

# Briefing Paper 10

## Parenting Support

### National Assembly Elections 2007

*"The help and advice I have received has been like a light at the end of a dark tunnel which I could see no way out of."*

Parent  
Evaluation of  
Caerphilly Family Intervention Service, NCH Cymru



**Save the Children**

Achub y Plant



**NSPCC** ™

**Dim mwy o greulondeb i blant. DIM.  
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.**



**Barnardo's  
Cymru**

**RHOI'R DYFODOLYN ÔL I'N PLANT  
GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE**

## **Parenting Support**

Article 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the rights of parents to receive support and their status as the people with primary responsibility for decisions relating to their children. If we want to achieve best outcomes for children and young people, the Welsh Assembly Government must ensure that parents have the information and support they need to bring up children safely and effectively. Parents should be involved in decisions about the best ways to provide this information and support.

### **What has been achieved since 2003?**

The Cymorth fund, managed by the Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships, has enabled over 200 family support projects to be developed across Wales and the fund sees an increase in 2006/2007. Integrated Children's Centres have been established in several local authority areas and there is currently a target of one per local authority. A Childcare Strategy has been published and £12m of European funding (Genesis) has been secured for initiatives, including childcare, to help women return to work. Free childcare for lone parents has been piloted in Torfaen. The new "Flying Start" initiative will offer part-time childcare and other support for parents of two year olds in the poorest areas. This programme is based on evidence of the effectiveness of early intervention to reduce future disadvantage. There is a Children's Information Service in each local authority area.

Parenting advice and information has been provided through four booklets for parents – The Pregnancy Book, Birth to Five, From Breakfast to Bedtime and Over the top Behaviour in the Under 10's. Another booklet is being written on alternatives to physical punishment, as WAG has taken a principled stand against physical punishment and has supported the Children Are Unbeatable Campaign.

The Parenting Action Plan, developed by WAG sets out further aims – establishment of a bilingual helpline for parents, expansion of training in the Incredible Years parenting programme, guidance for local partnerships on involving parents, work on the support needs of grandparents and further work on the website for parents, Parentsnet. There is also a commitment to promoting parental participation in schools, but no detailed plans.

On the whole, WAG policies have been supportive of parents but there has been a parallel growth in more coercive measures. LEAs can now apply for parenting contracts for truancy or school exclusion and parenting orders in case of exclusion (this power was already available in cases of truancy). Youth Offending Services can apply for Parenting Orders in cases of criminal conduct and antisocial behaviour in children and young people. Fixed penalty notices have not been introduced in Wales. Strategies for parenting support or family support are being developed in some areas.

## **What are our current concerns?**

- Parental involvement in schools is underdeveloped, particularly with the most disadvantaged parents, whose children are likely to underachieve.
- We are concerned that some parents tell us they were offered no appropriate parenting help before finding themselves subject to a Parenting Order. Parenting Orders should be a last resort.
- Parenting education and support is variable across Wales and targeted programmes, whilst very valuable, miss large numbers of parents who are struggling with parenting issues. Many parents of disadvantaged children e.g. disabled children and some ethnic minorities do not receive support suitable for their needs.
- The quality of parenting services is variable and needs to be assured.
- The Welsh Assembly Government is taking a principled stand on the funding of parenting programmes, funding only those which have been evaluated to the highest research standard. This excludes many locally developed programmes, popular with parents and with some evidence of effectiveness, where external evaluation has been unaffordable.

## **Recommendations**

We call on the Welsh Assembly Government to:

- Encourage Children and Young people's Partnerships to have a coordinated and strategic approach to family/parenting support.
- Produce guidance on involving parents in their children's education. This would include information for schools about developing partnerships with a range of professionals and organisations, able to assist in this process.
- Drive implementation of the new National Occupational Standards for work with parents and common, practical methods of evaluating effectiveness of parenting support programmes. In particular, WAG should do more to assist in the evaluation of current locally developed parenting programmes, so that those which are effective can be supported through funding.
- Ensure that early counselling and support is available for parents of disabled children, alongside services for their children.
- Ensure that Children and Young People's Partnerships involve the widest possible range of parents in decisions about service development, to ensure that services are appropriate for diverse groups.
- Fund a public education campaign on alternatives to physical punishment.
- Make long-term funding available (10 years) for targeted initiatives such as Flying Start.
- Meet the needs of disadvantaged families in isolated rural areas.
- Implement the Childcare Strategy as a matter of urgency, with particular attention to the needs of disabled children.
- Provide teenage parents with particular support, to help them maintain education and/or training.
- Ensure targeted support for parents who are vulnerable and/or face discrimination.

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