



Bedfordshire
county council



Positive parenting

A strategy for parenting
support to promote better
outcomes for children
in Bedfordshire

Summary



Introduction

- In order to further improve the range of support for families, the Government has required all Local Authorities to 'develop a strategic approach in the design and delivery of parent support services that inform the local Children and Young People's Plan' (Parent Support Guidance for Local Authorities: DfES October 2006).
- This document is a Summary of Bedfordshire's Positive Parenting Strategy. It provides a brief overview of the county's approach to supporting children and families. Copies of the full strategy document can be obtained by e-mailing parenting@bedscc.gov.uk or telephoning 0800 023 2057.
- The Strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan and continuously reviewed to ensure it remains focused and relevant, supports parents and helps to deliver improved outcomes for children.



Why a Strategy for Parenting?

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is responsible for the publication of a Children and Young People's Plan that meets the needs of children and young people in Bedfordshire. The Partnership works together to improve the range of local services available and monitors their performance in order to improve the well being of children and young people. This means all aspects of children's health and development so that they will feel safe, valued and supported to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to society.

It is well documented that parents have a huge influence on outcomes for their children, so support for parents can make a significant contribution to improving all outcomes for children. The majority of parents in Bedfordshire are doing a good job compared with parents in other parts of the country and some are doing so in very challenging circumstances, using their own resources and informal networks of support.

However there are other more vulnerable families who are not being helped by services and others who may have one or two additional needs and whose situation may escalate without some early support. For these parents their own level of difficulties and needs make it very hard for them to meet the needs of their children.

National measures of deprivation and disadvantage point to Bedfordshire as being generally affluent, particularly in its rural areas. However, there are areas of significant deprivation, largely centred in Bedford, with pockets both in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. These areas are characterised by high unemployment, low qualifications, educational under-achievement, reliance on social benefits, poorer health and premature mortality. They also experience higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Defining what we mean by 'positive parenting'

For the purpose of this strategy 'parents' refers to anyone acting in a parenting role, eg. mums, dads (including teenage parents and parent carers), step-parents, grandparents and foster-carers. In order to define what we mean by 'positive parenting' we sought the views of representatives from local Bedfordshire community, voluntary sector and other agencies and services working directly with children and their families. Most people agreed that positive parenting is **loving, firm and consistent** and includes:

- Getting the best out of family life
- Recognising a child's needs are underpinned by love and being responsible for ensuring those needs are being met
- Providing a safe environment
- Being nurtured and encouraged
- Providing clear boundaries
- Providing opportunities for growth and development
- Ensuring respect for one another within the law
- Promoting truth and honesty

The Government has advocated key principles to underpin positive parenting:

- Authoritative (warm and firm, but not harsh parenting)
- Attachment, initiated pre-birth and especially important in the early months
- Parental involvement in the form of interest in the child and parent child discussions : how parents interact with their children is key
- Positive parental expectations, beliefs and attitude
- Parental supervision

'Parenting Support : Guidance for Local Authorities' - DfES October 2006

Recognising the diverse cultural and economic backgrounds in Bedfordshire, the strategy places the family unit at its heart and values effective models of parenting that are already in place. Where appropriate, parents will be empowered and supported to establish peer and family parenting networks.

The strategy recognises the factors that impact on family life, such as employment, poor health, low income, low literacy and numeracy levels, poor mental health or substance misuse problems and acknowledges that adults and children have differing needs. It takes into account that some adults may need additional support in order to benefit fully from parenting services.

Not everyone needs the same level of support

In order to achieve consistency in the way children's needs are understood and communicated between staff working in different services and agencies, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has agreed brief descriptions of the different levels of children's needs:

- **Universal services:**

Universal services are provided by General Practitioners and other primary health professionals, schools, nurseries, early year's groups and play services. They are the foundation of all children's services and offer support and guidance for parents.

- **Targeted parenting services for children with additional needs:**

Targeted support is more likely to address specific needs and risks, linked to the achievement of specific outcomes. Parenting support is often provided in groups or individually for more complex problems. It also allows for rapid identification of children at risk of significant harm who may need referral to children's services.

- **Specialist services:**

Specialist support is provided as part of a care package where a number of professionals are involved and where the needs of the child are complex or there is a high level or risk or need.



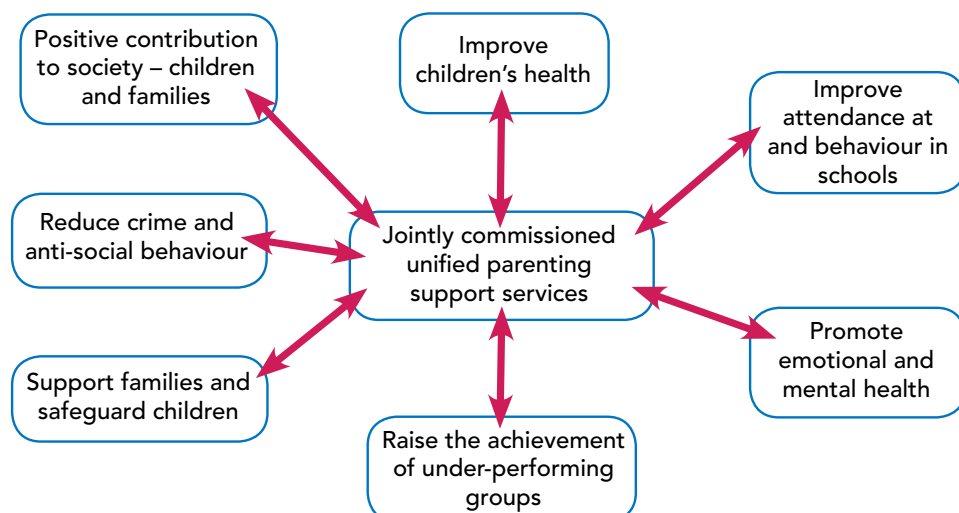
Working in a 'joined-up' way

- The strategy aims to provide a 'joined up' approach to positive parenting services across all levels of complexity so as to be able to meet the full range of needs of children and their families. The strategy ensures that parenting support is well co-ordinated and commissioned and supported by complementary integrated processes to ensure that from the perspective of the parent who is seeking help:
 - Information about services will be readily available, including signposting to support for families
 - They will be able to tell how services available can specifically help them
 - How those services can be accessed – through self-referral or professional referral
 - Those services that are free at the point of delivery and if applicable, those paid for by the parent
- Consultation and involvement of parents, carers and staff in the ongoing development of the strategy will ensure the continued strengthening of the strategy over the coming weeks and months.

Commissioning Parenting Support Services

- To ensure the development of a range of support for parents and in line with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) recommendations, Bedfordshire has appointed a Parenting Commissioner to provide the strategic focus for the development of parenting support services and the commissioning of evidence-based parenting programmes. The responsibilities of the post are integrated into the work of the multi-agency Joint Commissioning Group which ensures unified parenting support services illustrated by this diagram:

Impact of joint commissioning for parenting support



Developing the Parenting Workforce

- The Government has funded the setting up of a National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) made up from a consortium comprising the Family and Parenting Institute, Kings College University and Parenting UK, in order to effectively deliver quality assured, standardised parenting support cross the country. The Academy will be implementing national occupational standards supported by training and support for staff and volunteers delivering parenting support. In Bedfordshire work has begun on the development of an integrated workforce strategy for children and young people which will focus on the roll out of accredited training for staff and parent educators.

Strategy Delivery Plan

Priorities 2008-10

- Engagement and involvement of parents. Their views on the shape of services to meet their needs and what those services might look in the future will be a key action and an ongoing requirement.
- Integrated implementation and delivery - working and consulting with relevant agencies and professionals involved in providing parenting support and those working with families.
- Ensuring the strategy is integral to the joint commissioning arrangements and resource identification
- Commissioning accessible, high-quality evidence based parenting support
- Developing capacity for a trained and skilled workforce able to access nationally recognised training
- Ensuring quality in parenting support provision is maintained and kept under review in line with national occupational standards
- Communication strategy to support positive parenting particularly to vulnerable and hard to reach groups and avoid stigma
- Regular review of the Strategy by the Parenting Stakeholder Group to ensure it is responsive to needs of families in Bedfordshire
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact - establishing a cycle of continuous improvement to measure improvement in outcomes

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please contact us - details below.

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