and challenges of family life. ACCORD counsellors give their time and expertise to couples needing help. They offer a safe and confidential space for couples to talk openly about their concerns and difficulties. It is a professional and prompt service, available to all and based on the needs of clients rather than an ability to pay. Any hardship is less difficult to endure, when spouses are able to support each other. We would encourage any couple, suffering pain at this time, to seek ACCORD's help.

ACCORD has nine centres strategically placed throughout N. Ireland with trained counselors available. To make a booking please call **028 9023 3002** or contact us at info@accordni.com

VOLUNTEER NOW
think - act - do

Young People encouraged to Volunteer Now!

Volunteering is a fantastic way for young people to gain skills, meet new people and have fun in the process. It gives them something great for their CV, job and UCAS applications.

Kyle Moffett began volunteering with Newry Olympic Hockey Club when he was 16 and is now involved with the Ulster Elks University Club in Jordanstown. He was inspired to get involved within a group

Have you the IQ Factor? Are you strictly arts & literature?

Dust off the winter blues at one of our quiz nights!

Venue: **Lisburn Rugby Club**
Dates: **Friday 24th February 2012**
Friday 23rd March 2012
Start Time: **7.45pm**
Entry **£5 per person to include supper**

For further details contact Anne on **028 9031 0891** or email fundraising@parentingni.org
All proceeds in aid of Parenting NI
Keeping parents at the heart of what we do....

Baby's First Christmas with Baby Sensory

Award winning Baby Sensory classes are running Baby's First Christmas sessions for babies from birth to 13 months.

This is an amazing session packed with all the seasonal festivities and of course that special Baby Sensory touch!

Parents who attended last years Christmas session loved the celebration, in fact one couple designed their baby's first Christmas as a Baby Sensory Christmas by making up a 'Christmas Box' for Jude using the five senses as a theme.

"We wanted Jude's first Christmas to be very special and wanted to mark it with a number of thoughtful gifts.... There is no doubt that attending our local Baby Sensory class also spurred us on to do a Baby Sensory Christmas. During one class Janice and Sharon talked about developmentally appropriate Christmas gifts. Some of the classes have also involved home-made items/toys".

For more information about Baby's First Christmas or to register for a weekly class please contact Janice, Sharon or Jill.
Tel: **07929029856 / 07813277220 / 07412726626**
Email: belfast@babysensory.co.uk
Web: www.babysensory.com

Christmas Events in Colin

The Colin Neighbourhood Partnership is a community group based in the Colin area of West Belfast. This December a variety of Christmas events for parents and children will be taking place.

Booking is required for all craft workshops, please contact Chris or Laura at Colin Neighbourhood Partnership on 9062 3813. For more information see www.newcolin.com

Family Christmas Crafts night
Thursday 8th December, 6.00pm-8.00pm at Cloona House. Come along with the family and discover your creative side. Great for all ages!

Dads and Kids Christmas Wreath Making Workshop.
Monday 12th December, 6.00-8.00pm at Cloona House. Great opportunity for all the dads to spend some fun time with their kids! Try your hand at making some handmade Christmas wreaths.

Christmas Family Film Night.
Thursday 15th December at Cloona House, Poleglass, 6.00pm-8.30pm. Something for all the family!