

<b>item:</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>report:</b>	CYP39/09

## **SUPPORTING PARENTS IN HIGHLAND**

**By Bill Julia Nelson**

### **Summary**

This report proposes the further development of a coordinated approach to support parenting across integrated children's services partners in Highland.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Parenting here is defined as the care, attention and nurturing that parents/carers give a child as they grow up. Parenting is probably the most important job in the world, as it influences a child's ability to achieve their potential during their childhood and into the future, affecting both the individual and society in the long term. For an infant, child and young person to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected & responsible, requires parents/carers in their life who are able to love and care for them and meet their day to day needs.
- 1.2 This paper focuses on the antenatal to 16 years old stage and proposes a Highland Parenting Support Framework be developed which will help parents and parents-to-be to fulfil their role.
- 1.3 It is now widely accepted that the first stages of an infants and child's life are particularly important for their future wellbeing. A secure, loving environment is known to affect the way a child's brain develops and the establishment of a secure attachment to parents/carers from birth means a child is better able to manage stressful events later in life. As most of a child's brain structure development is completed by the age of two, getting the best start possible for the child and parents will reap benefits for the child and the wider community.
- 1.4 While 'each child is different and different environments require and enable different parenting strategies'<sup>1</sup>, all parents need to have some kind of help and encouragement at different stages. This may range from intensive support where there parents face particular and significant challenges to advice and support on tackling everyday topics.
- 1.5 Changes in society all make it more possible than before that parents may be isolated in their role: families are smaller with fewer older

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<sup>1</sup> *Parenting practices and support in Scotland*, Briefing 40, CRFR, October 2008

relatives to offer advice, older family members may be in employment and less available to help, new parents may not live near relatives and there are pressures on parents to be in paid work as well as bringing up children.

- 1.6 This paper proposes the development of a coordinated approach by the Joint Committee for Children and Young People to support parenting across integrated children's services partners in Highland.
- 1.7 The approach builds on the experience of implementing a series of delivery strategies for the early years, health improvement in the early years and parenting support in for Highland's Children 1 and 2. It will form the basis of parenting support to be incorporated in For Highland's Children 3 and further contribute to putting and sustaining *Getting it right for every child* in practice.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Previous integrated children service plans have delivered the following approaches to supporting parenting in Highland:
  - Providing all new parents with *play @ home* and *Bookstart* resources;
  - The delivery of research-based parenting interventions in some communities: for the early years, PIPPIN and for older children and adolescents, the Webster-Stratton 'The Incredible Years' programme;
  - Mapping the range of parenting support available and initiated training for practitioners. The co-ordinator post was time-limited;
  - A National Lottery bid was submitted, informed by the GIRFEC methodology, to develop a web-based interactive approach to parenting support. This bid did not attract funding.
- 2.2 Over the years, discussions with those involved in delivering parenting support across Highland have identified the following gaps in services:
  - Interventions that match need with the level of support and or intervention;
  - Employing an age/stage approach to ensure appropriate interventions;
  - Administrative support for the delivery of parenting (booking venues and crèches, organising materials, arranging transport);
  - Funding for venues, refreshments, child care and transport.
- 2.3 *Better Health and Better Care* (Scottish Government 2007) is the core strategic change programme for NHS Scotland. 'Supporting Parents' is a key element of its Action Plan:

'Most of a child's needs in their earliest years are met by their parents, families and wider social networks. Children who live in families where parental capacity is high and which have strong family and social networks often go on to enjoy better outcomes later in life. Whilst most, if not all, parents require and value a degree of support as they begin parenting, some require additional help to build the resilience to support the development of their children.'

2.4 The Action Plan includes the development of early intervention programmes which invest in the health of pregnant mothers, babies and young children to break the link between early life adversity and adult disease.

2.5 Recently the publication of *The Early Years Framework* (Scottish Government/CoSLA concordat, 2008) has incorporated this emphasis on parenting support.

### **3 Helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes themselves**

3.1 The second of the 10 priorities in the Early Years Framework comprises:

- Developing mutual support networks for parents and other carers
- Nurseries, schools and childcare services develop their role in supporting family and community learning.
- Community development programmes include parenting and early years as one of their priorities.
- Opportunities for parents to get involve din services as volunteer helpers or similar roles.
- Supporting grandparents and informal carers who spend significant amounts of time with care of children.

3.2 A single gateway to a range of advice and information for children and families.

3.3 Meanwhile the Youth Justice agenda and the focus on mental health and well being and the related development of the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Framework Implementation Plan also require a response to support parenting. The Curriculum for Excellence 'Health & Wellbeing' strand enables parenting issues to be addressed in schools with young people, who may become parents in future, and for those who may become parents whilst still adolescent.

3.4 The development of a more co-ordinated approach to training across children's services in Highland presents opportunities for extending this

approach to parenting interventions that may be web-based and interactive.

- 3.5 The implementation of *getting it right for every child* across Highland offers a fresh way to develop parenting interventions that are in line with the principles that children and families get support when they need it at the point of need and in a proportionate manner.

#### **4. For Highland's Children 3**

- 4.1 Improving the support available to parents is relevant to all seven of the Key improvement Objectives aimed to ensure that all children are: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected & responsible and included.

- 4.2 The aim of developing a Parenting Support Framework relates particularly to:

Draft Key Improvement Objective 4: Nurtured

- Develop and strengthen a comprehensive range of high quality, universal services providing a balanced range of accessible and adaptable family support.
- Ensure families have access to a good range of early intervention & prevention services
- Promote the Childcare Information Service to become a family information service offering high quality universal web-based support.
- Detail a range of evidence-based Parenting Programs matched to assessed need where complex circumstances require a higher level of support.

#### **5. Proposed process**

- 5.1 In order to create a coherent method of support parenting capacity across Highland, a framework is required that will establish a core set of principles, standards and guidance within which agencies and practitioners can deliver support. Ensuring the right level of support is offered to the right parents will be important. Refining current activity by monitoring how existing practitioner skills are deployed will help this process.
- 5.2 To be a dynamic and effective tool, this framework will require firm commitment from those responsible in agencies for assigning financial and human resources.
- 5.3 This is particularly important as there is no recurring additional financial resource to fund the development and implementation of a Parenting

Support Framework. Officer time is available to provide co-ordination for the Framework to be developed.

5.4 The proposal Highland Parenting Support Framework will set out:

- The help that should be available to parents at different stages of their infant/child/young person's life and for different levels of need;
- The principles and standards to be followed by agencies and practitioners when offering interventions, including the monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes for families;
- The types of interventions that have an evidence base of being effective and should therefore be the primary source of support;
- The routes to securing resources, training and supervision for practitioners.
- The information that should be available to all parents and the types of media or other routes that should be used to make this information accessible.

## 6. Next steps

6.1 It is proposed that a multi-agency **Reference Group** is established, with support from the Early Years Health Development Officer, to steer the creation of a Highland Parenting Support Framework.

6.2 Members will be senior representatives of NHS Highland and Highland Council departments (midwifery, public health nursing, child & adolescent mental health, drug & alcohol service, social work services, education, youth justice), Northern Constabulary and the voluntary sector.

6.3 Effective ways of engaging parents and young people, for example, in local events, will be identified so that they are actively involved in developing the Framework.

6.4 The work of the Reference Group will be to agree the elements of the Parenting Support Framework (see above).

## 7. Outline timetable

Task	Completed by
Complete mapping of current parenting support services	End October 09
Invite Reference Group members	Mid October 09
Hold first meeting; agree working methods and timetable	Mid December 09

**Recommendation**

The Joint Committee is asked to approve the development a Highland Parenting Support Framework, endorsing the process as set out in this report

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