

# Oxfordshire Parenting Forum

## What a good Oxfordshire parenting service might look like

### Background

Oxfordshire is the birthplace and home of several parenting organisations with a national and international as well as local reputation, providing excellent targeted services to parents locally.

**Oxfordshire Parenting Forum (OPF)** was set up in 1997 as a charitable umbrella organisation to bring the statutory and voluntary sectors together to ensure that all this local expertise could be harnessed in the best interest of parents and therefore for children and young people in Oxfordshire.

In 2008 Oxfordshire County Council, in common with all LAs, was required to produce a **Parenting Education and Support Strategy**. Following this, and the development of Children's Centres, a range of parenting programmes and support was available in every community, delivered through the Children's Centres, schools and other public and voluntary sector organisations. The essence of its success was partnership between these various providers.

Since 2012, subsequent rounds of funding cuts - particularly to Children's Centres, schools, youth services and commissioning budgets - have significantly reduced this provision and weakened the links between the statutory and voluntary sectors.

We are now seeking to re-establish the **voluntary organisations' partnership with the statutory sector** which was lost when OCC commissioning ceased.

### What good parenting provision looks like

- is led strategically by the Local Authority
- provides for all from universal to targeted
- provision across the age range from Early Years to teenagers
- includes specialized targeted groups, e.g. for Dads, parents of SEND children, parents of children/young people who offend
- offers group and one to one work
- additional outreach to those groups who may find formal services hard to access
- an effective cross referral signposting system, ensuring parents are guided to the most appropriate provision
- responds to evidence showing that parenting groups work better with a mix of participants (i.e. not all at sharpest end)
- accepts evidence showing that interventions are most effective when delivered by well trained and supported facilitators, with time to prepare, engage parents, debrief and evaluate, and that **how** programmes are delivered is as important as the programme content
- a system for sharing information about where and when groups are running and when places might be available, while recognizing that some groups are closed and for particular client groups

**The benefits to society of parenting provision** in terms of improved parent-child attachment, school readiness, the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of parents, children and young people, and reduction in youth offending and family breakdown are well researched and documented. A recent presentation on **'Parenting - a Public Health Priority'** by the National Parenting Programmes Alliance summed up the costs of not intervening as follows:

£17 billion per year spent on late intervention for children and young people = benefits and services for difficulties that could have been prevented if children and families had received effective help at an earlier time – EIF 2016

£5.3 billion on Looked After Children

£2.7 billion on benefits for young people NEET

£665 million on school absence and exclusion, and every cohort of permanently excluded pupils will cost the state an extra £2.1 billion

£60 billion a year attributable to crime in adults who had conduct disorder problems in childhood

**We realise that resources and time are currently very limited in the statutory sector and that services therefore have to be targeted at those families who are most vulnerable/ at risk, but we believe that a more joined up approach across the sectors could help all of us to reach more parents.**

### **How the voluntary sector can help**

- ❖ host a parenting network for the sharing of information and expertise
- ❖ provide practitioner training - this is currently paid for in a mixed economy, i.e. schools and individual organisations pay for individual places or team based training
- ❖ provide practitioner supervision and support – Parenting Practitioners Oxfordshire (PPO) offer mentoring and supervision groups. Family Links (FL) offer some already to certain schools via outside funding
- ❖ share their expertise and experience in county strategy groups, e.g. about school readiness
- ❖ facilitate joint partnership bids for grant funding
- ❖ provide information about available places in groups which are not full
- ❖ provide details of local trained facilitators where schools or FSS, for example, have only one facilitator available
- ❖ jointly run groups, e.g. with a facilitator from each sector, and reserved places for families from each sector
- ❖ OPF could provide information about groups on its website newpage, including about those which might have spare places, or might be seeking a co-facilitator.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

The main providers of direct work with parents in Oxfordshire include

### **Voluntary Sector**

**Voluntary organisations:** Peeple, OXPIP, Home Start, HENRY, SAFE, Family Links (occasionally), Aspire, VIVA/Doorsteps

**Community run Children's Centres,** Early Years and family provision (set up with support from OCC and now self funding)

**Church and other community run groups**

**Parenting Practitioners Oxfordshire (PPO)**

### **Statutory sector**

Family Solutions Service (FSS)

Schools

CAMHS

Health Visitors and other health services

## APPENDIX 2

The main providers of practitioner training are

**Family Links** provides programme based training to practitioners in FSS, schools, etc.

**Take 3** provides programme based training to practitioners in FSS, schools, etc.

**HENRY** provides programme based training to practitioners in FSS, schools, health etc.

**OXPIP** training in attachment, infant observation, etc.

**Peeple** training for practitioners, including those from early learning and childcare, health, family support and social care

## APPENDIX 3

### Training that OPF could provide

Half day workshops on the following subjects, at a cost of £50.00 per participant (for a minimum of 6 participants) or £300- £600 for a group/ team, depending on the numbers involved

- Barriers to participation: engaging with vulnerable/ reluctant parents
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Facilitation skills for working with parents: encouragement, empathy, listening, assertive communication, managing conflict
- Working one to one with parents: how to make the work engaging and varied
- Understanding and working with group dynamics
- Handling tricky situations that may arise in parenting work
- How adults learn and change

Other topics can also be negotiated to meet the needs of practitioners or settings