



# Every Parent Matters

department for  
education and skills

Creating Opportunity  
Releasing Potential  
Achieving Excellence

# Every Parent Matters

## Foreword



Parents and the home environment they create are the single most important factor in shaping their children's well-being, achievements and

prospects. We know that the overwhelming majority of parents want to do the very best for their children. We know that the majority say they expect to need advice or help at some time or another. And we know that mainstream services are not as good as they should be at recognising and responding to parents' needs. Being a parent is – and should be – an intensely personal experience and parents can be effective in very different ways. However, we also have a growing understanding, evidenced from research, about the characteristics of effective parenting.

Parents are demonstrating a growing appetite for discussion, information and advice, as we see from the increasingly vibrant market in television programmes, magazines and websites. Government wants to support the development of a wide range of services for parents to access as and when they need to. At the same time, we want to

empower parents to influence and shape public services such as schools, health and children's services, as part of our public service reforms.

This document sets out for the first time in one place what we are doing to promote both the development of services for parents as well as their involvement in shaping services for themselves and their children. It assesses where we are to date, the gaps and how we propose to fill them. It also marks the beginning of what I hope will be a national debate with parents, children and young people, as well as service planners, commissioners and providers as to how parents can best be supported and engaged.

**Alan Johnson**

# 1. Being a Parent Today – the changing roles of mothers and fathers

**1.1** Parents and carers are a crucial influence on what their children experience and achieve. The evidence of the importance of parental impact is building and the shape and structure of families and the social context in which they live is evolving rapidly. Government needs to consider carefully its role in enabling all parents to play a full and positive part in their children's learning and development.

**1.2** *We have seen major changes in parental employment patterns and in the way that caring responsibilities are shared.* Mothers are working more. Since 1971, the proportion of women working has increased from 56 per cent to 70 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Fathers are spending more time with their children: in the late 1990s, fathers of children under 5 were spending an average two hours a day on child-related activities, compared to less than a quarter of an hour per day in the mid 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Since 1997, responding to these demographic trends, increases in the availability of childcare, extended maternity leave rights, and new rights to paternity leave, coupled with rights to request flexible working arrangements when their children are

young, have all enabled more mothers and fathers to find a work-life balance which better suits their family's needs.

**1.3** *Parents are having children later.* First time mothers are now, on average, three years older than their 1970s counterparts. They are having fewer children when they do decide to start a family<sup>3</sup>. The conception rate for under 18s is declining (as are overall conception rates), but by the end of 2005 there were still around 50,000 mothers under 20 in England with a total of 64,000 children. Although births to mothers under 20 only accounted for 7% of all births in 2005, young parents and their children have a disproportionately high risk of poor outcomes. Children of teenage parents have a higher risk of growing up in poverty, and being disadvantaged by low educational attainment, poor housing and poor health. Teenage mothers are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30 than older mothers.

**1.4** *More parents are juggling caring for their elderly parents as well as their children,* often whilst continuing to work. Up to

10 million people are likely to be caring for elderly relatives by 2010<sup>4</sup>.

**1.5** *Parents of teenagers are increasingly saying they want more help* in supporting their children.<sup>5</sup> Many express bewilderment at sudden changes of mood and challenging behaviour. Parents can be unsure about how to manage the fine balance between fostering independence and relaxing boundaries while remaining warm and authoritative. Although frank and unembarrassed discussion of risk taking helps young people develop the skills to make informed choices<sup>6</sup>, 4 out of 10 young people say that they receive very little of such information from their parents<sup>7</sup>.

**1.6** *There is more variety in family structure and relationships.* Changes in cohabitation rates, marriage and divorce patterns, mean that children are growing up in an increasing variety of family structures, compared with those growing up in the 1970s<sup>8</sup>. There has been a long-term increase in the divorce rate<sup>9</sup>. It has been estimated that in England and Wales 28% of children living in married couple families will experience divorce in their family before reaching 16<sup>10</sup>, and of the 12.5 million dependent children, 2.5 million are living in stepfamilies<sup>11</sup>. It has also become increasingly common for parents to live together without marrying. Between 1986 and 2004 the proportion of births to cohabiting couples rose from 10% to 28%.<sup>12</sup>

**1.7** *There are more lone parents.* Today, the 1.7 million one-parent families in Britain

care for over 3 million children<sup>13</sup>, three times higher than in 1971<sup>14</sup>. Lone parents are more likely to be poor than other families: 50% of lone parent families live on low incomes<sup>15</sup>. Teenage mothers often have fragile relationships with their partners and 50% of such relationships have ended by the time their baby is one year old. But it is becoming easier for lone parents to work. Helped by the introduction of tax credits and the New Deal for Lone Parents, twinned with a huge increase in childcare places, lone parent employment rates have increased from 46 per cent to 55 per cent since 1997<sup>16</sup>; that's over 300,000 more lone parents in work.

**1.8** *Increased ethnic diversity in society is reflected in more diverse patterns of family formation.* For example, young Muslim adults are more likely to be married than young people from any other cultural background<sup>17</sup>, and those from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds tend to have significantly larger families than those from white backgrounds<sup>18</sup>. Black women often remain in full-time employment throughout family formation whereas white and Indian women are more likely to be in part-time employment<sup>19</sup>. The numbers of mixed-ethnicity marriages have also increased<sup>20</sup>.

**1.9** *Increasing numbers of young adults live with their parents.* Some young people may be delaying leaving home because of economic necessity, such as difficulties entering the housing market. In spring 2003 nearly three fifths of men aged 20 to 24 lived with their parents, compared with half in 1991. For women

the proportion of 20 to 24 year olds living with their parents increased from a third to nearly two fifths.<sup>21</sup> Against this trend some young people from disadvantaged groups are living apart from their parents at a young age – including teenage mothers and young people estranged from their parents and homeless. Despite recent improvements, too many young people leave the care system at too young an age and without the right support to live independently.

**1.10** Changes in the economy, society and technology mean that *children and young people today have more opportunities than previous generations* and most take full advantage of them. More work hard and succeed at school, going on either to study at college or university or to find a job. The internet and mobile phones have revolutionised the way young people live and the way in which they communicate and get information. Families have more choice in many areas of their lives from what they eat to how they spend their leisure time. The majority of children and young people have good relationships with their parents, who remain the strongest influence in their lives and the choices they make.

**1.11** In the face of this profound social change and greater wealth of opportunities one thing hasn't changed. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are still more likely to experience a range of obstacles to success. Whilst these factors can be overcome, they put poorer children

in danger of achieving less than their better-off counterparts. They are more likely to live in poor housing, to suffer accidental or deliberate harm, or have a parent with a mental health problem. They are less likely to be able to access all the new opportunities that are available.

**1.12** The circumstances of their birth play a substantial and increasing role in determining children's life chances – social mobility has declined since the 1950s. Recent analysis suggests that to increase social mobility, the relationship between family background and educational attainment needs to be addressed, and resource better directed at improving the outcomes of those from deprived backgrounds.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Government's Role in Enabling Parents to Support their Children's Learning

**2.1** Parents' influence is important throughout childhood and adolescence. At different times parents guide, encourage and teach. Children learn from the example set by their parents. The support parents give for their children's cognitive development is important, as is instilling of values, aspirations and support for the development of wider interpersonal and social skills<sup>23</sup>. Recent research<sup>24</sup> has shown the importance of parental warmth, stability, consistency and boundary setting in helping children develop such skills:

- In the early years, parental aspirations and encouragement have a significant impact on children's cognitive development and literacy and numeracy skills;<sup>25</sup>
- Parental involvement in a child's schooling between the ages of 7 and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family and level of parental education;<sup>26</sup>
- Educational failure is increased by lack of parental interest in schooling;<sup>27</sup>
- In particular, a father's interest in a child's schooling is strongly linked to educational outcomes for the child;<sup>28</sup>
- Most parents believe that responsibility for their child's education is shared between parents and schools;<sup>29</sup>
- Parental involvement has a significant effect on pupil achievement throughout the years of schooling;<sup>30</sup>
- Many parents want to be involved in their children's education. In a study, 72% of parents said that they wanted more involvement;<sup>31</sup>
- Parent-child relationships can have an impact on whole communities; and the more positive the community the better chance families have of avoiding negative outcomes themselves;
- Selective parenting interventions can substantially improve childhood behaviour. With on-going intervention, there is a real prospect of better school attainments and less violence.<sup>32</sup>

**2.2** Fathers matter to children's development. Father-child relationships – be they positive, negative or lacking – have profound and wide ranging impacts on children that last a lifetime, particularly for children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Research shows that where fathers have early involvement in a child's life:

- there is a positive relationship to later educational achievement;
- there is an association with good parent-child relationship in adolescence; and
- children in separated families are more protected from mental health problems.

**2.3** There is clearly significant public interest in making it as easy as possible for parents – fathers and mothers – to engage as partners in their children's learning and development from the earliest age. Enabling this involvement to be sustained as children move through school and, as children mature, in enabling parents to help their children make choices about options, services and lifestyle. In addition, parents can play a major role as informed users of public services and can increasingly exercise influence over the quality of such services.

**2.4** Parents already draw on a range of existing and valued sources of information, advice and support including friends and family, community networks, faith groups, the media, as well as from trusted professionals like

Health Visitors, GPs, teachers and childcare practitioners. Any government action should be limited and designed to complement and strengthen these resources, not replace them.

**2.5** While seeking to create the conditions within which many more parents themselves feel confident about engaging effectively with their children's learning and development, government must pay particular attention to parents, for whatever reason, who currently lack the motivation, skills or awareness to do so. We must ensure that all parents have every chance to get involved, have their say and secure what is best for their children.

**2.6** Families bring up children. The role of government is to ensure that all parents, not just those for whom it comes naturally, are able to:

- make confident, informed choices which they feel are right for their family;
- shape services to respond to their family's needs;
- work in partnership with services to reinforce the benefits for their children's outcomes; and
- access additional support, when they need it.

**2.7** Our vision is of responsive public services driven increasingly by ever greater numbers of parents with high aspirations and expectations for their children. Public services need to be respectful of parents as adults with

expertise of their own<sup>33</sup> and provide a personalised approach. We do not underestimate the challenges involved, however, we believe that these are challenges worth pursuing. We are determined to transform public services so that they respond better to the needs and aspirations of parents. Every parent should be confident that the system is delivering for their child.

**2.8** That said, for a small minority of parents who have lost, or never had, the capacity to parent responsibly, public services must be ready to intervene promptly and sensitively. Parents in this situation may be distressed by being unable to resolve their problems alone and afraid of being seen as failures. The ultimate objective remains to enable them confidently to raise their children effectively themselves. However, we have to accept that this journey may be a long one and compulsion for the few, through measures such as parenting orders, may sometimes be required to ensure that responsibilities to the child (such as getting them to school every day) are being properly fulfilled.

**2.9** As a last resort, where children are at risk of significant harm, it may be necessary to take them into the care of the local authority. The state then takes on the parenting role, but the child still needs significant adults taking a consistent supportive and interested role in all aspects of their life (within and outside the home). Wherever possible, the local authority (alongside other agencies) must provide the support necessary to help the parents develop the capacity to resume looking after the child themselves, if it is safe to do.

# 3. The Early Years

**3.1** How things go during pregnancy and the first years of a child's life can influence deeply that child's health, including patterns of healthy eating and physical activity, its wellbeing, cognitive development and emotional security.<sup>34</sup> We have clear evidence<sup>35</sup> as children move through their early years, of the positive impact of parental engagement on children's cognitive and social development; as well as on numeracy and literacy skills. It is a time of rapid brain growth and research<sup>36</sup> has shown a direct link between the stimulation a child receives and their brain development. Low birth weight is another predictive indicator of poor adult outcomes and health complications throughout childhood. Evidence<sup>37</sup> suggests that causes of low birth weight include excessive alcohol or drug consumption and smoking during pregnancy.

## Parents and their babies

**3.2** Supporting parents before and around the birth of their children can have longer term positive effects. Midwives and health visitors are well placed to deliver this type of support.

**3.3** Both international and UK evidence show us that high quality social and psychological support as part of universal child and family health services can have outstanding results in terms of outcomes and long term cost-effectiveness, particularly for families with high levels of deprivation. For example, the US Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)<sup>38</sup> model of intensive support for first-time mothers from pregnancy to the child's second birthday has produced evaluation evidence for nearly thirty years. NFP is highly cost effective in producing sustained benefits for parents and children. In the UK, Carolyn Webster-Stratton's "Incredible Years" demonstrates sustained impacts on maternal health, child development and reduction of conduct problems.

**3.4 From April 2007, we will start health-led parenting projects in 10 areas across England.** We want to test how best to deliver high quality health-led parenting support using the NFP model in this country and to build the English evidence base, to inform best practice for PCTs and local authorities. These projects will be run jointly by the PCT

and local authority in each chosen area, linking with Sure Start Children's Centres. Health Visitors or community midwives will deliver support for mothers from pregnancy before the birth of their first child and will continue to support them until the child's 2nd birthday.

- 3.5 This one to one support will be designed to improve parents' interaction with their baby, increase the likelihood of smoking cessation, improve the mother's diet in pregnancy, increase breastfeeding initiation and duration, and help parents develop in their own lives, e.g. participation in the workforce or re-engagement with education.

### Parents as educators

- 3.6 The EPPE study<sup>39</sup> showed that what parents do is more important than who parents are. Parents engaging in a range of activities with their child were all associated with higher intellectual and social/behavioural scores. These activities included:

- reading with their child;
- teaching songs and nursery rhymes;
- painting and drawing;
- playing with letters and numbers;
- visiting the library, museums and other places; as well as
- creating regular opportunities to play with friends.

- 3.7 There is evidence<sup>40</sup> that 30% of parents don't read regularly with their young children. To encourage parents to

develop this important habit, **the Government funds Bookstart which provides packs of free books to all families in England with children at 6-9 months, 18 months and 3 years. We have invested £27m in Bookstart for 2005-08 to issue 4.5 million packs of books to children in around 1.5 million families.**

- 3.8 The National Year of Reading in 1998 was successful in stimulating participation in reading among adults and children, including parents from disadvantaged backgrounds and fathers who often opt out of 'books at bedtime duties'. The integrated programme of activity included:

- 15 million extra books going into schools;
- businesses running programmes involving their employees and families reading at work;
- businesses sponsoring and funding local projects (with major investment in projects from a handful of big players – News International, Walkers and Sainsbury's);
- communities developing reading activity weeks, literacy fun days and writing workshops, often linking up with schools in new ways;
- participation by celebrities from sport and entertainment; and
- national newspapers running regular features and case studies and radio stations covering local activity.

The number of parents reading with their children increased by 43% and

businesses supported the scheme so that employees and families read together at work. We want a new generation of children to see similar benefits, and plan to **launch in 2008 a National Year of Reading – Ten Years On.**

**3.9** For some families, issues with numeracy, literacy or other basic skills can act as barriers to parents supporting their children’s learning. Almost one half of adults (17 million) have difficulty with numbers and one seventh (5 million) struggle with reading and writing.<sup>41</sup> Improving these skills as a family can give parents significantly more confidence in supporting their children’s cognitive development. Family learning programmes have been shown to deliver lasting improvements in literacy, numeracy and language skills in both children and their parents. They also boost parents’ involvement in their children’s learning, encourage parents to go on to further training and can re-connect them with schools they might previously have been wary of.<sup>42</sup>

**We will pilot from Autumn 2007 a new family learning course for parents and carers of pre-school children with literacy and numeracy needs – to help them support their children with the Early Years Foundation Stage.**

### **The Importance of Fathers**

**3.10** Research shows that a father’s early involvement in their child’s life can lead to a positive educational achievement later on, and a good parent-child

relationship in adolescence. It can, however, be a challenge to involve fathers and other males in services targeted at families with pre-school children. Some fathers are not accustomed to using such services. They may be unaware of them or think they are not for them. This is especially true of minority ethnic, young and non-resident fathers. Barriers to fathers’ involvement can include:

- services that are insensitive to fathers’ needs; that do not adequately connect with the context of fathers’ lives or motivations;
- an overtly female focus and culture amongst staff and service users, and a lack of confidence to explain to female service users why it is important to engage with fathers; and
- under-estimation of the significance of a father’s involvement if he is not visible to the service, or not living with the child.

**3.11** Irrespective of the degree of involvement they have in the care of their children, fathers should be offered routinely the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively. Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance, for example, is now clear about the need to develop effective systems to gather information about fathers in all the families with whom they are in contact, and gives tips on how this might be achieved. A parent link or community outreach worker with a specific remit to engage with fathers can be very effective, but we want *all*

staff in services for pre-school children to engage proactively with fathers. Having more men in the workforce should lead to greater success in getting dads involved, and we recently launched a new PR campaign, where one of the main issues is to attract men into the early years and childcare sector.

## Engagement with Early Education and Childcare Opportunities

**3.12** The EPPE study<sup>43</sup> showed the importance of good quality early education in enhancing child development and later outcomes. That is why we introduced the Foundation Stage and Birth to Three Matters Quality Frameworks for early years and childcare settings. From 2008, these will be consolidated into the Early Years Foundation Stage which will set consistent standards for children's learning, development and care so parents can be sure that their child will receive the right support to progress at a pace which takes into account their individual needs.

**3.13** Children who have experienced two years of good early education from age 2 can get a boost of up to six months in their development. It is particularly important that children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from this, which is why since 2004 all parents of children aged three and four have been offered free early education and childcare. To give children a further developmental lift and give families more choice about how they fit this offer with other aspects of their lives, **from 2010 we will extend the early**

**education and childcare offer to 15 hours a week, 38 weeks of the year and enable it to be delivered more flexibly over three or more days.**

**3.14** Although the take up of the free offer for three and four year olds is very high (96% of 3 year olds and almost all 4 year olds), there are some groups (notably migrant or traveller families, those on lower incomes, and minority ethnic groups, particularly Bangladeshi) which are less likely to access it. Given the potentially positive impact, **outreach workers from children's centres will – while at all times respecting parents' wishes – focus on ensuring that those families not taking up the offer are doing so out of choice.**

**3.15** This activity will be further supported by the new duty in the Childcare Act 2006 for local authorities to do more than just provide information about local childcare. **From April 2008 local authorities will be required to take reasonable steps to secure sufficient childcare for working parents, paying particular attention to the needs of parents of disabled children.** This service will vary depending on individual parents' circumstances but could include:

- helping parents navigate the information available to them;
- checking whether cost is a barrier to finding suitable childcare;
- checking whether the parent has taken up all possible entitlements; and

## Learning through play in an Early Learning Partnership Project

Joanne, 24, was identified as being at risk of post natal depression after a routine hospital visit when pregnant with her first child. She didn't have a family to support her, her circle of friends did not have children yet, and there was concern that she was going to be spending a lot of time alone at home with her baby. Joanne was assigned a befriender and it was through her befriender that she was introduced to the Newpin centre in Southwark when her daughter was 8 months old.

Joanne is now taking part in Newpin's play project (funded as an Early Learning Partnership project) – with her second child, a two-year-old boy. In her group there are four parents and their children and two workers. Through play Joanne learns both how to relate better to her son and also how to help him developmentally. Joanne says:

*“He got this box and put it over his head – and instead of telling him it's naughty, I have to do it as well, to gain an understanding of why he is doing it. We copy them. It's fun to see the children responding to it.”*

Joanne and her son paint and draw together and invent games with cardboard boxes. For Joanne it has been a lifeline and a chance to do things with her son she would never dream of doing at home, as well as to meet and talk with other people like her.

The project co-ordinator Carolyn plans to take the project out to local disadvantaged families like refugees, asylum seekers and families identified by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

- brokering partnerships with providers in different sectors to enable parents to access a package of provision which meets the needs of the children and the family.

**3.16** Research clearly shows that the home environment makes a significant contribution to a child's development. For families with children aged one to three years, the Early Learning Partnerships (ELP) project is testing twelve different approaches to how early education and childcare practitioners can involve parents in their child's learning. This project has been running in nineteen areas since October 2006, delivered by a

consortium of mainly third sector organisations led by the Family and Parenting Institute. Families are contacted through outreach and home visiting, and are encouraged, where possible, to access early education and childcare. Among groups being targeted by the project are isolated, black, minority ethnic and traveller parents, asylum seekers and parents with mental health problems, as well as several fathers groups. **The ELP projects are being evaluated and the findings will be disseminated to all early years settings.**

**3.17** The Parents, Early Years and Learning project (PEAL) has developed a national

model of effective practice in working with parents to support the learning of their young children. The project has produced resources to help people in Children's Centres work more effectively with parents. **By March 2007 the training and resources will be available to staff from 700 Children's Centres. PEAL training will then extend across the whole country, including to private day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, as part of the Early Learning Partnerships project.**

**3.18** Within the Foundation Stage (children aged 0 to 5), the Parents as Partners in Early Learning project (PPEL) will ensure that policy and practice across all local authorities and early years settings effectively support and secure active parental involvement in their children's early learning. **An additional £9m has been made available in 2007-08 to support LAs in the 30% most disadvantaged areas.** The fund will support LAs in developing and

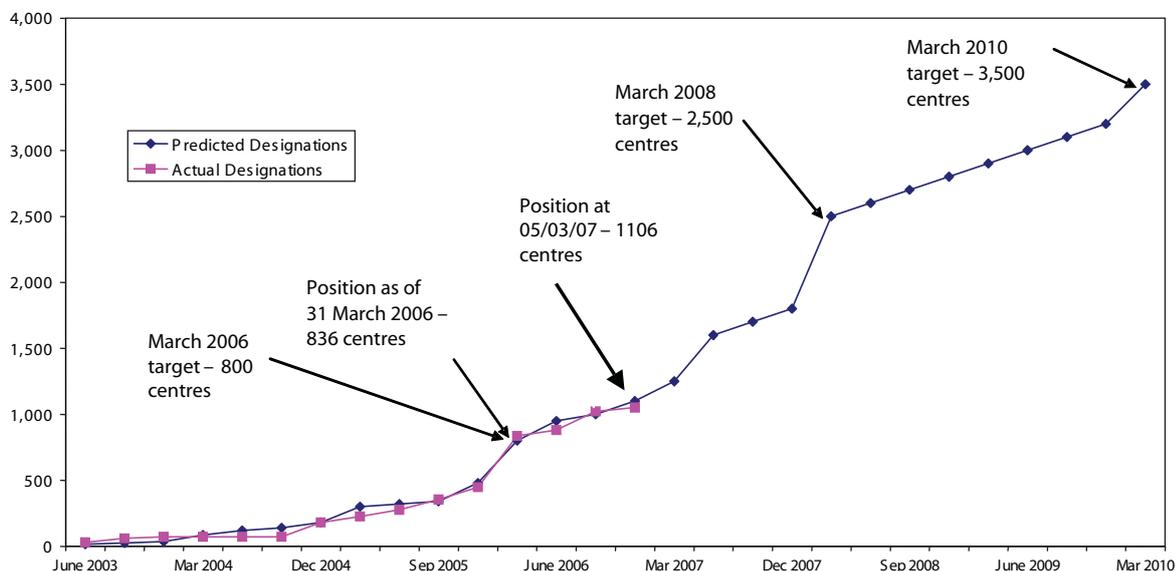
disseminating innovative approaches to working effectively with hard-to-reach parents to support their children's early learning and development.

**Lessons learned will be drawn into the Early Years Foundation Stage when it becomes statutory in September 2008.**

**3.19** Evidence<sup>44</sup> also shows the importance of effectively integrated care, education health and wider children's services which are responsive to the needs and preferences of users – mothers, fathers and children. **This is why we are investing in 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres (one for every community) by 2010 offering every family easy access to high quality integrated services.** We already have 1,055 centres designated and delivering services to 840,000 children.

**3.20** The level of family support offered by each Sure Start Children's Centre is based on local need and could include universal information, advice and guidance, drop in facilities, structured

### Sure Start Children's Centres Designations



parenting programmes (group based or one-to-one support) and outreach services and home visiting – giving special attention to those families that need extra help with their children. The blend of services delivered in each centre is informed by consultation with parents, children and the community, as well as demographic data on likely local needs. Ongoing responsiveness to parents' and children's needs is part of the Sure Start Children's Centre ethos and is emphasised in the latest guidance.<sup>45</sup>

- 3.21** A key issue is to ensure that services reach those who need them most. Findings from the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS)<sup>46</sup> suggest that some of the most disadvantaged families (for example some minority ethnic groups, drug users, those involved in criminal activities, teenage parents, low income families) are not accessing services and/or may not benefit from them. Outreach targeted on excluded groups is an important mechanism for improving parental engagement.
- 3.22** The third (voluntary and social enterprise) sector is an important provider of outreach services. For example, since 1999, the Government has resourced Home-Start, a major provider of family support. This organisation often works from Sure Start Children's Centres, helping families with at least one child under five, who are facing serious difficulties. It matches parents with trained volunteers who provide friendship, practical and emotional support. Additionally,

where families have more complex needs, Home-Start volunteers are able to refer families on to appropriate service providers.

- 3.23** Building on this good practice, Sure Start Children Centres are now using a Toolkit for Reaching Priority and Excluded Families (developed by Together for Children) to help them find excluded families and encourage them to access services.
- 3.24** The Sure Start Children's Centre Planning and Performance Management guidance issued in November 2006 set a clear expectation for Sure Start Children's Centres to monitor how successful their outreach services are in engaging families from excluded groups. The guidance also suggests that local authorities should agree with all their centre managers a range of common measures for each excluded group so that progress in engaging them can be tracked across the whole local authority area.
- 3.25** Disabled children are often in the poorest families and face real barriers to full participation and attainment. The Early Support Programme works with parents, voluntary organisations and local authorities to join up services for disabled children and their families. The programme provides materials for parents and early years practitioners with information on disabilities and guidance on how services can better join up; and training to local authority managers and practitioners to help them create better multi-agency working.

### 3.26 2007 sees the Early Support

#### Programme rolled out nationally,

beyond the 45 pilot LAs in which it was developed through the availability of free training and resources. This programme is also developing specific accredited courses helping early years staff to support disabled children.

### Engaging fathers in Sure Start

#### Children's Centres

3.27 It can be a challenge to involve fathers and other male carers in Sure Start Children's Centre services. Some fathers are not accustomed to using many of the services available; may be unaware of them or think they are not for them;

#### Home-Start at the heart of a multi-agency approach

Home-Start assisted Ann, a mum referred to them by her Health Visitor when her youngest of three sons was ten months old. Ann was struggling to cope with an infant and two other young children (one of whom had special needs) whilst having postnatal depression. Karen, a Home-Start volunteer, was introduced to offer emotional support and help Ann to have individual time with each child, which was an identified need. As Karen's visits continued, further needs were identified (second child identified as having additional needs and parents concerned about third child) and following discussion with the family, where the purpose and procedure were explained and consent gained, Common Assessment Forms were completed with the family.

Completing the assessment highlighted the need for a multi-agency response. With the family's consent, Karen called a meeting of key professionals including the Health Visitor, Paediatrician, Education, School Nurse, Speech Therapist and Child Psychologist. At the meeting more issues were identified (third child identified as having additional needs) and the professionals were able to get a clear picture of the role each could play in meeting the needs of the children. The group, which involved both parents, developed a plan to address the needs of the children with Karen from Home-Start being identified as the lead professional.

Karen ensured that the aims of the plan were addressed and acted as point of contact for other professionals and the family. This included making a referral to the children's disability team, accessing information on benefits, ensuring that continence support was arranged, investigating play opportunities and contacting Kaleidoscope (an organisation in North Lincolnshire that supports families of children with disabilities). Another meeting was arranged two months later.

By the next meeting with Karen, Ann and her partner had already acted on much of the information provided. Places had been booked for the two elder boys to attend Special Needs Play Schemes and the family had applied for Disability Living Allowance and discussed further support within school. A referral to Social Services had gone in for Disability Assessments, Continence support had been provided and a Speech Therapy appointment attended.

and may lack confidence in coming forward. Irrespective of the degree of involvement they have in the care of their children, fathers should be offered routinely the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively.

**3.28** Sure Start Children's Centres need to develop effective systems to gather information about fathers in all the families with whom they are in contact. A parent link or community outreach worker with a specific remit to engage with fathers can be very effective, but we want *all* staff to engage pro-actively with fathers at initial contact. The Sure Start Children's Centre Planning and Performance Management guidance makes this clear, and gives tips on how this might be achieved.

**3.29** Fathers generally appreciate some services which are designed specifically for men. These are often services for fathers with their children, but may also include services where they can meet other dads, engage in activities together, and talk about their lives as fathers. Many fathers do not feel they are expert parents and an all-male environment can enable them to feel more confident about interacting with their child and seeking advice. Traditional male interests can sometimes provide the basis for engaging with fathers, in addition to the opportunity for fathers to spend time with their children; access 'peer support'; one-to-one information; or advice and advocacy from a skilled worker. For example, some Sure Start

Children's Centres run sessions where dads and their children work together on an allotment, visit sports facilities or take part in music or photography projects. In later years, some schools run "bring your dad to school" days. It is important that fathers have a part in planning services, and are consulted about the services they want.

### Starting School

**3.30** Starting school can be an exciting, if emotional time for children and their parents. For some children it can happen as early as age three, if they receive their free early education and childcare in a school. To help children take this new experience in their stride, many schools now offer home visits to the families before their child starts school. This gives parents a chance to find out more about what to expect and how the school staff handle common difficulties like the child taking time to settle and toileting accidents. Such visits enable school staff to start building strong relationships with parents, not just those who take the initiative to approach the school. They begin to develop an understanding of the family context which helps give the child more of a sense of continuity between their experiences at school and at home and the parent a stronger sense of being a partner in their child's learning.

**3.31 In autumn 2006 and autumn 2007, selected primary schools in 20 local authority areas are offering Transition Information Sessions** for parents whose children are starting

primary school. These sessions are exploring how best to build effective partnerships between parents and their child's school. They are designed to engage parents in discussion about wider parenting issues and provide information on the services available through schools and other local and national services. **A national roll out of training for facilitators to deliver the sessions in schools will be offered to all local authorities in the latter half of 2007.**

# 4. Parents of School Age Children

**4.1** In the school years, parents remain a major influence on their children's success. The research<sup>47</sup> shows that much of this is about the support that parents give to what the school and other services are trying to achieve, such as:

- reading to and with children;
- showing an interest in what their child is doing outside the home (at school, in childcare and other activities);
- visiting places of interest together, such as museums or libraries;
- reinforcing the importance of doing homework; and
- attending assemblies, plays, concerts and sports events.

**4.2** Most parents recognise this – a survey<sup>48</sup> indicated that three quarters of parents believe it is extremely important to help their child with homework. Parents also influence the other structured and unstructured activities in which children participate outside school – including music, drama, play and sport; not least

because parents are a key source of money and transport.

## Choosing a School

**4.3** Parents can find the process of deciding which schools to apply for very stressful and, over the last few years, we have taken steps to help. Co-ordination of admissions has made the process of applying for a school easier for parents. They no longer have to make separate applications for each school they want to apply for, and can state all their preferences on one form. This means they get a single offer, rather than parents receiving no or multiple offers. The new School Admissions Code bans the use of unfair admission criteria and practices, and puts an emphasis on the need to provide clear information for parents on the process and the choices available to them.

**4.4** On the web, Directgov provides general advice on how to apply for a place, what to look for when choosing a school, how the admissions process works, where to find other sources of information such as Ofsted reports and test results, and how to appeal if an

application is unsuccessful. If they wish, parents are now able to find more detailed information on schools, make applications and (where available) receive results online via their local authority's website.

**4.5** Schools themselves can ease parents' anxiety by organising open evenings for prospective parents and by ensuring that their published admissions material is clear and easy for parents to understand. Local authorities are encouraged to publish information on the patterns of previous years' successful applications so parents have a good idea of their chances of gaining a place at a particular school.

**4.6** Research<sup>49</sup> shows that the sources of information parents consult when choosing a secondary school for their child is linked to socio-economic group and parental educational attainment. Many parents from disadvantaged backgrounds consult no formal sources of information and a small minority fail to make any application to a school at all. Such parents may well not make the optimum school choice for their child.

**To help these parents make informed choices of secondary school for their children, we are creating a network of Choice Advisers.**

**4.7** Since September 2006 over 56 local authorities have been delivering Choice Advice services using a variety of innovative approaches. All Advisers offer independent advice in a personal and community-based way. These Advisers do not make decisions for parents, but

help them to reach a fully-informed choice of secondary school that best meets their child's need.

## Engaging Parents in Partnership

**4.8** Although there is strong evidence of the importance of parental engagement, schools struggle<sup>50,51</sup> to engage some parents. We also know that parents typically feel a stronger sense of connection with primary schools than they do with their child's secondary school. To help address this, Government has resourced the development of materials and practice to help schools work more effectively with parents. The toolkit *Involving Parents, Raising Achievement*, explains practical steps needed to develop home-school links, and was positively received when it was launched to schools in 2003. More recently, we have backed initiatives which support schools to develop and refine their own practice, such as the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

**4.9** Schools which are effective in working with parents recognise that different parents have different needs: fathers; mothers; carers; lone parents; non-resident parents; parents from minority ethnic communities; parents with disabled children or children with learning difficulties; or parents who have a disability themselves. Services struggle to reach some parents, such as those who are workless or living in poverty; parents who are refugees or seeking asylum; parents who speak English as an additional language; and

parents who are from Gypsy/Traveller communities. Many schools have found that home visiting and outreach can be highly effective in engaging with parents who are harder to reach. Offering activities at different times of day, including beyond the school day, can be effective in reaching working parents.

**4.10** Some schools, often using their parent-teacher associations (PTAs) have used themed learning events to attract more dads and get them involved with their children's education. These include robot building workshops and activity weekends where dads attend with their children. Other schools run successful "Bring your dad to school" days on a regular basis.

**4.11** On entering school, Home-School Agreements provide information about the agreed responsibilities of schools and parents and what is expected of pupils. A survey by Ofsted showed that consistent use of Home-School Agreements as part of the school's approach improves behaviour and gains greater commitment from pupils. However, only a third<sup>52</sup> of schools recognise the value of such agreements. **We plan to strengthen Home-School Agreements by making sure schools are using them effectively, as part of a set of wider measures to strengthen home-school relationships. We will be clearer about what good engagement can look like**, so that schools can consider this in updating their Self Evaluation Form, which is taken into account during school inspection. It

is important that schools fully exploit the potential of Home-School Agreements in engaging parents, and that parents have a clear understanding in which activities the school would find it beneficial to have their support. This is particularly important for households where both parents work, and they must prioritise what aspects are most important in terms of engaging with their child's school.

**4.12** All schools are also expected to provide parents with regular reports on their children's progress. The Schools White Paper<sup>53</sup> made clear that we will ensure parents receive regular, meaningful reports during the school year about how their child is doing, with opportunities to discuss their child's progress with their teachers. Technology has revolutionised how we communicate in every aspect of our lives: mobile phones and emails are part of modern day life. **We want to harness this so schools can engage with parents and make access to information easier and quicker, such that parents are better able to support their children's learning. We will work with Becta on developing this during 2007.** Schools are already addressing this in a variety of ways, such as:

- offering web-based updates to parents on their child's attainment, progress, homework, behaviour, or attendance, and providing guidance on how parents can use this information to best support their child;

## Intelligent Reporting at Cardinal Wiseman

Parental engagement is fundamental to the ethos of the Cardinal Wiseman Catholic College in Birmingham. As well as traditional communication routes such as weekly letters and termly newsletters, the College started using internet techniques to actively engage parents two years ago.

The College offers parents 24/7 password-protected access through the internet to up-to-date information on: the timetable; attendance records; conduct logs and assessment information for their child. The assessment system includes termly pupil target-setting reviews, with progress against these regularly tracked and measurable via the e-portal. Staff are starting to record subject assessments and targets for the pupil to move to the next academic level – for example 'Simon needs to improve maths by doing x'. Targets are also put in homework diaries on sticky labels, to serve as a constant reminder to the pupil – and to the parents. The College's annual reports on pupils are available via the e-portal as well as on paper.

The College is in a highly deprived area, with 79% of pupils in the lowest 20% for social and economic deprivation in the UK, and 46% with free school meals. They have found that a key way to engage parents unwilling to venture into school is using the web. The College estimate that around 65% of their parents currently have internet access, and that at least a quarter of their parents are using the e-portal regularly. If parents don't have internet access, they receive printed versions of information.

The portal and underlying systems have helped the College to focus on what is presented to parents and make it more effective. Parents are now talking to their children about what they have seen on the system, and pupils are motivated to improve their behaviour. GCSE results have improved, much of which the College attributes to increased parental involvement. Parent Susan said:

*"The e-portal site has been a real 'wow factor' for me. I love the way I can find out easily what's going on in my son Daniel's life at school. He is now more inclined to tell me about school issues himself. Before, he would try and keep things that he had done to himself, now all I have to do is check the site and find out for myself. I have been telling my friends about it and they all agree it is a very good scheme."*

- sending text messages to parents when their child is absent from school;
  - setting up desktop alerts to parents over school issues, for example school trips or more immediately over issues such as school closure; and
  - provision for parents without home IT access, such as making school computers available to parents out of hours.
- 4.13** The Computers for Pupils initiative aims to get ICT into the homes of some of the most disadvantaged secondary school pupils to help close the

attainment gap. Parents will also have access to the computers and we estimate that about 100,000 homes will be equipped over the two years of the programme. To support parents, Childnet International has produced a resource, 'Know IT All for Parents' to help them understand how to use a computer effectively and to provide supportive information about Internet safety.

**4.14** This is just a start at equalising upwards, to ensure that all children can access the advantages of technology and the Internet in their learning. Schools Minister Jim Knight MP has recently established a Home Access Taskforce which will work in partnership with industry, the third sector and other key partners to consider how access for all school children, and their families, might be achieved in a sustainable way.

**4.15** To encourage innovation and improve school practice in engaging parents, particularly those parents that have not been reached through existing mechanisms and practice, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust is currently running a lively 18 month national campaign (with Warwick University, ASCL and others). Over 100 schools are engaged in a host of approaches to engage parents as partners in raising achievement at secondary school level. Two regional conferences with participating schools in March 2007 will showcase the learning to date. **We will ensure that more schools are aware of what is possible in advance of a final evaluation report, due in July 2007.**

**4.16** Personalised learning is a major theme of educational thinking at present. The Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group's *2020 Vision* published in December 2006, echoed the fundamental contribution parental engagement can make to improving educational attainment and made specific recommendations on how this might be more consistently embedded into a more personalised future school system. These included:

- improved two way communication with parents based around easier to understand information about their child's progress;
- access to a "learning guide" – a member of staff able to meet parents regularly to review their child's progress and the factors that may be helping or hindering this;
- improving the links between schools and family support services, particularly for disadvantaged families at the point children enter primary school and the capacity of practitioners in such services to respond; and
- focusing attention on engaging those families which have not been successfully or consistently engaged to date.

**4.17** Engagement between schools and parents is being built into more learning programmes. For example, parental engagement is embedded within the primary social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), which is designed to develop children's social and emotional

skills to promote positive behaviour, attendance, learning and wellbeing. As part of this, children take home SEAL activities to engage their parents, for example enjoyable games and exercises about making wise choices, dealing with conflict peacefully and overcoming obstacles. Family SEAL workshops are starting to share the approach with all parents. Introduced in June 2005, the SEAL programme is being implemented in half of primary schools; **we expect two thirds of primary schools to be using the programme by July 2007. The secondary SEAL programme is to be rolled out, starting in September 2007** and the guidance encourages schools to engage with parents to support a shared approach to the promotion of social and emotional skills.

### Direct involvement in schools

- 4.18** We are introducing measures to create a school system shaped by parents. In order to give parents more influence over schools in their area, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a new duty on local authorities to respond to parental representations. Alongside the existing right for popular schools to expand, it provides opportunities (such as through a parent champion) for parents to influence decisions when radical steps are required in instances of school failure. A Schools Commissioner has been established, whose role includes monitoring local indicators of parental satisfaction.
- 4.19** There are also measures to improve parents' ability to shape their children's

school. Since September 2005, **the school Self-evaluation Form required as part of a school inspection, has asked schools to capture how they gather the views of parents**, and to give examples of action taken based on the views of parents and other stakeholders. All schools are required to have a complaints procedure. Parents also have a right to complain to Ofsted on matters relating to their child's school. Parents make up a third of all school governing bodies, so over 100,000 parent governors have a chance to support and challenge the leadership of their child's school. We are encouraging the establishment of Parent Councils, to give many more parents a voice about the issues that matter – like discipline and uniform. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that they be set up in the case of many Trust Schools. **We will be establishing a resource pack for schools to help support such developments. And from May 2007 the Act introduces a duty on all governing bodies to listen to all parents.**

### Extended Schools

- 4.20** **By 2010 all 23,000 schools will offer access to extended services**, with 6,000 by September 2007 and 9,800 by 2008. Extended schools work with local providers, agencies, and in many cases other schools, to provide access to a core offer of extended services, such as childcare; study support; parenting support; and community use of facilities including family learning. Extended

## The wonder of discovery.....

To get some parents more actively involved in their children's education is simply a matter of giving them a better understanding of what their children are learning, how this is taught and what they should be doing to support learning in the home.

Thrumpton Primary School in Nottinghamshire, with dedicated funding from the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA), is now running a science club after school for children, parents and teachers. This is giving parents and their children the opportunity to learn and discover together in a fun and relaxed environment. It is always the aim that the learning should continue at home with parents given hints and tips on how to make this happen.

The club was originally proposed by parents themselves following successful workshops in other subjects such as English and Maths. Parents actually requested the opportunity for 'hands on' learning alongside their children.

Thrumpton is already beginning to see the impact of the project: parents are starting to lead some of the sessions and for the first time ever the school has noticed that parents are comfortable discussing what their children are learning in science.

Hope Valley Community Primary School in Liverpool has used its NCPTA funding to develop a range of *Discovery Club* packs for children to take home and complete with parents. The packs provide children and parents with all they need to take part with any resulting work brought back into school for display and/or demonstration.

The response from children has been overwhelming with packs in great demand (62 have already participated). Parents have responded to this enthusiasm with the school reporting that the project is already successfully engaging those that have been traditionally hard-to-reach. Parents are also interacting directly with the school: many are asking questions about how the packs should be used and what more they can do to support their children's learning.

services can have significant positive effects on children, adults and families, including impacts on pupil attainment and exclusion rates.

**4.21** Currently 5,690 schools provide parenting support. We are testing a range of additional activities to develop a better understanding of what children and parents find most useful and effective. This includes improving access to information at important points in a

child's school life; access to additional support and advice, including parenting programmes; and addressing needs of parents facing specific challenges, such as with their own basic skills.

**4.22** Consultation with parents, and the community, is integral to providing extra services within an extended school. Governing Bodies are responsible for deciding if a school offers extended services and what form

these will take. Governing bodies must<sup>54</sup> consult with pupils, families and the community before setting up extended services. These services should be responsive to the needs and preferences of users.

### Improved information

- 4.23** Many parents feel they have a greater need for information<sup>55</sup> which is why we are ensuring that they have access to advice at key transition points in their children's lives. As well as focusing on parents whose children are starting primary school (see para 3.31), **in 20 local authority areas in autumn 2006 and autumn 2007, Transition Information Sessions will be offered to parents whose children are moving to secondary school.** Information sessions at transition points have a potentially powerful role in de-stigmatising access to support.<sup>56</sup> The sessions aim to engage parents in dialogue about parenting issues such as keeping children safe and helping them achieve their potential. They will help to increase parents' understanding of the challenges their child is likely to face in the near future, as well as boosting parents' confidence and willingness to engage with their child's school and learning.

### Advice and Support

- 4.24** To develop models of good practice in early intervention and preventive support for parents in schools, from January 2007 we are piloting **Parent Support Advisers in over 600 schools across**

**20 local authorities – expanding to over 900 schools during 2007.** Parent Support Advisers are testing different approaches building on the best of what schools are already doing to enhance home-school relationships. Evidence suggests that similar programmes have reduced potential permanent exclusions by as much as a quarter, improved attendance and reduced fixed period exclusions and truancy rates.<sup>57,58</sup> Such advisers can also ensure effective exchanges of information between parents and schools<sup>59</sup>.

- 4.25** These advisers bring expertise in parental engagement. They are able to run basic parenting classes or events, broker access and signpost parents to relevant specialist services where parents would otherwise not have access. A particular focus is early intervention work to improve pupil attendance and reduce exclusion. **We will be looking to ensure that good practice from the pilot is mainstreamed through extended schools from 2008.**

- 4.26** As in the early years, the best outcomes for parents and children often come where parents and children learn together. Activities such as helping with reading can be a focus for this. The Pre Budget Report 2006 included an announcement of **a free book in 2007 for all children at the transition to primary and secondary school (ages 5 and 11).** For some parents, issues with their own numeracy, literacy or other basic skills can act as a barrier to their supporting their children

effectively. For this reason **we will develop packs for parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs encouraging them to participate in activities with their children. These will be issued in Autumn 2007** when their children receive their free book.

- 4.27 To address the gap in family support between Sure Start Children's Centres, Targeted Youth Support (which starts at age 13, see para 5.6) and Youth Justice Board provision, since Autumn 2006 we have been running Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders. These Pathfinders in 18 local authorities are testing different parenting programmes for the families of 8-13 year olds at risk of anti-social behaviour. The programmes are offered to the family before the behaviour of their child has met the threshold triggering statutory intervention. The evaluation of these projects will help to identify common elements within parenting programme which make them effective so that **from March 2008 this can inform both the development of the parenting support offer through extended schools; and guidance to local authorities on developing and delivering their parenting strategies.**

### Parents' responsibilities

- 4.28 Most parents take seriously their responsibilities to ensure that their child attends school and behaves appropriately – whether in school or in the wider community. Some parents need help to do this effectively and this can be provided by way of a parenting

contract or through other, less formal, means. But the small number of parents unwilling to accept help and fulfil their responsibilities must be compelled to do so.

- 4.29 Parents have a clear duty to minimise any absence, such as term-time holidays, which in the school's view is unnecessary or inappropriately taken. We fully support schools and local authorities who decline approval of such absence. In the short term this may prove unpopular, but inevitably leads to a climate in which education is appropriately valued and more effectively delivered to individual pupils. This is why, in 2004, we introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution for truancy for those parents who need a sharp reminder of their responsibilities.
- 4.30 We are working closely with more than a third of local authorities and over 400 schools where persistent absenteeism by a small minority of pupils accounts for much of the schools' absence figures. Each of these pupils and their parents will have their needs identified and addressed, with key worker support, in order to support the child's regular attendance. Parents who do not engage with the process face a penalty notice or prosecution.
- 4.31 Where a child has been excluded or is truanting, schools and local authorities can arrange a voluntary parenting contract with parents. Parents agree to undertake specific actions to improve their child's behaviour or attendance

and the school or authority agree to provide support. For example, a contract could specify that the parent takes up support arranged by the school or authority such as a parenting course, mentoring, debt counselling, benefits advice or help with housing problems. The Education and Inspections Act will, **from September 2007 enable behaviour-related contracts to be offered as an earlier intervention by schools** and LAs well before poor behaviour in school deteriorates to the point of exclusion. Parents that will not act to improve their child's attendance or behaviour can be made subject to a court-imposed parenting order. This compels the parent to attend parenting classes and comply with any other conditions set out in the order. Currently, only local authorities can be granted such orders but, **from September 2007, schools will be able to apply for such orders** where a pupil has seriously misbehaved or been excluded for serious misbehaviour.

**4.32** In 2004/05 permanent exclusions were over 20% lower than in 1997/98 (down to 9,440 from 12,298). There were 389,560 fixed period exclusions involving 220,840 pupils (2.9% of the school population). Guidance for schools on exclusions make clear that parents should be involved in each stage of the process. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 will, **from September 2007, place a new duty on parents of excluded pupils**. They will be required to ensure that their

child is not in a public place during school hours in the first five days of any exclusion. From the sixth day the local authority or school will arrange full-time education. If the parent fails in this duty they commit an offence, the liability for which may be discharged by paying a penalty notice of £50.

**4.33** Currently, when a pupil is reintegrated back into school following a fixed period exclusion, parents are normally invited to the reintegration meeting. **From September 2007 schools will have duty to invite the parents to a reintegration interview**. Failure to attend the interview must be taken into account by the courts if the school or local authority applies for a parenting order. When a pupil is permanently excluded local authorities are expected to involve parents at an early stage in making arrangements for continuing their child's education and in discussions about alternative school places.

# 5. The Transition into Adulthood

**5.1** Although peers have an increasing influence over young people as they move through their teenage years, there is evidence that parents and family remain important to young people's wellbeing.<sup>60</sup> Young people take increasing responsibility for their own choices, but they still seek the views of their parents. Parents of teenagers are concerned about a range of issues such as peer pressure, sex and relationships, alcohol and drugs, but also more generally about the behaviour and attitudes of teenagers.<sup>61</sup>

**5.2** Supporting teenagers in the transition to adulthood is a distinct and unique phase of parenthood. Most parents manage this changing relationship with no major problems – using friends and family to help at times. However, parents of teenagers – and those in the pre-teen years – are increasingly saying they want some additional help in supporting their children navigate these challenging years.<sup>62</sup>

**5.3** The curriculum and qualifications for young people aged between 14 and 19 are changing. There will be a wider range of courses: traditional qualifications like

GCSEs and A levels will remain, and the International Baccalaureate, apprenticeships and, from 2008, new Diplomas will become available. So young people will have more choice about what and where they study. Many may follow part of their course in school, in college or the workplace. We will make sure that young people and their parents have high quality information, advice and guidance to help them make appropriate choices, and a marketing campaign will publicise the range of options available. Local prospectuses will set out what is available in a specific area.

## **Strong Relationships between Parents and Young People**

**5.4** Research indicates that the most effective parenting of teenagers requires a fine balancing act between fostering the independence of young people and relaxing boundaries on the one hand, while maintaining warm and authoritative parenting support on the other. Young people need and respond to good role models to shape their aspirations, behaviours and attitudes. For many young people, men working in public and third sector services, such

as youth workers, are key positive influences on their lives outside the home. Many experts stress the importance of positive male role models for boys' learning and reading<sup>63</sup>.

**5.5** Yet just when teenagers move into this adult world, and need time to unpack and understand its complexities, they spend declining amounts of time with their parents. While this is a natural part of the transition period, UK teenagers spend less time with their parents than their European peers.<sup>64</sup> For some young people this can result in feeling out of touch with their parents and increasingly reliant on their peers. For some parents it can provoke a feeling of lack of influence or importance in their child's life. The extended transition to adulthood and a longer period in the family home puts young people with poor parental relationships at an even greater disadvantage.

**5.6** The importance of involving parents of teenagers is recognised in our **plans to ensure that by April 2008 vulnerable teenagers have access to a package of Targeted Youth Support**. Guidance to local authorities makes clear that the support offered should include support to live in a stronger family environment. Support for their parents in building and sustaining positive relationships within the family is a key part of this. Our recent guidance to local authorities<sup>65</sup> reinforces this by making clear that their local parental support strategy should include support for parents of teenagers (see para 6.3).

**5.7** Where relationships have broken down and conflict levels are high, there is increased risk of young people disengaging from school, turning to their peers and sometimes running away. The availability of family mediation is critical. For teenage mothers, relationship breakdown with their parents is a significant cause of poor mental health, which in turn affects their parenting skills with negative outcomes for their children.

**5.8** We have asked Sure Start Children's Centres to ensure teenage parents who need it receive mediation with their families. Government also announced last year a range of measures to reduce youth homelessness, including improving access to family mediation for young people. **We are funding Relate to develop a nationally recognised model for homelessness mediation, which will be piloted with local authorities from April 2007.**

### Talking about Sensitive Issues

**5.9** It is clear that a positive relationship between teenagers and their parents protects young people against a number of poor outcomes – low educational attainment, poor mental health, low self esteem, substance misuse, youth offending and homelessness. Frank and unembarrassed discussion about risk taking also helps young people develop skills to make safe and informed choices. For example, teenagers who can discuss sex and relationships with their parents openly, and without embarrassment,

start having sex later in life and are more likely to use contraception.

**5.10** But 4 out of 10 young people say that they receive no or very little information from their parents about these issues, and parents continue to say they feel embarrassed and don't have the knowledge or language to start the conversation. 35% of young people report that they talk about "things that matter" to their mother less than once a week and over half say they talk with their father less frequently than that. Boys fare worst – with mothers talking less to sons than daughters, and fathers communicating least of all.<sup>66</sup>

**5.11** For this reason we have resourced campaigns such as *Time to Talk* (led by Parentline Plus) which provides parents with information and advice on how to talk to their children about sex and relationships; and the *Speakeasy* community-based education project (led by the Family Planning Association) for parents. The Transition Information Sessions (see paras 3.31 and 4.23) will

help parents access authoritative information on these and other topics.

### Supporting Young Parents

**5.12** Being a parent requires emotional maturity; and can be easier with financial security and the support of partners, family and friends. For teenagers, who are less likely to be in this position, the challenge is even greater. As a result they, and their children, are at higher risk of long term social exclusion. That is why Government's priority – set out in our Teenage Pregnancy Strategy – is to halve the under 18 conception rate by 2010. Most areas have now reduced their rates, with some showing significant declines. We have provided local authorities and Primary Care Trusts with guidance on what should be in place in every area to ensure that all areas perform at the level of the best.<sup>67</sup>

**5.13** But while 75% of teenage pregnancies are unplanned, some young people will become young parents. Getting the right support for them is essential in

#### **Dads Against Drugs (DAD): Raising awareness through football**

Steve is a father involved in a community based programme in Hull which delivers anti-drug messages through football.

The DAD programme was developed as an innovative approach in response to a local need for good quality education about drugs for children. The programme uses football to develop effective drug awareness campaigns for fathers and their children. On the understanding that children will only listen to their fathers if they knew what they were talking about, a football team was set up and used as a forum for educating fathers about drugs. This enabled fathers to pass on this information to their children.

*"Being a positive role model is all about involving the kids, making them feel part of the community and giving them hope for the future."*

securing a better future for them and their children and breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty.

**5.14** While some individual young parents manage well, the outcomes for teenage parents and their children are stark:

- teenage mothers are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30 than older mothers;
- teenage mothers are half as likely to breastfeed, three times more likely to smoke during pregnancy and have three times the rate of post natal depression, with a higher risk of poor mental health for three years after the birth;
- their babies have a 60% higher risk of dying in the first year of life; and
- children of teenage mothers are generally at increased risk of poverty, low educational attainment, poor housing and poor health, and are less likely to be employed in later life.

**5.15** Our Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is the first Government initiative to identify and seek to address these problems. In 35 local authorities, the Sure Start Plus programme piloted a model of providing teenage parents with a dedicated specialist adviser who coordinated a package of support. Acting as a 'critical friend', the advisers ensure the young parents access advice on health, parenting, education and training, family mediation, benefits and housing.

**5.16** An independent evaluation found a significant impact on emotional support, improved relationships with the mother's family (including reducing the incidence of domestic violence), increased participation in education of school age parents and significantly higher levels of involvement in post 16 education when the advisers were based in education settings. Young parents, and other professionals working with them, were overwhelmingly positive about the

### One-to-one support from Sure Start Plus

Tina, a young mother of 18, was completely estranged from her family, had no friends, and her ex-partner (and baby's father) was in prison. Her Sure Start Plus adviser helped her with housing and benefits, took her out, fed her, listened to her, accompanied her to all her antenatal appointments, was her birth partner and encouraged and supported her to get back in touch with her family. Tina gained skills and self confidence and has a long term ambition to have a career supporting teenage mothers herself.

*"She (the Sure Start Plus adviser) has helped me most... with money and benefits... helped take me back and forth with my scans. She helped me look on the positive side. I had no one to come with me to the birth (except her), I don't think I could have done it without her. I think every area should have Sure Start Plus, cos they're brilliant. ... (without her support) I would've been really depressed. She's made me realise there's more to life than bad things. You can be depressed, then you see her and you come back happy."*

specialist support which filled a gap in mainstream services.

**5.17** Lack of affordable childcare is a major barrier to young parents returning to education and taking up training. To address this, we have put in place the Care to Learn scheme which provides financial support to help with the costs of childcare to young parents up to (and including) age 19 starting a course of publicly funded learning. Evaluation of the scheme shows it is having significant impact in supporting young parents' engagement with learning.

**5.18** Building on the success of Sure Start Plus and Care to Learn, we have set out our expectations that all areas should provide specialist support for young parents through Sure Start Children's Centres and targeted support. We are proposing that this is measured through a specific performance indicator on teenage parents for local authorities.

**5.19** As signalled in *Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010*,<sup>68</sup> **we will be publishing revised guidance to local authorities and Primary Care Trusts later this year. This will set out the support we expect to be in place for all young parents to help them build a secure future for them and their children.** This support will focus on:

- developing strong and confident parenting skills;
- addressing any emotional or mental health problems;

- preventing further unplanned pregnancies – 20% of births conceived to under 18s are repeat conceptions;
- mediating positive relationships with their family and, where appropriate, the father of the child;
- continuing or re-engaging with education and training;
- developing financial management skills; and
- developing the knowledge and skills to look after their own and their children's health.

**5.20** We will also be exploring how best to ensure that no lone teenage parent is given their own accommodation without receiving the support they need, emotionally, educationally and economically, to face the challenges of parenting.

## Parents' Responsibilities

**5.21** There remain a small number of households whose behaviour causes disproportionate nuisance in their communities. Building on the pioneering approaches of the Dundee Families and other projects, the Respect Action Plan<sup>69</sup> announced the development of Family Intervention Projects in fifty local authority areas. Since September 2006 these projects have been using **intensive tailored action with supervision and clear sanctions to improve the behaviour of persistently anti-social households.** A key worker 'grips' the family, the causes of their poor

behaviour and the agencies involved with them, to deliver a more coordinated response. This involves working in a multi-agency way to ensure all the necessary services are involved through the children's trust partnership arrangements. This usually includes health, education, children's and adults' social care, Youth Offending Teams, criminal justice and Police services.

- 5.22** Evidence shows that the quality of practitioner and the use of a proven programme are more likely to result in good outcomes from attendance at parenting programmes. This is why **from March 2007 we will be training over 1000 practitioners to deliver parenting programmes and one-to-one support in Family Intervention Projects.** These practitioners will work with the parenting experts that have been appointed since November 2006 to work in 77 areas across England. These parenting experts can be called on by frontline staff who are tackling anti-social behaviour to provide help to families, either in the form of parenting classes or a one-to-one basis.
- 5.23** The 40 local authorities recognised as Respect Action Areas (reflecting their commitment to the Respect Programme), have been **given the opportunity to bid for a share of £6m extra funding from March 2007 to improve parenting support services in their area.**

## Future Issues

- 5.24** Parents also face a number of difficulties and problems themselves which can have an impact on their capacity to parent teenagers. They want the best for their children but personal difficulties can get in the way. Effective and timely support for parents can ensure that they draw on their own resources as parents and develop positive relationships with their teenagers.
- 5.25** The importance of support for parents of teenagers has been increasingly reflected in Government policy. Yet, the encouragement to parents to seek advice and the support available is largely focused on parents of younger children. Parents of teenagers tend to lose the informal networks of support through contact with parents and teachers in primary school.
- 5.26** Some parents of teenagers have taken part in intensive support programmes which they report as very helpful. These programmes have in the main been provided to reduce anti social behaviour of a small number of young people, but we need to make them more widely available for parents at an earlier stage. We must also take care to ensure that the perceived association between parenting support for teenagers and anti social behaviour does not deter some parents from seeking early advice. **We are currently considering what further response the Government should make to these important issues.**

# 6. Investment in Strategic Capacity

- 6.1** Having established how important parental engagement is to children's outcomes, we are investing to develop local capacity to underpin an environment in which parents feel increasingly informed and enabled to help themselves.
- 6.2** As part of delivering *Every Child Matters* with their children's trust partners, **local authorities now have a clearer strategic role in the development of support to parents in their area.** The *Supporting Parents* guidance issued in October 2006 asks each local authority to develop a strategic and joined up approach to the design and delivery of parenting support services in its area. It suggests that parenting support to deliver improved outcomes for children should be seen as a continuum from information, early intervention and preventative services through to the use of enforcement measures.
- 6.3** The guidance encourages the creation of a local strategy (working within the existing processes to develop and review their Children and Young People's Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy) for designing,

commissioning and delivering flexible and responsive local services that empower and support parents to become more confident in improving child outcomes. It asks authorities to appoint a single commissioner to champion services for parents. The aim is to create greater personalisation of services that is more responsive to every child's and family's requirements. **We have given local authorities an additional £7.5m over 2006-07 and 2007-08 to develop these strategies to ensure they are in place by March 2008.**

## Influence over Services and Choice

- 6.4** To improve the level of information available to parents about local services, since 2001 every local authority has had resources for a Children's Information Service. **By April 2008 local authorities will be required to provide a full range of information about local and national services to parents of children and young people from birth to age 19.** The information available from this source ranges from local school admissions processes, the availability and location of childcare

(including that offered free for three and four year olds), to recreational activities, play opportunities, sport, music, local museums, galleries etc.

- 6.5 As Sure Start Children Centres and Extended Schools roll out, many local authorities are linking them into their Children's Information Service – both to enable practitioners working in the centre or school to signpost parents on to relevant local services, and also as convenient venues for parents to obtain information direct from the Children's Information Service.
- 6.6 This local information builds on national sources such as the DfES Parent Centre and DirectGov websites. There is a wide range of other parenting websites run by other organisations including a number from third sector as well as the BBC. Since 1998 the government has

also resourced a number of third sector telephone help lines providing information to parents on a range of issues including exclusion, bullying and bringing up teenagers. Government is also working to ensure focused services are available to help parents understand their responsibilities for child maintenance.

- 6.7 Work underway as part of the Government's Obesity Programme has highlighted that some parents find it difficult to show commitment to a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and regular physical activity. They may exercise very little influence over their children's food choices or acquiesce to pressures to spend leisure time in front of the TV or playing computer games.<sup>70</sup> To help these parents establish a healthy lifestyle for their children we are:

### Information and Advice from Children's Information Service

Jane, a lone parent, asked her local Children Information Service (CIS) to help her search for childcare to accommodate her two young children aged 2 & 5 years, because she intended to join the emergency services and start training. Mary from the CIS discussed all of the childcare options available, and Jane decided to use a childminder. Jane had never used a childminder before and had never left her children with anyone else apart from family members. Jane also needed support in making contact with local childminders. An appointment was booked for a one-to-one session with Mary, who explained the choices available, including the childcare tax credit system. Through the 'brokerage' service, Mary helped Jane identify childcare which was suitable and affordable.

Mary followed up progress with Jane, who told Mary that she would have to wait some weeks for her training to start. Having found suitable childcare, Jane wanted to find another job in the interim. Mary put her in touch with a lone-parent adviser at Jobcentre Plus who helped her find a suitable part-time position. Mary helped Jane to negotiate her childcare to fit her hours. Jane really appreciated the help she received from the CIS.

*"without their help, I would not have got this far."*

- ensuring that simple and straightforward advice on a range of healthy living topics is widely available (for example through Children's Centres), including the importance of ensuring a healthy weight and information about the weighing and measuring exercise for Reception and Year 6 pupils;
- limiting pressure on parents through restrictions on advertising of unhealthy food to children under the age of 16;
- helping disadvantaged parents by providing fresh fruit and vegetables for their families through the Healthy Start Programme; and
- ensuring all children lead healthy lifestyles during the school day through our School Food and School Sport programmes.

**6.8** We know that there is a vast store of information available for parents, but its volume and fragmented nature can make it difficult for parents to find what they need when they need it – enabling parents to access information when it is convenient to them. New technology can help with this and we know that many parents across the social classes use the internet.

**6.9** We will rationalise publicly funded information for parents to make it easier to access, more user-friendly and better organised. As part of this, **we propose to pilot during 2008 a universal Parent Know-How service, integrating access to quality web materials with targeted information via help lines**

**and printed material for parents at higher risk or unable to access other channels.** Information from this pilot will inform further improvements to the accessibility and quality of information for parents.

**6.10** Parent Partnership Services are statutory services offering information, advice and support for parents of children and young people with special educational needs. They are able to put parents in touch with other local organisations. These services have a role in making sure that parents' views are heard and understood and that these views inform local policy and practice. Some are based in the voluntary sector and all are able to provide impartial advice and support to parents.

### Information about Quality of Services

**6.11** Information about the quality of schools is important to enable parents to exercise choice. We will continue to improve the accessibility and relevance of such information. The Achievement and Attainment Tables now show not only key stage results, with year on year comparisons of results over the past four years, but also background information on the school, and information on authorised and unauthorised absences. Recent changes to Ofsted reports have made them much shorter and sharper, with the parental audience in mind. In addition, all schools are now required to complete a School Profile offering a balanced assessment of the schools' key qualities across topics such as what the

school is trying to improve, how the school works with parents and the community, and how the school makes sure that every child gets teaching to meet their individual needs, as well as measures of achievement.

**6.12** Since 2001 childcare for children under eight years old has been required to meet national quality and safety standards which enable it to be registered by Ofsted. There have been improvements to information about childcare settings to help parents choose childcare. Ofsted inspection reports explain how the setting is supporting children in achieving the five Every Child Matters outcomes and its grading. All parents with children at a childcare setting receive a copy of the report and they are available for other parents through the Ofsted website.

#### **The introduction of the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register in April 2007**

will enable a wider range of childcare (including that for older children) to demonstrate that they have met required standards – giving parents better information about its quality and safety.

#### **Improving Access to Advice and Support**

**6.13** 75% of parents say they want extra support at times.<sup>71</sup> We need a better understanding of when this need arises, what support they want and why it is not readily available. We know that we do not have consistent success in effectively engaging or supporting all parents. Families and family life are increasingly complex so we need to

consider how public services can effectively engage all the significant adults in a child's life. We need to reach:

- Fathers as well as mothers;
- Parents from all backgrounds, in particular those government has traditionally found harder to reach;
- Families with a disabled parent or child;
- Other key adults in children's lives including grandparents and step-parents;
- Those parenting looked after children; and
- Parents in challenging circumstances e.g. prisoners' families.

**6.14** Any package of services must have at its heart parents continuing to look first to their private contacts and networks. And it must also consider the role of the private sector, notably the print and broadcast media in this field. This is not about nationalising parenting. Learning from the pilots described earlier, combined with **pioneering new research (reporting in July 2007) into what parents from different backgrounds want at different times in their child's life** will help us increasingly understand how to ensure that all parents can access the information, advice and support they need.

**6.15** We need to explore the scope for developing private provision, whilst maintaining involvement of the third sector. We have already commissioned further research into the barriers

inhibiting the development of this area as a market; whether stigma puts parents off seeking such support; how much of a factor is parents' ability to pay; and the impact that supplying better information to the sector about what is needed. **This will report in May 2007.**

### Supporting families to stay together

**6.16** The law is clear that children should live with their parents wherever possible and, when necessary, families should be given extra support to help keep them together. There is lots of innovative practice in this country – many local authorities are focusing support on providing cross-disciplinary, sustained support for families, responding to better techniques for identifying problems early.

**6.17** In the recent green paper *Care Matters*,<sup>72</sup> we outlined some specific proposals to help strengthen the work being undertaken by local services in supporting families to stay together:

- Assessing the impact of intensive models of parenting support such as multi systemic therapy and functional family therapy; and
- Establishing a national centre for excellence in children's and families' services to help support a more systematic approach to sharing best practice in supporting children and families across children's services more widely.

### Promoting contact between children and their separated parents

**6.18** Each year between 150,000 and 200,000 couples separate and many of these separations involve children. Where there is separation or divorce we want children to be able to continue to have meaningful and safe contact with both parents. A minority of separating couples (approx 10%) are unable to come to contact/residence arrangements amicably in the best interests of their children and turn to the family courts for help. Approximately 67,000 contact orders were made in England and Wales in 2004-05.

**6.19** Since the publication of a Green Paper (2004) and Next Steps document (2005) on Parental Separation, the Government has been developing a wide range of services, such as mediation and providing guidance to support all separating parents in making contact/residence arrangements that reflect the best interests of their children.

**6.20** Where cases do come to court we have a number of measures to help avoid unnecessary lengthy and adversarial court proceedings, unless there are issues of harm to either children or parents. The Children and Adoption Act 2006, when implemented, will provide courts with measures additional to the existing ones of fines and imprisonment, to tackle breaches of contact orders and support parents to reach agreement. These measures include referral to hear about the value of mediation; referral to classes to educate parents on the child as a priority

and to learn conflict management techniques; and provide for follow-up support to families for up to one year after a court order is made. We are currently finalising a timescale for implementation of provisions in the Act.

- 6.21** The Children and Family Courts Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) advises the court on the circumstances of the family, interviews parents (and children, if appropriate, according to their age and understanding) and writes a report with recommendations to the court. CAFCASS is rolling out nationwide in-court conciliation services, where its practitioners will attempt to broker agreements, where appropriate, to help avoid the need for contested court hearings.

## Children in Care

- 6.22** The decision to take a child into care is never an easy one, and it is a decision that is taken by the courts. In every case where a child is taken into care on a care order, the courts will have considered the evidence and taken the view that the child has been significantly harmed, or would be if they were not taken into care.
- 6.23** Where the court makes an order placing a child in the care of a local authority, the authority will continue to work with the family with a view to the child returning home. However a stage may be reached when it is apparent that the child cannot return home. It is at this stage that the local authority must make alternative plans to provide the

child with a permanent family home; adoption is one way of providing this, but for many children, long-term care is the solution.

- 6.24** For children in long-term care, the issues around parenting are complicated. The overwhelming majority of children in care live with foster carers – some of whom are members of their wider family. Legal parental responsibility for children on care orders is shared between the local authority (as ‘corporate parents’) and the birth parents. But the day to day tasks involved in providing children with a nurturing, caring and supportive home environment rest with the foster carers. And children in care tend to have greater levels of need than the wider population of children.
- 6.25** It is therefore essential that foster carers have access to all of the sources of parenting support available to other parents and carers, and that services are delivered in a way that is accessible to them, to their families and to the children they look after.
- In the green paper *Care Matters*, we set out our vision for a tiered framework of placement types, structured around the different levels of support required by children with different levels of need.
  - We need to recognise the special situation for foster carers who care for members of their own wider family. These placements can often be the most stable, and should be routinely considered at an early stage

for children in care. We are promoting the use of family group conferencing as an effective intervention to help identify potential placements with their wider family at an early stage. We are also looking at ways of improving the approvals system for family foster carers.

- We are also piloting a very intensive model of foster care, with a multi-agency team providing intensive support to the child, to their birth family and to their foster carers, aimed at improving the outcomes for particularly challenging adolescents. This model, called Multi Dimensional Treatment Foster Care, is being piloted in 18 local authorities. We are also piloting a version of this approach with much younger children to enable them to settle in a permanent family.
- To bring their experience closer to that of other young people, who tend to stay with their families for longer, we intend to pilot a right to remain in care up until a young person's eighteenth birthday.

### Workforce Development

**6.26** We are committed to improving the capacity of the workforce in children's, young people's and family services to work effectively with parents. In sections 3 and 4 we have already described a number of resources and toolkits to help staff reflect on their current

practice in involving and engaging parents and learn from what has been found effective elsewhere.

**6.27** The new National Occupational Standards for children's services include standards for work with parents, which were approved by the QCA in April 2005. **By September 2007 examining bodies (including City & Guilds) will have developed qualifications that reflect these standards, so that they can be incorporated into web-based and taught courses. All training programmes will be reviewed by December 2007 under the QCA framework.**

**6.28** **The National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (announced in the *Respect Action Plan*) will come into operation from Autumn 2007.** It will have a key role in improving practice and will have three main areas of work:

- training, development and support for the parenting workforce, especially – but not exclusively – the trainers of practitioners and those who train trainers;
- acting as a national centre and source of advice on high quality academic research evidence on parenting and parenting support, combined with practical knowledge of what works and has worked in different situations and with different client groups; and
- supporting the government's parenting agenda, as it develops.

**6.29** The Academy will directly support our commitment to ensure that the new national occupational standards are met by parenting practitioners and thus raise the quality of the parenting workforce.

# 7. Developing Parental Engagement

**7.1** We have strong evidence of the beneficial impact of both good parenting and parental engagement in public services on children's outcomes. Public services in a range of areas need to improve how they work with parents. Engaging parents effectively means:

- engaging both fathers and mothers;
- enabling parents to access information so that they can exercise effective choice;
- giving parents the means to influence the shape of services so that they meet their family's needs;
- practitioners providing services to the family seeking to work in equal partnership with parents to maximise the benefits to the children of the services received;
- enabling parents to find and draw down additional information and help to deal with specific issues when they need it; and
- ensuring opportunities for fathers and mothers to work in partnership with schools, taking account of the constraints on working parents.

**7.2** This is an ambitious aim which requires change. We have made some progress towards it – improving levels of information; providing support to the workforce to adopt good practice; creating new services – often by testing out approaches to see what works and for whom, and how far activities that have only been previously tried on a small scale can be successfully offered to larger populations.

**7.3** Going forward we need to ensure that parents understand the benefits to their child that can come from working more effectively with services; and the boost to child outcomes that can come from effective parenting in the home. We also need to ensure that parents know to expect services to work in partnership with them and that it is the good parent that seeks extra help when they need it not the poor one.

**7.4** There is more to do to embed in mainstream services the culture of effective partnership with parents and the importance of encouraging the development of good at-home parenting.

- 7.5 There is also development work in local authorities – some are further along than others in threading effective parental engagement through local service planning, commissioning and delivery. There are considerable variations from area to area in the extent to which this has happened to date.
- 7.6 There are also geographical variations in the quality, nature and availability of extra specialist support to parents, as well as in the balance between private, voluntary and public sector provision and the level of public funding support. Much of the expertise in delivering specialist support lies with small, often community-based third sector organisations.
- 7.7 The pilots currently underway (e.g. Parent Support Advisers, Transition Information Sessions, Early Learning Partnerships) are generating a clearer picture of what works and for which parents. But there is still more to learn.
- 7.8 A clearer definition of what information, advice and support each parent can expect as a minimum from their local Sure Start Children’s Centre and extended school would empower parents and help destigmatise asking for help.
- 7.9 **We therefore intend, in consultation with others, to develop a definition of the minimum package of information advice and support that any parent should be able to access locally through their Sure Start Children’s Centre and extended school and from**

**national sources of information and advice. We will also consult on the steps that need to be taken to make this a reality for parents.** This is a challenge for all of us; not just government. This is not simply a question of extra publicly-funded services; and to a large extent is not a question of extra service at all.

### Taking this Forward

- 7.10 We need to assess the impact of the work already started to improve the parental support and engagement offered through the contact parents have with existing (and growing) services such as extended schools, health services, Sure Start Children’s Centres and other early years and childcare settings. **We will explore the scope for tracking parental confidence at a national level, so that we can identify over time which groups of parents we are still failing to engage.**
- 7.11 We need to ensure that policy and service design take into account what we already know about what works; and what we will learn over the next few years as the further learning from pilots becomes available. **We will do this through disseminating information to local strategic partners and delivery partners on what works; and feeding into future development of occupational standards for the children’s workforce. The new National Academy for Parenting Practitioners will help with this.**

**7.12** As part of this we need to look for the lessons about what constitutes effective service delivery, for groups less well served at present, ensuring in particular that service design and delivery is effective for families whatever their structure; and that **fathers and mothers have the information, advice and support they need to parent their children effectively, meeting the needs of parents facing additional difficulties, such as separated couples, and the challenges that arise in engaging both parents in school events (e.g. parents' evenings).**

**7.13 The Children and Young People's Review, currently being conducted by DfES and HM Treasury and due to Report in spring 2007, is examining how to boost children's resilience to risk and improve the responsiveness of services to the needs of children, young people and families.** The review published a discussion paper in January 2007 which set out new analysis<sup>73</sup> on the dynamic nature of risk during childhood and the importance of positive parenting as a key factor which protects against risk. At present, where intensive/targeted parenting support is offered it is often at the point of crisis. Going forward we need to understand what the review's analysis implies about identifying where it would be effective to focus support; whether it should be made to all parents or a more differentiated or

targeted offer; and the role for public funding in this. The Children and Young People's Review will set out recommendations to inform the Comprehensive Spending Review.

**7.14** We know that the current picture in local areas is very varied. We also have evidence that current gaps in local provision are partly caused by weak, poorly co-ordinated commissioning processes. We have taken action to improve these by asking local authorities to identify a single individual responsible for commissioning parenting support services. We have started to work with these commissioners to help them learn from good practice in other areas. **We need to go further and propose to work with IDeA and the Local Government Association and a group of front running local authorities to develop and share best practice.**

**7.15** Generating a clearer understanding through gathering the additional learning and analysis described in this section; and tapping into local intelligence on progress will be key to determining a realistic timeframe for getting to where we want to be. This will also need to be linked to the existing timescales for developing universal services such as childcare, Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools; and the timetable for wider changes to universal services like the response to the *2020 Vision* for teaching and learning (see para 4.16).

**7.16** This work will not only be helpful to parents, but also:

- For organisations in the **third or private sectors**, enabling them to plan where they might seek to grow; the services they might seek to offer; and the type of staff (employee or volunteer), and associated training, they might need over time.
- For **government, and local strategic commissioners of services**, giving a direction for what services might need to be developed over time, and where development funding might best be used.

**7.17** Action starts with the launch of this document. In taking this forward we will involve:

- Parents – fathers and mothers as well other family members in a parenting role.
- Children and young people up to age 19.
- Service delivery organisations from public, private and third sectors drawn from across the spectrum of current services for children and their families.
- Local strategic commissioners of services including local authorities, children’s trusts and strategic planners and commissioners of health services.

### What will this mean for Mothers, Fathers and Families – to end of 2007

Action	Date
For parents with children in over 600 schools in 20 local authorities, access to a Parent Support Adviser	January 07
For disadvantaged parents in 10 areas, access to extra support from Health-led parenting projects from before birth to their child’s second birthday	April 07
For families in pilot areas, homelessness mediation developed by Relate	April 07
For children in two thirds of primary schools, access to the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme	July 07
For parents whose child is excluded from school, a new duty to ensure that their child is not in a public place for the first five days of the exclusion	September 07
For children and young people in secondary schools, access to the SEAL programme	September 07
For all 5 and 11 year olds, a free book	Autumn 07
For parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs, a pack will be available to help them support their children’s learning	Autumn 07
For parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs, availability of a Family Learning course	Autumn 07

## What will this mean for Mothers, Fathers and Families – 2008 – 2010

Action	Date
All parents increasingly likely to be offered information sessions around the time their child enters primary and secondary school	Early 2008
Parents more likely to find the childcare place they need once the childcare sufficiency duty and offer of brokering childcare places starts	April 08
Vulnerable young people will receive targeted support	April 08
Parents can be more certain of a quality childcare place with the introduction of voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register	April 08
Parents in pilot areas will start to receive Parent Know-How services	2008
Children 0-5 in childcare and early education will receive the Early Years Foundation Stage	Sept 08
Parents can be assured of their child's safety in settings when the Vetting and Barring scheme comes into force	Sept 08
Parents of children and young people from birth – 19 years will have access to a full range of information on parenting and local services from their Children's Information Service	2008
All parents increasingly likely to have access to Parent Support Adviser through their extended schools	2008
All families with children under 5 have access to Sure Start Children's Centres, 3,500 centres – one in every community	2010
All families able to access extended services through their children's school	2010
All families with children aged three and four able to access 15 hours of free early education and childcare, 38 weeks of the year, over three or more days.	2010

## What will this mean for Local Authorities – to end of 2007

Action	Date
20 local authorities will have Parent Support Adviser Pilots in over 600 schools	January 07
Local authorities and PCTs will receive revised guidance setting out support to young parents	Spring 07
Practitioners in 50 local authorities will start to receive parenting training to work in Family Intervention Projects	March 07
10 local authorities will have Health-led parenting projects	April 07
Local authorities in pilot areas will have access to the Relate model for homelessness mediation	April 07
Local authorities will have access to a research into developing the market for parental support, including through private provision	May 07

Local authorities will have access to guidance taking account of research by Mencap/Contact a Family on information needs of families with disabled children	Spring 07
Local authorities will have fed back their progress on developing parental support strategies	May 07
Local authorities will be able to access results of segmentation research – telling us who parents are, what they want and how they want it	July 07
Local authorities will have access to the final evaluation report from Specialist Schools and Academies Trust campaign to improve parental engagement with schools	July 07
Two thirds of primary schools to be using Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme	July 07
Local authorities will have access to case studies on effective parental engagement in secondary schools	Summer 07
Local authorities will have new powers under the Education and Inspections Act on excluded pupils and parenting contracts and orders	September 07
Rollout of Secondary SEAL programme	September 07
Local authorities will have access to the interim evaluation report from Transition Information Session pilots (with learning from 20 authorities)	Autumn 07
Free books given to all 5 and 11 year olds in every local authority area	Autumn 07
The National Academy for Parenting Practitioners will start to support local authorities map existing parenting services and help to plug any gaps	Spring 07
Local authorities will start referring practitioners and employers to the online communities run by the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners	Autumn 07
Local authorities will have access to packs for local parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs	Autumn 07
All local authorities will start to deliver Transition Information Sessions through extended schools	Autumn 07
Local authorities will have access to a publication of long term strategy for development of parental engagement	Autumn 07
Family Learning course for parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs will be available to local authorities	Autumn 07

## What will this mean for Local Authorities – 2008 – 2010

Action	Date
All local authorities will have access to the final evaluation report of Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder projects, with learning from 18 authorities	March 08
Local Authorities to have in place strategy for local services that empower and support parents	March 08
Childcare sufficiency duty and offer of brokering childcare places for parents starts	April 08
Local authorities will offer targeted support for vulnerable young people	April 08
Local authority information services will have access to information from the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register	April 08
Local authorities will have access to the final evaluation report of Transition Information Sessions pilots (with learning from 20 authorities)	Spring 08
2 local authorities will be pilot areas for Parent Know-How pilot	Spring 2008
Local authority Children's Information Services to provide full range of information for parents of children and young people from birth – 19 years	April 2008
Local authorities will have access to the final evaluation report of the Early Learning Partnerships Project, run in 19 areas	Summer 08
Settings in all local authorities will deliver Early Years Foundation Stage	Sept 08
Vetting and Barring scheme comes into force	Sept 08
Local authorities will mainstream good practice from Parent Support Adviser pilot throughout Extended Schools	2008
Local authorities will have access to the Parent Know-How pilot evaluation	2008
Local authorities will have 3500 Children's Centres one in every community	2010
Every school an extended school	2010
Local authorities will extend the 3 & 4 year old offer	2010

## What will this mean for Practitioners – to end of 2007

Action	Date
Practitioners in 20 local authorities will be delivering Parent Support Adviser Pilots in over 600 schools	January 07
Practitioners in 50 local authorities will start to receive parenting training to work in Family Intervention Projects	March 07
Practitioners in 10 local authorities will have Health-led parenting projects	April 07
Practitioners in local authorities pilot areas will deliver the Relate model for homelessness mediation	April 07
Practitioners will have access to guidance taking account of research by Mencap/Contact a Family on information needs of families with disabled children	Spring 07
Schools will have access to the final evaluation report from Specialist Schools and Academies Trust campaign to improve parental engagement with schools, so they can begin to implement the learning	July 07
Two thirds of primary schools to be using Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme	July 07
Practitioners will have access to case studies on effective parental engagement in secondary schools, so they can begin to implement the learning	Summer 07
Schools will have new powers under the Education and Inspections Act on excluded pupils and parenting contracts and orders	September 07
Rollout of Secondary SEAL programme	September 07
Schools and parenting practitioners will have access to the interim evaluation report from Transition Information Session pilots (with learning from 20 authorities)	Autumn 07
Free books given to all 5 and 11 year olds on starting school, with teachers planning complementary lessons	Autumn 07
Practitioners will be referred by their local authority to the online communities run by the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners	Autumn 07
Practitioners will have access to packs for local parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs	Autumn 07
All extended schools will start to deliver Transition Information Sessions	Autumn 07
Schools will have access to a publication of long term strategy for development of parental engagement	Autumn 07
Family Learning course for parents and carers with literacy and numeracy needs will be available	Autumn 07

## What will this mean for Practitioners – 2008 – 2010

Action	Date
Practitioners will have access to the final evaluation report of Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder projects, with learning from 18 authorities	March 08
Childcarers can register with the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register	April 08
Schools will have access to the final evaluation report of Transition Information Sessions pilots (with learning from 20 authorities)	Spring 08
Early years practitioners will have access to the final evaluation report of the Early Learning Partnerships Project, run in 19 areas	Summer 08
Schools make more effective use of Home-School Agreements, as part of a set of wider measures to strengthen home-school relationships	Autumn 08
Settings in all local authorities will deliver Early Years Foundation Stage	Sept 08
Vetting and Barring scheme comes into force	Sept 08

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