Parent Know How

Telephone Helplines and Innovation Fund Strands Evaluation

Nicola Hall, Laurie Day and Louise Scott

ECOTEC Research and Consulting

Parent know how
working together, supporting families

department for
children, schools and families

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Glossary and abbreviations

The report includes a number of key terms relating to certain aspects of the Parent Know How programme. For clarity and consistency, the following terms apply throughout.

ACE	Advisory Centre for Education.
Bebo	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
BME	Black Minority Ethnic.
Blog	Contraction of the term 'web log' - is usually one person's views, diary, and thoughts for the day, published on the internet and regularly maintained.
CAF	Contact a Family.
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service.
Callback	Following an initial call to a helpline, some helplines offer a callback service where a specialist call taker or worker makes targeted callbacks to calls to discuss things or offer advice in more detail.
Chat room	A web based discussion area where users can chat to each other through type written responses in real time.
CLC	Children's Legal Centre.
Click through's	Website visitors can often access a list of links to other websites in the 'links' section of a website. When they click on one of those hyperlinks they are 'clicking through' to another website.
COI	Central Office of Information.
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families.
Email	Electronic means of sending messages over the internet. Emails can include text, pictures, and audio files.
Facebook	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
FMI	Family Matters Institute.
FRG	Family Rights Group.
Forum	Web based discussion forum. Similar to a chat room but does not happen in real time. Messages are posted under common topics or 'threads'. Moderators usually moderate forums dealing with enquiries and checking content.
Google Adwords	A pay per click advertising service offered by Google search engine where key words are used from search terms to display relevant adverts / web links.
IAG	Information, advice and guidance.
IM	Instant messaging (see full entry).
Information, support and advice	The differences between informational services, advice giving services and supportive services should be noted throughout this report.
Instant messaging	A form of real-time communication over the internet between two or more users (people) based on typing text. Different from email in that it is in real time.

ISPP	Information Service for Parents and Practitioners.
MMR	Monthly Monitoring Report. All innovation funded projects completed statistical monthly monitoring reports providing updates on their service in terms of reach, priority parent segments, satisfaction and outcomes.
MySpace	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
GB	Gingerbread (formerly known as One Parent Families-Gingerbread).
OPO	One Plus One
Parents helped	'Parents helped' refers to the total number of parents reached through the Parent Know how funded services. This is defined differently according to the type of service. In the case of a helpline reach is defined as the number of unique calls taken by the helpline. In the case of an SMS service, it is the number of unique users sending text messages to the service. In the case of web and social media this also includes numbers of downloads of videos (as in the case of YouTube content) or number of visitors to a service or website (for example total number of visits to the website or profile page in Facebook). In all cases the greatest figure is taken to refer to 'reach'.
PDF	Portable Document Format is a file format created by Adobe Systems in 1993 for document exchange.
Podcasts	Short downloadable video/music clips from the internet.
Post, posts, postings	Written messages posted on websites in web forums or discussion areas.
PLP	Parentline Plus.
PR	Press and public relations.
QMR	Quarterly Monitoring Report. All helplines completed statistical quarterly monitoring reports providing updates on their service in terms of reach, priority parent segments, satisfaction and outcomes.
Registered users	Websites or social networking sites often have a registration facility. Registered users become members of the site and are then allowed privileges e.g being able to post messages in the discussion forum or access further content.
RSS	Really Simple Syndication (a type of web feed that provides users with frequently updated content. Users can subscribe to RSS feeds).
SEN	Special Educational Needs.
SMS	Simple Message Service (text message).
Social networking	A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as email and instant messaging services. (Source: Wikipedia).
SPAN	Single Parent Action Network.
Syndication	The process by which content is made available to other published resources (such as in print media or on the web).
Twitter	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.

YouTube	A video and content download site. Users can post video content to the site to share with other users.
YM	Young Minds.

1.0 Introduction

ECOTEC Research and Consulting was commissioned in January 2008 to evaluate Parent Know How on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This report presents the overall findings of the evaluation[1].

1.1 Overview of Parent Know How

Parent Know How is a new programme designed to deliver better outcomes for children and parents by driving greater efficiency, innovation and reach in the parenting information and support services funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). It draws together existing and new channels including the use of new technologies/media, such as text messaging and the internet, as well as print media, such as magazines, with the aim of improving the range and choice of services and information channels for parents.

The provision of information and support to parents was raised as a key issue for development by the Government in March 2007. Departmental backing for the programme was further strengthened by the release of the Children's Plan[2] in December 2007, which reiterated the commitment for improved information and support provision through to 2010 to 2011. Parent Know How is providing in the region of £65 million worth of funding between 2008 to 2011.

The objectives of Parent Know How are to achieve:

- an increase in the capacity of parenting support funded by the Department from approximately 100,000 parents helped in 2007 to 2008 to 835,000 parents helped each year from 2010 to 2011 with 760,000 of this coming from the innovation fund and helpline strands;

- improved support to particular parent segments which are currently underserved or for whom the technologies would provide significant benefits – such as the parents of disabled children, parents of teenagers and dads;

- greater parental satisfaction with the range of ways in which they can seek and access support; and

- greater innovation from collaboration between the private and third sectors in delivering across multiple channels.

Parent Know How enables support for all those in parenting roles through four main strands:

i.   Telephone helplines - consisting of continued and increased support to existing third sector helplines; enabling expanded capacity so lines can open longer and be staffed by more call takers;

ii. Innovation fund - including support from third and private sector organisations developing previously untested parent support methods including text messaging services, and internet based services which include instant messaging, social networking tools and discussion forums;

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[1] ECOTEC submitted the final report of the Parent Know How Evaluation to the DCSF in May 2009
[2] See http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/childrensplan/

iii.   A 'Virtual Magazine' - printed content that reaches parents who would prefer not to use telephone helplines or internet technologies to access information, advice and support through embedded articles or 'syndicated' content; and

iv.   Internet based information for parents and practitioners - through a web based searchable directory of family and parenting information. At the time of submitting the report, May 2009, the directory was known as ISPP and has since been renamed the Parent Know How Directory.

This evaluation deals exclusively with the first two strands of Parent Know How, namely the **helplines** and the **innovation fund**. A brief overview of the services funded through Parent Know How is provided (Tables 1.1 and 1.2), with more detailed descriptions of the services funded under each strand provided in Annex One. All innovation services were funded for an initial contract period from March 2008 to June 2009; helplines were grant funded for three years until 31 March 2011.

Table 1.1 - Parent Know How service overview: Helplines

Parent Know How services	Description of services
Advisory Centre for Education helpline (ACE)	Provides free, independent and legally accurate advice on education via an advice line, helping parents to support their children's education. ACE gives advice across the whole range of education issues: school exclusions, special educational needs, school admission and choice, bullying, attendance issues and disputes or discrimination. Covers children in state funded education aged 5-16.
Children's Legal Centre helpline (CLC)	The Child Law Advice Line provides free legal advice and information on all aspects of law and policy affecting children. To ensure parents, carers and professionals can get accurate information on child law and access the support and services to which they are entitled. Urgent cases are referred to a child lawyer.
Contact a Family helpline (CAF)	The Contact a Family free phone helpline offers advice and information on any aspect of caring for a disabled child. It covers all disabilities, including the rarest conditions. They provide a very wide range of general and specialist information, covering medical conditions, services and rights.
Family Rights Group helpline (FRG)	This confidential telephone advice service supports parents and other family members whose children are involved with, or need, social care services. Our service is a source of specialist information about families' legal rights and what they can expect of the social care system. Advisers are experts in the fields of child law.
Gingerbread[3] helpline (GB)	Gingerbread offer a dedicated free phone confidential service, offering help and advice to single parents on a wide range of issues: benefits and tax credits, education and training, returning to work, childcare, and more. It aims to offer information and help that lone parents can trust and to provide follow up support and advice to those who need it.
Parentline Plus helpline (PLP)	Parentline gives immediate help via a helpline to parents from a volunteer parent support worker 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They offer support on a wide range of issues, from problems coping with babies and toddlers, to teenage issues such as anti-social or risky behaviour, as well as bullying, discipline and the impact of divorce. They offer support and tips and strategies.
Young Minds helpline (YM)	The helpline provides help to anyone who has concerns about a child or young person's mental health or emotional wellbeing. This can cover: challenging behaviour, bereavement, depression, eating disorders, self-harming and serious diagnosable mental health difficulties. Where appropriate, callers are offered a more extensive telephone consultation callback with a qualified mental health practitioner.

[3] Until January 2009 Gingerbread was known as One Parent Families-Gingerbread and the helpline was known as the Lone Parent helpline.

Table 1.2 - Parent Know How service overview: Innovation fund

Parent Know How services	Description of services
Advisory Centre for Education - Ask ACE SMS	ACE is providing a free text based service called Ask ACE to parents with queries about educational issues for their child. It provides free accurate legal advice by text on issues such as exclusions or bullying.Texts provide a simple first response and an opportunity to expand the query or links to the ACE website or a booklet for more details.
Attic Media with Respect - Dad's Space, Dad's Space 1-2-1 and Dad's Team	Two new media services are being developed. Dad's Space is a website targeted at dads which contains a 1-2-1 space designed to bring separated fathers together with their children to allow them to keep contact. The site enables them to chat, share files, pictures and messages in a safe and fun environment. The site includes levels of security to ensure access is mediated where necessary. Dad's Team is a syndicated content approach which targets sites where dads already go and build partnerships to deliver dad friendly content such as videos and games.
Contact a Family - Social networking services and Second Life	A series of new Contact a Family spaces in existing social networking sites including Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and YouTube which offer information for parents to download (video and written materials) and ways to get in touch with parents in similar situations. A virtual advice centre in Second Life offers one to one sessions with a worker in real time, as well as general advice to users.
Family Matters Institute - DadTalk	DadTalk is a social networking site for all dads but particularly dads from African and Caribbean communities and fathers of teenagers. It includes a forum where dads can share experiences and various downloads including video, podcasts and articles. It aims to champion fatherhood via the web and raise dads' confidence and aspirations.
NetMums - Parent supporters and coffee house support boards	NetMums is an existing social network, and is the biggest source of support and advice for mums in the UK. This project provides an extra layer of support to mums using the coffee house support boards. Mums with serious problems can have access to a professional directly online and receive information and support and access to local services. A team of parent supporters provides expert advice on specific topics, this includes Health Visitors and experts from Contact a Family, Women's Aid, ACE and One Plus One.

Parent Know How services	Description of services
One Plus One - CoupleConnection	A new website aimed at all parents, but specifically targeting dads and parents of disabled children where parents can find out how to manage their relationship effectively. The site is designed to help couples work through changes in their relationship together through the use of self-assessment tools, blogs and forums. The site aims to build a community of parents all helping each other with experts acting as moderators. The couple space part of the site is a private interactive area for couples to work together and keep interactive diaries.
Parentline Plus - Gotateenager.com	A new social networking site Gotateenager.com which is aimed at parents of teenagers who do not have access to the social networks available to parents of primary school age children. Content includes e-learning tools (modules that parents can complete online), web TV shows, email support, message boards and a jargon buster. A text messaging service is also being piloted in one area to provide tit bits of advice to parents of teens.
Relate - SMS, Live Chat and Relate for Parents website	Three new services for parents, offering therapeutically based advice and support. A Live Chat service offers real time instant messaging sessions for parents with a trained adviser. A text messaging service offers individualised text responses on any relationship counselling topics, emotional or factual. The new Relate for Parents website provides information about the services and resources on a range of related topics including divorce, stress and eating disorders.
SPAN - One Space	SPAN support single parent families through a new social networking site called One Space. Online groups cover parenting alone, parenting a teenager on your own and parenting after divorce or separation. The site includes blogs, multimedia content, videos and other resources as well as moderated discussion forums where parents can exchange views.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the services being provided meet parents' needs and fulfil their expected benefits. The helplines and innovation services will need to be monitored and assessed:

- to determine the success of individual and overall investment and the extent to which the investment delivers the expected benefits; and

- to provide a benchmark for future investment, in terms of:

  ► how much to invest, and

  ► what channels deliver the best return on investment.

Specifically the evaluation was required to report against the following key success measures:

i. Reach: for example, how many parents are using helplines and new channels, what is the frequency or repeat use of channels?

ii. Service users: which parents are using the channels (in terms of demographic information); and are particular target parent segments being successfully reached (dads, parents of disabled or teenage children, black or minority ethnic (BME) parents). For the helplines in particular - though for all services - the evaluation will assess take up by BME parents, parents of children with disabilities, and other disadvantaged and at risk groups.

iii. Satisfaction: are parents satisfied with both their access to information and support services and the quality of the support they receive through them. Are targets for satisfaction being met for currently funded helplines and are similar targets in place and being measured for new channels funded via the innovation fund. This analysis will measure short-term satisfaction with information, support and advice.

iv. Outcomes: what are short and longer term outcomes for parents and their families? In particular exploring softer outcomes such as around confidence, knowledge, not feeling alone, and relationships. What are longer-term indications of outcomes for users?

v. Customer experience of service provision and providers. Including: opinion about the customer experience, technical or aesthetic details of the particular services, and how the provision of service was delivered, for instance in relation to response times or tone of voice, and the management of the cross-channel experience.

vi. Collaboration and learning between partners and the Department: has the level of collaboration between all stakeholders (including the Department, private and third sectors) been positive?

vii. Investment: As Parent Know How may provide support to an established service, or provide only part of the funding for a new service; it will be helpful to understand the cost per parent for the grant or innovation fund level, and also the cost of the entire service.

1.3   Methodology

The evaluation of the Telephone Helplines and Innovation Fund strands of Parent Know How commenced in January 2008 and was completed in February 2009. A range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to evaluate both strands. This combined approach was designed to allow a comprehensive assessment of whether the services delivered under both strands fulfilled their expected benefits. The following sections detail the specific methods for the evaluation in more depth.

Quantitative evaluation

There were three elements to the quantitative evaluation:

- **Monthly and quarterly monitoring of providers' activities, outputs and deliverables** was of central importance to the evaluation to ensure regular and consistent tracking of programme performance. This included:

  ► Quarterly monitoring data collection across all seven helplines (from 1st April 2008 to 31st December 2008). More regular monitoring of the innovation fund providers was identified as necessary, given the more recent launch of these projects so monthly monitoring from service launch until 31st December 2008 occurred for the innovation fund projects.

  ► An electronic monitoring report in excel format was used for providers across both strands to gather information on reach figures (i.e. number of unique users of the services[4]) and uptake by various parent segments. Quarterly monitoring reports, designed by DCSF for helpline providers, were already agreed with the helplines prior to the evaluation so it was agreed to continue using the agreed format. The monthly reports for innovation fund providers were designed by ECOTEC during the initial research design phase of the evaluation. Reminders were sent to providers, by ECOTEC researchers, on a monthly basis to request the latest monitoring data. Once returned, the data for each provider was collated into a central excel spreadsheet which was used to monitor ongoing performance for each provider.

  ► Bi-annually, in depth monitoring interviews were conducted with all providers to give more qualitative feedback on performance, including barriers, successes and issues arising.

- **A telephone and web survey of 2,351 parents using the Parent Know How Services** was conducted as the second strand of the quantitative evaluation to provide data on user demographics, satisfaction and outcomes. The survey was conducted via a telephone survey (for helpline and text message users) and web based survey (for web service users).

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[4] Definitions of unique users were agreed with the Department and all the providers. For the helplines unique callers were defined as the number of 'unique callers' who are contacting the helpline regarding a specific enquiry, as measured by the helpline's caller identifier software. This definition did not include any follow-up calls regarding the same enquiry (or subject) but a previous caller with a different issue counted as a new unique caller. For text message services, the used software also provided incoming figures for unique mobile phone numbers. For web based services, software packages (such as Google Analytics) provided data on unique visits or visitors.

- ► The survey was conducted between 2nd June 2008 and 15th January 2009, with the sample for the survey constructed through referrals from helplines and text message providers or through online recruitment to the web surveys.

- ► ECOTEC set quotas for the achievement of interviews for each provider, calculated as a proportion of anticipated volumes to ensure a representative reflection of service usage overall. This included a minimum quota of 100 responses for each provider to provide a basis for sub-set analysis by provider. However, for some services, this minimum quota was not achieved due to the smaller than expected reach of some of the services[5].

- ► The survey data was analysed using SPSS. Sample tolerance tests were applied to the percentage results of the survey and when comparing subgroups differences are only reported on if they are significant at the 95% confidence level. It is also not possible to infer from survey results the extent to which the responses given are representative of the wider population of service users since many services did not collect demographic information[6]. Instead, where possible, throughout this report results have been compared with national data[7] to obtain a comparison. Likewise, it was not possible to undertake any non-response analysis since there was no way of knowing who accessed the web based or text services but did not respond to the option to complete an evaluation survey.

- ► A full breakdown of achieved sample sizes is supplied in the Technical Annex under separate cover.

- • A separate **cost-effectiveness analysis** was undertaken as the final element of the quantitative evaluation. This served to ascertain the value for money of the services delivered under each strand and to calculate costs per parent for each of the services. Our approach to this was the development of unit costs for different services, based on financial data provided by the Department.

Qualitative primary research

A range of qualitative research methods were completed as a second strand of the evaluation. This included:

- • **75 in depth telephone interviews with parents** were completed with parents using the funded services, with a minimum of four interviews per service. Interviews aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the views of different parent segments targeted and reactions to specific services. These interviews were weighted towards the specific parent segments targeted by the Department and included interviews with 18 dads, 15 parents of disabled children, 27 parents of teenagers, and 15 parents from a black or minority ethnic background. Fieldwork took place between 1st July 2008 and 15 January 2009 and was timed to begin at least a month after service launch to allow for bedding down of services before users were consulted.

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[5] For instance survey data is only available for one of the three text services since reach figures were too low for other services to create adequate sample for a survey. In these cases qualitative evidence was collated instead.
[6] Due to the 'anonymous' nature of many innovation services, for example the software used by providers did not collect demographic data about users of a text service or visitors to a website.
[7] For example Census data or nationally representative household or panel surveys.

- In addition, 10 **follow up in depth interviews** were conducted three months later with a proportion of these respondents (spread across one parent per service), to explore whether outcomes had been sustained in the longer term.

- Primary research was also undertaken with parents from target parent segments not using the Parent Know How services to provide independent feedback on the appropriateness and scope of the Parent Know How services, and to help identify any gaps within provision or unmet needs. This took the form of **four half day workshops**, in four regions of England during November and December 2008, involving 77 parents from specific parent segments. The workshops were interactive with parents being able to access and test demonstration versions of the services.

- The final element of qualitative research was **stakeholder interviews** with seven policy representatives from the Department. These interviews were undertaken in November 2008 and were completed to explore the level of collaboration and learning between partners and independent views on the effectiveness of the services being provided.

1.4   Data presentation, reporting and rounding

Throughout this report percentages are rounded to the nearest full percent. Any figure of more than zero but less than half a per cent is indicated by an asterisk (*). Where base sizes fall below the minimum of 100, the corresponding count is also given in brackets *(n)*. In these cases, some caution is needed in terms of the significance of findings given the small sample sizes involved. In this report use is made of qualitative feedback and verbatim comments taken from participants from in depth interviews. These comments should be taken as illustrative of the range of opinions, but not statistically representative of the strength or depth of opinion. Throughout the report evidence is presented where possible to provide a like for like comparison, for example to avoid comparing 'light touch' services (such as information giving websites) with 'deeper' services such as counselling or advice giving. However in some instances this is not always possible and many of the services are not directly comparable. The report's chapters are therefore arranged by service type to broadly facilitate this.

1.5   Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter two deals with the helplines funded through Parent Know How looking at this group of services in terms of the evaluation questions: reach, service users, satisfaction, customer experience, and outcomes.

- Chapter three looks at the text messaging services funded through the Parent Know How innovation fund, looking at this group of services in terms of the evaluation questions: reach, service users, satisfaction, customer experience, and outcomes.

- Chapter four explores the web and social media projects funded through the Parent Know How innovation fund, again looking at this group in terms of the evaluation questions.

- Chapter five provides a summary of findings around the level of collaboration between providers, partners and the Department.

- Chapter six presents our analysis of the cost effectiveness of the funded services.

- Chapter seven provides our conclusions and recommendations.

Annex One contains a more detailed overview of the services funded through Parent Know How and their targets. A Technical Annex, presented under separate cover, contains more details of the methodological approach to the evaluation, copies of the topline survey results for each service and the topic guides used within the evaluation.

2.0 Helplines

This chapter considers the progress and achievements of the seven helplines that have been funded through Parent Know How. The chapter is based on a synthesis of various strands of evaluation data, including the quarterly and bi-annual monitoring returns, a telephone survey[8] and qualitative interviews with parents who used the helplines. The helplines' performance against each of the key success criteria for the programme is first considered, before exploring parents' views of different aspects of the helplines, including accessibility, functionality and the advisers' expertise.

Key findings: Helplines

Reach

- The helpline services reached over 72,000 parents by the end of December 2008, representing 61% of the annual target for reach achieved over three full quarters of service delivery. As performance has remained steady at around 20% per quarter, this indicates that the annual target is unlikely to be achieved.

- The providers ranged from 37% to 126% against their individual targets. Although most had fallen behind their profiled target for the end of December 2008, three expected to meet or exceed their targets over the full year. The performance of PLP is significant in the overall targets of the helplines, as this provider also accounts for more than two thirds of the target for the helplines collectively. PLP's shortfall against their targets therefore had a wider impact.

- Feedback suggested delays to recruitment, staff turnover and difficulties with managing demand at peak caller times contributed towards the shortfall in reach. The monitoring data indicated that marketing was a factor, and that additional investment in targeted campaigns has the potential to generate new callers.

- Approaching three quarters of parents who responded to the survey (74%) had never previously contacted an organisation or service offering support and advice to parents. This is a good indicator of the added value of the funding, as it shows that even well established providers were able to tap a latent demand for support.

Service users

- By far the greatest majority of helpline callers were female (83%). This figure was on a par with previously evaluated parental information programmes, and largely reflects the market for family support services. There were stark differences between the helplines, with men accounting for nearly a third of callers (31%) to one provider.

- The monitoring data shows that the helplines reached the priority customer segments with a varying degree of success, and that the differences between providers largely reflected their remit and targets. Few of the helplines attracted large numbers of step-parents or grandparents. Whilst neither category was specifically targeted through the programme, the findings suggest that alternative forms of marketing might be needed to engage these groups.

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[8] Full survey results in the form of a marked up questionnaire are available in a technical annex under separate cover.

Satisfaction

- The helplines exceeded the target of 80% user satisfaction[9] that was set for them by the Department, with 93% of all helpline callers being either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. None of the providers failed to achieve the benchmark. This represented a strong endorsement of the programme by service users.

- Two of the providers marginally failed the floor target of no more than 3% of parents reporting dissatisfaction with the service. The qualitative interviews suggested that a mismatch in expectations was the main reason for users being dissatisfied. This was particularly the case for helplines offering a specialist (e.g. legal) service.

Customer experience

- Parents commonly learned of the helplines through internet search engines, word of mouth, and advertisements in the printed press. Two of the more specialist providers routinely took referrals from other helplines, because prior networks were in place.

- Parents who contacted the helplines usually selected this channel because of the desire for an immediate response to their query, a preference for the spoken word, and a perception that discussing their issues gave a more personalised approach.

- Over a third (39%) of calls to the helplines were answered during their opening hours, according to the monitoring data. There were large discrepancies between individual providers, which show that parents sometimes had difficulties in getting through.

- A considerable majority of parents were satisfied with the depth of information they were given (90%). Parents often valued the specialist knowledge and telephone manner of helpline staff, but feedback was mixed about written materials or handouts. These were sometimes found to be either too generic, or hard to understand.

Outcomes for parents

- Based on the survey data, approaching half (45%) of the parents felt that their presenting issue or situation was helped 'a lot' by the helpline service they received. Just over a quarter (28%) attributed some level of improvement to the service.

- The helplines routinely achieved wider (soft) outcomes for parents, even where the presenting issue was complex and could not be resolved over the phone (e.g. a custody dispute). Over three quarters of parents felt better informed of their rights as a result of calling a helpline, and gained reassurance from the contact.

- One in four parents in the survey went on to access some form of additional advice or information. The specific patterns of action taken by parents varied between the providers, reflecting their relative focus on advice, information and support.

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[9] User satisfaction was measured by at an interval of two-to-three weeks from receipt of the helpline advice, at which point the evaluators re-contacted those parents who opted-in to a telephone interview.

2.1 Reach

One of the targets for Parent Know How is to increase the reach of services for parents from the level of 100,000 parents reached in 2007 to 2008 towards 760,000 parents helped each year from 2010 to 2011.[10] Reach is defined as the number of users accessing or contacting a service. In the case of a helpline, this corresponds with the number of 'unique callers' who are contacting the helpline regarding a specific enquiry. This does not include any follow-up calls regarding the same enquiry but a previous caller with a different issue counts as a unique caller. Each service set targets for the numbers of parents reached. Progress towards these is illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 - Reach of the helplines: annual targets and actual performance

	Annual target	Target for reach to end December 2008	Achieved to end December 2008	% of annual target achieved
GB	3000	2250	3787	126
CAF	7500	5625	6358	85
CLC	6000	4500	4347	72
PLP	80100	60075	48676	61
FRG	5000	3750	2169	43
ACE	11548	8661	4777	41
YM	6000	4500	2231	37
Total	119148	89361	72345	61

Source: DCSF monitoring data, compiled over three full quarters of service delivery

As the table demonstrates, investment in the telephone helplines reached over 72,000 parents up to the end of December 2008. This represents an achievement of 61% against the annual target for the programme, which suggests that the helplines are unlikely to achieve the overall target for 2008 to 2009. Although some had fallen well behind their profiled target to the end of December 2008 (YM, ACE and FRG), a further was operating at around four fifths of their target (PLP), whilst three expected to meet or exceed their targets over the full year (CLC, GB and CAF).

Although the overall figures for reach are disappointing, the telephone survey indicated that the helplines had tapped into a latent demand for the service. Approaching three quarters of parents surveyed (74%) said that they had never previously contacted an organisation or service offering support and advice to parents. This figure rose to 82% for FRG and 80% for GB. Reassuringly, 77% of parents contacting PLP said the same - this is perhaps one of the better indicators of the additionality of the helpline funding, given that all the organisations already ran telephone helplines prior to the programme.

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[10] Reach targets were agreed with the Department at the start of the contract based on evidence based estimates of demand and take up.

2.1.1   Explaining reach figures

The monitoring data sheds further light on the factors affecting reach.

Capacity issues were reported as a main barrier to achieving targets for reach. Five of the helpline providers experienced difficulties with recruiting and training advisers, and three experienced further staff turnover during the year. These staffing issues were thought to partly reflect a shortage of qualified advisers within the sector. The monitoring data showed that reach levels remained fairly constant throughout the year, however, which suggests that factors relating to demand (and how this was managed) were of equal significance. Identifying and managing peak caller times presented a real challenge for some of the helplines, as is considered further in Section Five.

Marketing appeared to have been an additional factor affecting reach. Those providers with well established helpline services reported being able to take full advantage of the press coverage generated by the programme launch, which helped to raise their profile. Some of the providers felt they had underestimated the need for ongoing marketing, and that the budget for this activity was insufficient to reach a wider cross-section of parents and therefore to drive-up caller numbers beyond the level that was achieved during the first year. This reflected the learning process from rolling out each helpline service - providers had sometimes relied on a more 'passive' marketing strategy in the first instance, and only subsequently came to realise the importance of a targeted approach. For example:

- ACE found that their flyer campaign in public washrooms and shopping centres generated some new callers, but considered in hindsight that a relationship-based approach to marketing was necessary to have a significant impact on reach by more actively engaging intermediaries who are already in contact with the priority customer groups. This might require some dedicated time from a PR person to liaise directly with Admissions Officers, for example, to explain what the helpline can offer to parents so that they are able to raise awareness about the service; and,

- FRG reported considerable benefits linking with the Media Trust and BBC, to raise awareness of the helpline. The main strategy was to provide the helpline number at the end of television programmes with relevant content. This had a direct impact on new callers. For example, there was an influx in calls from grandparents after the helpline featured at the end of a BBC programme about grandparents in a primary caring role.

These findings suggested that re-focussing of the providers' marketing strategies has strong potential to address current patterns of uptake for the helplines.

Several of the providers perceived that cross-channel migration from helpline to innovation services had affected reach by displacing potential unique callers. For example, PLP perceived that parents of teenagers had been migrating from helpline services towards websites (for example their Gotateenager site). The monitoring data however was inconclusive about the relationship between cross-channel migration and reach, however, and does not support the view that this has depressed overall numbers of unique callers to the helplines[11].

YM experienced particularly disappointing numbers of unique callers over the period. Staff there said it had proved difficult to convert the evident demand for support for mental health issues into actual calls by parents. A lack of effective marketing was thought to be a main factor.

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[11] Looking at the 'age of caller' data breakdown supplied by PLP it was clear that caller figures had reduced across all age groups proportionately and not just across older age groups who were more likely to be parents of teens.

2.2 Service users

A variety of data were collected during the first three quarters of recorded activity to capture the demographics of the helpline service users. The evaluation aimed to gauge both the extent to which the helplines collectively were accessed by a *representative cross-section* of the population, to ensure that there were no evident gaps in their reach, and whether the *priority parent segments* were reached. The targeting of these parent segments often varied between the individual providers, and the evaluation took this into account, as is considered further within this section.

2.2.1 Gender

The combined quarterly monitoring data from the providers for quarters one to three shows that by far the majority of service users were female (Table 2.2). The proportion of females and males stood at 83% and 17% respectively for the helplines combined. These figures are near-identical to the 2007 equivalent for helplines supported by the Department through the Parenting Fund[12].

Table 2.2 - Helplines: Recorded service users by gender

	All helplines	ACE	CAF	CLC	FRG	GB helpline calls[13]	GB advice calls	PLP	YM
	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total	% Total
	n=75,800	n=4007	n=6817	n=4310	n=2061	n=12,137	n=3490	n=40,756	n=2222
Male	17	17	15	31	22	8	5	19	13
Female	83	83	85	69	78	92	95	81	87

Source: Quarterly monitoring data (Quarters 1-3)

While the proportion of male service users was considerably lower than for the general population[14], it must be noted that low levels of participation by male carers is well documented in previous research[15]. The findings are perhaps not unexpected, therefore, given that the helplines are accessible to the general population and will therefore reflect population-level trends in how parents access information services. Nevertheless, the data highlights the challenge that remains for the helplines to fully engage fathers, and the level of constraint that the under-participation of male carers presents to achieving the potential targets for 'reach'.

The aggregate data also masks a number of differences between the individual service providers. At the different ends of the scale, the CLC advice line showed the highest uptake by male carers, at nearly a third of all callers (31%), whilst the equivalent figure was just 5% for Gingerbread (GB). The latter can be largely explained by the fact that GB specialises in

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[12] The Parenting Fund was set up by DCSF to develop services that support parents, including telephone helplines.
[13] GB helpline calls were not funded by DCSF
[14] 51% female, 49% male (2001 Census data, England only)
[15] The Parent Information Point (PIP) Evaluation (Bhabra, et. al, 2004) recorded that 79% of participants were female (base=403), whilst a survey for the national Transition Information Sessions (TIS) year one evaluation (Day et. al, 2007) found that 75% of participants were female (base=1641).

supporting lone parents, whom Census data shows to be predominately female. In the case of CLC, the qualitative monitoring suggested that there was a good level of demand for factual (including legal) information from fathers in a quickly accessible format, and that the helpline was therefore geared towards meeting their needs.

2.2.2 Caring roles

The quarterly monitoring data again provides a useful basis for assessing the extent to which individuals with different caring roles accessed the helplines (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 - Helplines: Recorded service users by caring roles

Caring roles	ACE	CAF	CLC	FRG	GB	PLP	YM
Fathers	9	5	25	12	5	7	6
Stepfathers	*	*	1	*	0	*	*
Non-resident fathers	3	*	0	4	0	2	1
Mothers	54	42	43	35	42	47	49
Stepmothers	*	*	3	*	0	*	1
Lone parents	7	10	0	5	46	31	18
Grandparents	2	1	8	21	2	2	2
Parents of disabled children	18	40	0	8	3	0	4
Disabled parents	4	2	*	7	3	6	3
Others	3	0	19	7	0	5	15

*Source: Quarterly monitoring data Quarters 1-3   * denotes a % lower than one, but more than zero*

The highest proportion of recorded calls was from mothers, although multiple categories were recorded for this question. This means that a proportion of the mothers also fit into other categories, including lone parents or those with a disability.

Helplines were accessed to a varying degree by fathers, parents of children with a disability, and parents with a disability; three of the priority customer segments for Parent Know How. There were some stark differences in uptake between the service providers, in this respect. Well over a third of recorded calls to CAF were from parents of a child with a disability, reflecting their remit for working with disabled children and their families. ACE was also effective at reaching this target group, at almost one in five of recorded calls. Both of these helplines far exceeded the average (median) total (at 4%).

Step-parents (both male and female) and grandparents made up only a very small proportion of the recorded callers to the helplines. The exception to this was FRG, which received one in five calls from grandparents. This service provider offers specialist advice to children who are in need of social care services, including where grandparents or other relatives are the primary carers for children who are unable to live at home.

At least one provider (ACE) reported a good level of demand for helpline services for families of prisoners. This work had been developed in parallel to the programme, with a different funding stream.

2.2.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity was recorded as part of providers' quarterly monitoring, and through the survey. Table 2.4 provides a summary of the ethnicity of callers during the first three quarters of monitoring activity, compared with the national average for England in the 2001 Census. The Census data relates to 16-49 year olds, as a proxy for those adults most likely to have children aged 16 or under, and therefore the closest match for the programme.

Table 2.4 - Ethnicity of helpline service users[16]

Ethnic categories	ACE	CAF	CLC	FRG	GB help-line	GB advice line	YM	PLP	*2001 Census (16-49 year olds)*
White									
British	63	73	92	68	74	67	91	83	*85*
Irish	2	2	*	1	2	4		2	*1*
Any other White background	5	2	2	7	6	9		4	*3*
Mixed									
White and Black Caribbean	9	*	*	*	*	3	2	*	*
White and Black African	2	1	*	*	*	1		*	*
White and Asian	2	*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Any other Mixed background	*	*	*	1	*	1		*	*
Asian or Asian British									
Indian	4	1	1	*	1	1	3	2	*3*
Pakistani	*	2	*	1	2	0		*	*2*
Bangladeshi	*	*	*	1	1	0		*	*1*
Any other Asian background	*	8	*	2	*	3		*	*1*
Black or Black British									
Caribbean	6	3	*	7	5	3	4	3	*1*
African	2	2	*	5	4	6		1	*1*
Any other Black background	2	3	*	2	*	0		0	*
Chinese or other Ethnic group									
Chinese	*	*	*	*	*	0	*	*	*
Any other	*	2	0	*	*	*		1	*

Source: Quarterly monitoring data Quarters 1-3

[16] Figures are based on combined quarterly monitoring helpline data for Q1-Q3. Percentages have been rounded, and do not necessarily sum to 100%, and * denotes a value of less than 1 but more than zero. Data for ACE was collected using generic categories, so a further breakdown is not available. PLP ethnicity data was only recorded for long calls. YM was based on data from Q3 only, because only aggregate data regarding BME / non-BME was available for Q1/2.

The average (median) percentages for the helplines were similar to the general population. A slightly higher proportion of callers were from minority ethnic groups than for the national average, but with more Black or Black British callers, and fewer Asian or Asian British callers. Three quarters of all callers were White British.

It is difficult to gauge the success of the helplines in engaging black and minority ethnic (BME) parents at this scale of analysis. However, FRG certainly achieved a higher proportion than average of Black or Black British callers (14%), whilst CAF reached high proportions of both Black or Black British callers (8%), and Asian or Asian British callers (11%[17]). In contrast, nine in ten of recorded callers to CLC were White British. The bi-annual monitoring data shows that some of the service providers considered effective publicity and targeting to be a success factor in reaching greater numbers of BME parents. CAF reported a positive response after marketing the helpline as part of a Bengali disability awareness day, for example. In contrast, FRG has found it difficult to identify a promotional strategy to boost uptake by BME parents, because no common message could be found that might help to explain the low uptake for the helpline.

2.2.4 Topics covered

Survey data indicated the largest single issue parents contacted helplines about was challenging behaviour (18%). This was particularly highlighted in bi-annual monitoring by PLP as an issue they had become increasingly aware of with the survey indicating 35% of all callers called about this issue. Indeed over a third of all calls to PLP and YM were on this single issue (35% and 37% respectively). Figure 2.1 overleaf illustrates the range of topics covered by calls to Parentline's helpline, based on survey data. Other helplines were dealing with issues appropriate to their area of specialism, for instance educational concerns and school exclusions for ACE (60% of all calls), disability and physical health issues for CAF (55% of all calls) and benefits or child maintenance issues for GB (62%). GB also highlighted in bi-annual monitoring that debt was a growing area of concern for parents calling its helpline (14% of all calls).

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[17] Most of these (8%) were from the category Asian Other.

Figure 2.1 - What issues did you contact Parentline about?
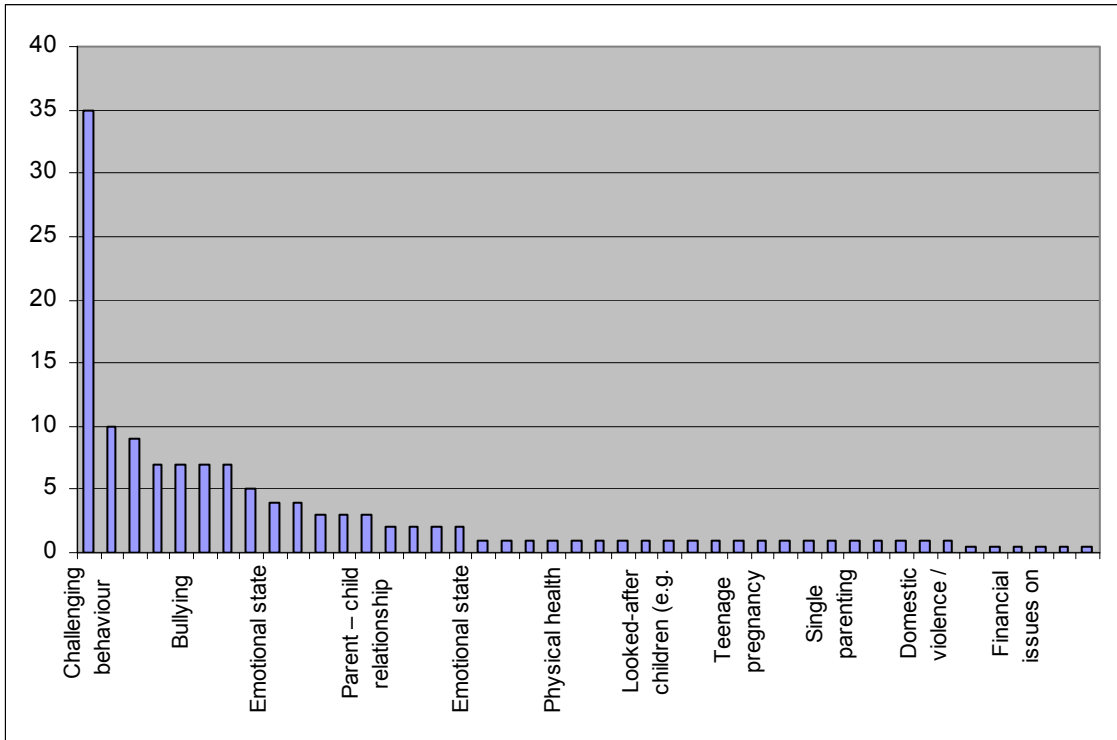
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: (350 callers to Parentline's helpline)

2.3 Satisfaction

The helplines were set benchmark targets[18] for user satisfaction by the Department, including a minimum of 80% of parents reporting being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' and no more than 3% of parents reporting being 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.[19] The measures of satisfaction were taken at an interval of two-to-three weeks from receipt of the helpline advice, at which point the evaluators re-contacted those parents who opted-in to a telephone interview. The helplines performed well above benchmark levels for overall satisfaction (Figure 2.2). It should be noted that the survey data for the helplines relates to short-term perceptions of the service received, and that a fall-off in satisfaction levels might be anticipated over a longer period of time[20].

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[18] Based on the COI benchmark.
[19] The telephone survey provides the main source of comparable data in this respect. A minimum of 100 parents was surveyed per helpline, using a standardised survey questionnaire.
[20] As with any such follow-up interviewing method, the interval was determined to achieve an optimum balance between 'action' and 'recall'. A longer interval might provide a greater insight to the sustainability of the outcomes achieved, but also carries a higher rate of attrition and is less effective for capturing parents' insights to the referral process and the skills and qualities of helpline staff.

Figure 2.2 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience?

Legend:
- Very satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Neither satisifed not dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know / not answered
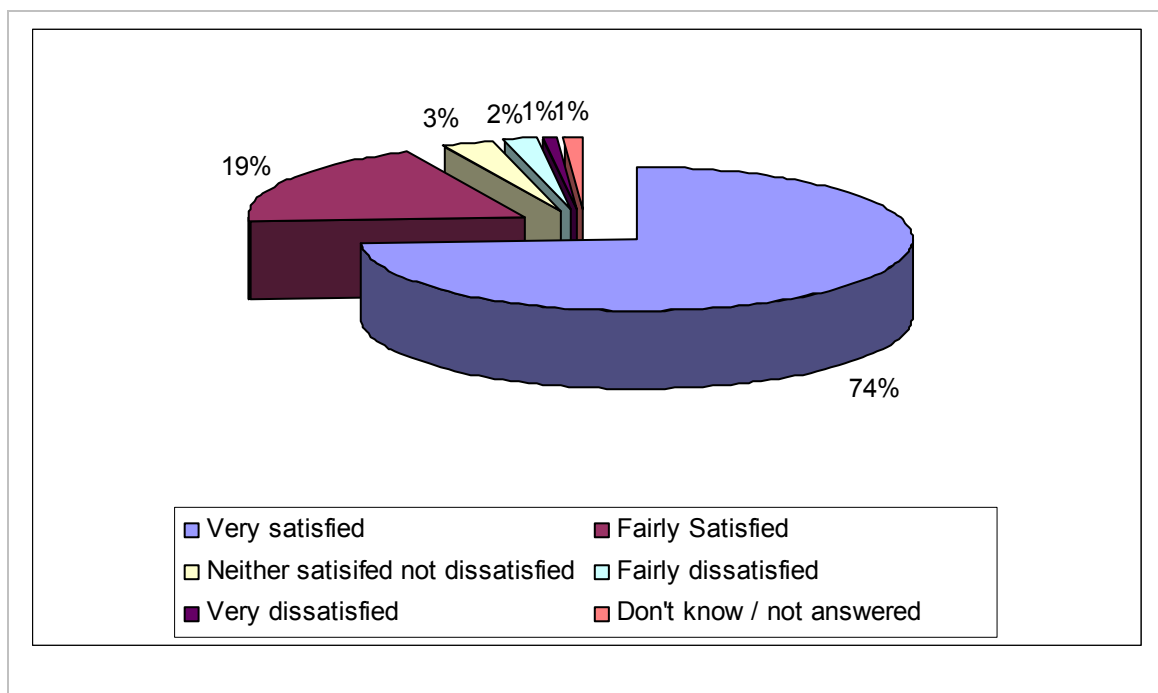
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: (980)

A figure of 93% satisfied for all helplines provides a strong endorsement of the service by end users, and it was notable that 74% rated their experience at the highest level of satisfaction ('very satisfied'). There was no shortfall for the individual service providers in this respect, with the lowest combined total for 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied' standing at 83% (CLC) and the highest at 98% (CAF). Helpline staff at CAF attributed the high satisfaction score to the level of specialist advice that is provided for disabilities issues. The helpline aims to offer a 'one stop shop' of information, including for rare conditions, and parents' feedback showed that expectations were often exceeded.

On balance, the helplines also performed satisfactorily against the target of no more than 3% of parents reporting dissatisfaction with the service. Only two of the helplines slipped above the benchmark limit; PLP marginally so at 4% and CLC perhaps suggesting greater cause for concern at 10% based on 'fairly dissatisfied' and 'very dissatisfied' combined. Whilst the survey did not capture parents' reasons for being dissatisfied, the qualitative interviews suggested that mismatched expectations of the service could be a factor. This was particularly the case for providers offering advice (such as legal), where parents sometimes expressed frustration that a quick or preferable solution was not possible.

2.4 The customer experience

Alongside a wider measure of user satisfaction, the evaluation captured both quantitative and qualitative data relating to more specific aspects of the customer experience. These are considered below, in relation to each of the different stages of the support received.

2.4.1 Awareness-raising and referral

The survey showed that parents found out about the helpline services by a variety of means, but predominately via the following routes:

- internet search engines (24%);

- word of mouth (17%); and / or

- advertisements in the printed press, such as newspapers or magazines (14%).

CLC and YM were different in this respect, as referrals from a telephone helpline accounted for their second and third highest categories, at 23% and 16% respectively. These figures were significantly higher than for any of the other telephone helplines, reflecting that these helplines provide more specialist advice and have strong referral arrangements with helpline providers providing a more general support service (e.g. PLP).

By combining the categories for referral by other professionals with publicity seen at other service settings[21], it becomes apparent that wider service providers also played an important role in raising awareness of the helplines. Moreover, this emerges as being one of the main areas of variation between the individual helplines. For example, whereas 43% and 34% of parents learned of the ACE and CAF helplines in this way, the equivalent figure drops to 11% for CLC and 10% for YM. These data suggest that there is scope for a number of the providers to further extend their reach in future, by making more effective use of partner organisations to help raise awareness of the service. Capacity issues meant that it was not always feasible for providers to do so, as is considered further in Chapter Five.

Although a quarter of the parents had learned of the helplines from the internet, they less commonly reported having found out via a parenting-related website (4%) or other non-parenting website (1%). This reinforces the findings discussed previously, that most parents were relatively unfamiliar with other available sources of information or advice at the time when they searched for help, and had often learned of the helplines following a more 'opportunistic' search about topics of interest or concern. The qualitative interviews supported these findings, indicating that parents routinely saw the benefit of the helpline as being a one stop shop for information that was unavailable elsewhere.

2.4.2 Parent's experiences of making contact

Parents had a varying quality of experience in making initial contact with helplines. Monitoring data suggested that the percentage of calls answered during opening hours was well over a third (39%). Wide variations were reported at provider level, within the survey and monitoring data alike. Within the survey respondents, three quarters of callers for CAF and PLP reported having got through the first time (74% apiece), with the figure reaching 80% for YM. This drops to between half and two thirds for FRG, GB and CLC, and just over a third (37%) for ACE, where callers evidently experienced greater difficulties in getting through. In the case of ACE, provider staff reported some improvements to first time response rates, after having introduced a 9am start on two weekdays.

The considerable majority of parents were able to speak to a call worker by the second or third attempt, but some problems were again apparent for ACE, where nearly half of callers (47%) took more than three attempts to get through, and FRG, where this stood at one in five (22%).

GB operated a three-stage process, involving an initial call to an 0800 number (switchboard), after which they would be transferred to generalist adviser (helpline), or referred onwards to a specialist adviser if so required (advice line). The monitoring data showed that around half of the callers were successfully transferred from the switchboard. This was a considerably lower percentage than was suggested by the snapshot survey conducted by GB, and suggests that the system was found to be off-putting by some parents who required an immediate response to their query.

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[21] Examples given in the survey included: school / GP surgery / Children's Centre / hospital / community centre.

The qualitative interviews reinforced that a rapid response to the initial query was considered important across all of the helplines. This reflects parents' expectations of a 'one stop shop' for information, as highlighted previously. Most users identified that the helpline adviser was able to either field their question directly, or signpost to an alternative source of information within a single phone call.

2.4.3 Quality and usefulness of the information provided

Overall, the quality of information provided by the helplines appeared to be of a very high standard. The survey findings were generally very positive and showed that the depth of information was considered suitable by the majority of parents (90%) (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 - How did you find the level of detail of information or advice?
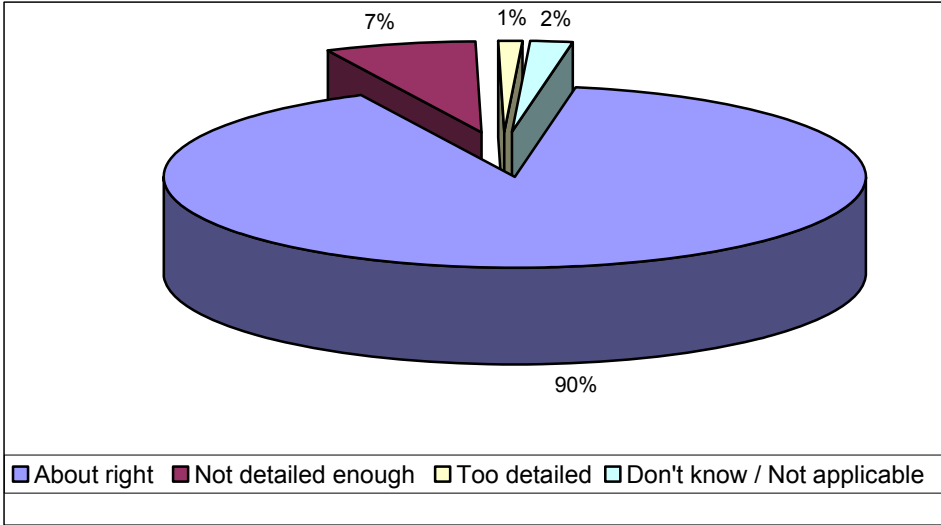
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: (950)

While only a handful of parents felt that they had received *too much* information, more parents actually reported a shortfall in the desired information (7%). The statistic hides some variations at the level of the individual helplines. For example, only a small minority of parents who accessed the CAF and YM helplines felt that there was insufficient information provided, but this rose to one in ten parents for PLP and CLC.

The qualitative interviews also showed that parents felt reassured by the specialist level of assistance on offer, which was often thought to be difficult to find in their local area. This was the case for parents accessing a variety of types of information, support and advice, but particularly in relation to those helplines that offered specialist legal advice (FRG, ACE and CLC).

> *"Mine is a difficult case and not many people can understand. But she [the helpline adviser] could understand it straight away."* (Mother, child not living with her, FRG)

This view of the helpline services somehow offering a higher level of knowledge or specialist advice was thought to be reinforced by the helpline publicity. Word of mouth was also a factor, such as where a family or friend reported having experienced a positive outcome. Survey evidence also showed that the helplines were able to provide a high level of clarity of information. Almost all parents (97%) found the information they were given to be either 'very clear' or 'clear'. Only a small minority of parents (1%) found the information to be either 'unclear' or 'very unclear', and for three of the helpline providers (ACE, CAF and YM) none of

the parents in the survey sample were unclear about the information provided. These findings were upheld by the qualitative interviews, which show that parents consistently valued the knowledge of the helpline staff, and the accessible way in which information was communicated. Parents routinely commented on the ability of helpline staff to communicate complex information in a straightforward way, by avoiding 'jargon'.

Nearly three quarters of parents found the helpline information to be 'very useful' (Figure 2.4), and yet more considered that the information had been of some use (89% combined). These figures are encouraging, and highlight that parents were often able to use the information to address their situation in a direct way (see also Section 2.5).

In qualitative feedback, where parents were less positive about the usefulness of advice or information received, this often related to written information materials that were provided following the initial helpline request. These materials were sometimes found to be disappointing either because they were too 'generic' and lacked the level of personalisation that was possible by speaking with helpline staff directly, or because the content was hard to understand. In one example, a parent had lost some confidence in the service because the written materials sent to them had contradicted written information they had received from other sources.

Figure 2.4 - Overall, how useful was the information, support or advice you received?

Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: (980)

23
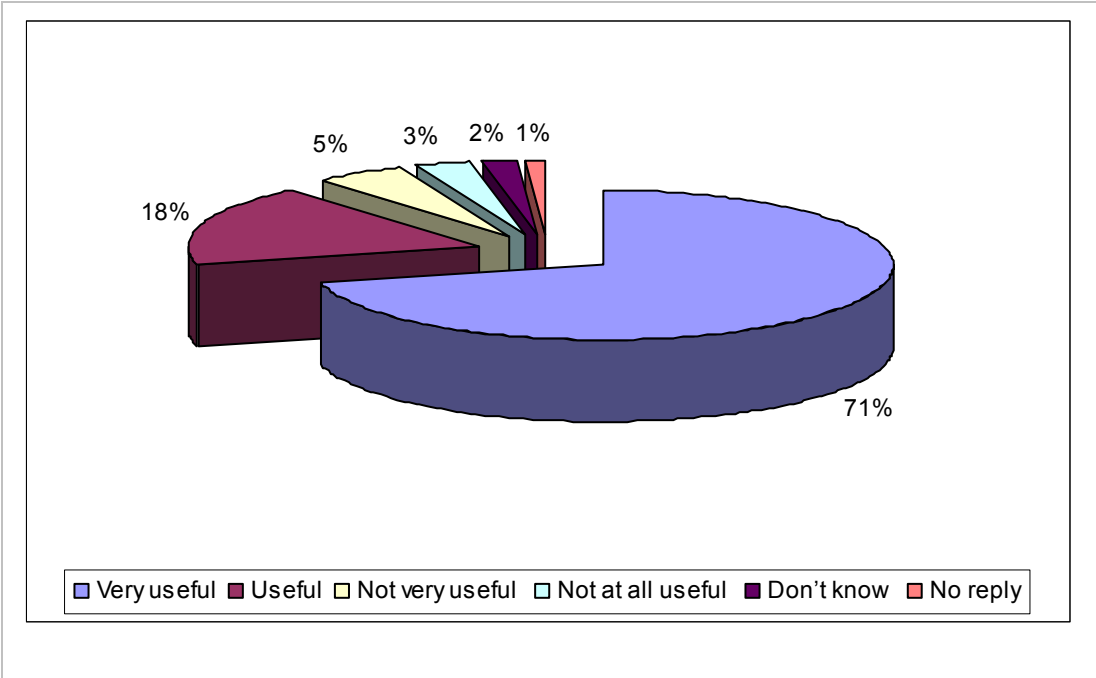
2.4.4 Skills and qualities of the helpline staff

The survey data provided an overwhelmingly positive snapshot of the personal qualities of the helpline staff, across all of the providers. The telephone manner of helpline staff was rated as being 'very good' by 85% of parents[22], and 'good' by a further 11%. Less than 1% reported a 'bad' or 'very bad' experience in this respect. Further, the vast majority (some 96%) felt that they had been fully listened to, with just 1% being dissatisfied that the staff member had not listened to them.

The approachability and supportive manner of the helpline staff was also reinforced by the qualitative interviews. Parents routinely commented on the friendly and empathetic approach that was taken by the member of staff. They commonly perceived the helplines to be 'impartial', or 'non-judgemental', and were therefore comfortable with discussing sensitive or personal family issues without fear of being penalised for this in some way.

A particularly high level of importance was placed on the ability for helpline staff to personalise the issue in question. A number of the parents interviewed described previous negative experiences of seeking information from other providers, and compared this with the ability of helpline staff to take into account their specific family situation. Indeed, in the few examples where parents were not satisfied with this aspect of the service, one of their main recommendations was for helpline staff to ask additional background questions to gain a better understanding of their individual situation.

A number of parents perceived a need for face to face meetings to progress their situation any further after the helpline consultation, and others perceived a need for more specific advice about 'next steps'. This perhaps illustrates the fine line between the role of telephone-based support and face to face advice work.

2.4.5   Channel choice and the cross-channel experience

The qualitative interviews provide an insight to the motivations for parents choosing telephone helplines as opposed to other channels. Based on this feedback, parents were most consistently found to have selected a helpline for the following reasons:

- the desire for an immediate response to their query;[23]

- a preference for spoken word, when dealing with sensitive personal issues;

- the perception that telephone contact offered a more in depth service than web-based media.

The survey showed that an average of around one in four helpline users contacted another source of parenting-related information, advice or support, following their initial contact with the helpline (24%). This proportion rose to more than one in three parents for CAF and CLC (35% and 39% respectively).

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[22] Base: 950

[23] Although this service is also provided through Parent Know How by other services, such as instant messaging and texting, it would be fair to assume that very few parents who had contacted the helplines would be aware of the existence of this particular option.

It was difficult to gauge accurately how much of this subsequent contact relates to cross-channel traffic, as opposed to the more general uptake of information services. Based on a smaller number of parents who commented in further detail (n=229[24]), however, it would appear that cross-channel referrals to other PKH helplines accounted for over half of this traffic. The remaining parents had accessed a diverse mix of statutory services, printed media and other websites that were not funded by the programme, whilst only a handful of parents reported having been referred from a helpline to one of the innovation channels.

The qualitative interviews showed that parents were generally comfortable with being cross-referred; if the reasons for doing so were understood. Cross-referrals were few in number, and usually related either to situations where more specialist advice was needed, or where a request had been made by the parent about locally available information services.

2.5 Outcomes

Data relating to outcomes for service users was collected using a variety of methods. The main method was using scaled outcome related questions within the telephone survey, for which minimum base sizes were applied. The evaluators also held a smaller number of in-depth follow up interviews at a longer interval of three months[25]. The latter were for illustrative purposes only, and the findings do not carry the same weight as the survey data.

2.5.1 Shorter term outcomes

The survey reveals that the helplines went some way towards helping parents with the original problem or issue for which they sought advice or support. Just under half (45%) considered that contacting the helpline had helped their situation 'a lot'. Just over a quarter of parents (28%) thought their situation had improved 'a little', but was not entirely resolved by contacting a helpline. The remainder were fairly evenly divided between those who reported 'no improvement', and others who felt it was 'too early to say'.

The survey also explored a number of potential 'soft outcomes' for service users, based on the types of outcomes that might be anticipated for advice and guidance services, and summarised in Figure 2.5.

[24] Base sizes were smaller than 50 per individual provider, so this is not a fully representative sample and more specific percentages are not therefore given.
[25] Initial interviews were conducted within 2-3 weeks of initial contact or usage of Parent Know How service. Follow up interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of participants at + three months.

Figure 2.5 - Outcomes from the helpline information, support or advice
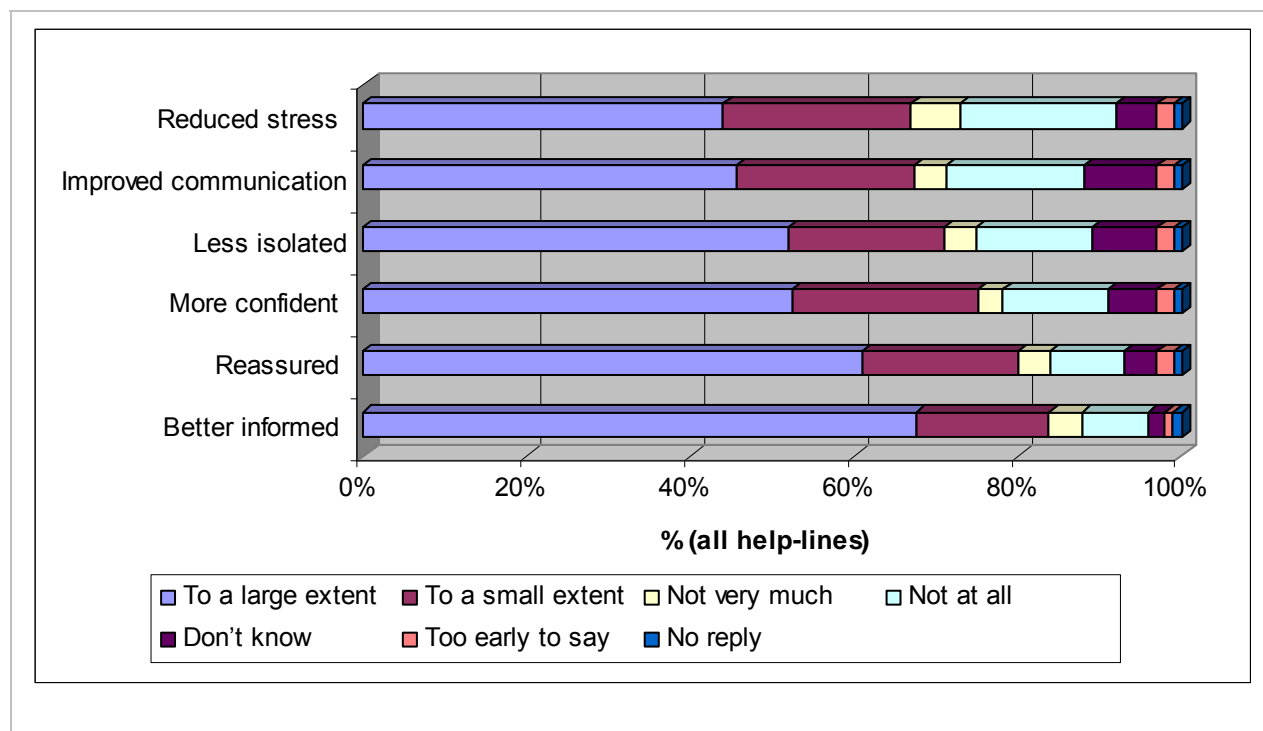
Overall, the survey data indicates that the helplines were often more successful in achieving wider personal benefits than they were in directly resolving the situation or issue that had prompted the call. So, for example, over two thirds of parents felt **better informed** (for example about their rights / possible courses of action) by calling a helpline, and gained reassurance from the process. The results were more divided concerning **reduced stress**. While nearly half felt that the helplines had helped them considerably, some parents did not consider these outcomes to be relevant to their situation, and / or reported no benefits[26].

The qualitative interviews largely support the survey findings. For those parents who called a helpline for support with more general parenting issues (YM, PLP, CAF), the outcome was often to **validate their existing knowledge**. Parents commonly reported feeling more confident in their own abilities to deal with the situations that they faced, having been reassured that they were taking the right approach. In other cases, the helpline was said to have boosted parents' **confidence** by supporting them through the process and providing reassurance along the way (FRG, ACE). This feeling of having 'someone on my side' was often considered important, even if the initial issue or problem was not resolved.

2.5.2 Subsequent action taken by service users

In terms of taking action following a call to a helpline, the survey indicated that the different emphasis of the helplines on advice, information and support was strongly correlated with the types of follow up action that were taken by parents (Figure 2.6)[27].

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[26] At 19% 'Not at all'.
[27] The proportion of parents who took no action was fairly similar for all helplines, at around one in five parents (range = 13% to 21%).

For example, a considerable proportion of parents contacting PLP and YM used the information that they were given to adjust their approach towards **managing family relationships**, whereas only a handful of parents reported taking this action for GB and FRG. In contrast, CAF and GB appear to have been highly successful in providing parents with the practical information they required to **make applications or claims**.

> *"After contacting Contact a Family I became more positive about doing the things she said to me…before I just said 'I will do it, I will do it' but now I am taking more action to do positive things and not leaving it until it is too late.. So she made me think positively."* (Mother, CAF)

Furthermore, ACE and YM demonstrated the highest results for encouraging the **take up of wider support services**. It is perhaps of note that ACE users were also the most likely to report having been referred by another professional or agency, and that these networks appear to have been effective for signposting both to and from the helplines.

These findings would seem to support the approach taken by the Department to fund a variety of providers with differences in approach and ethos. No single service provider excelled against all of the main categories, and certain niches have emerged where the individual helplines were stronger in relation to particular types of outcomes.

Figure 2.6 - Action taken as the result of contacting a helpline
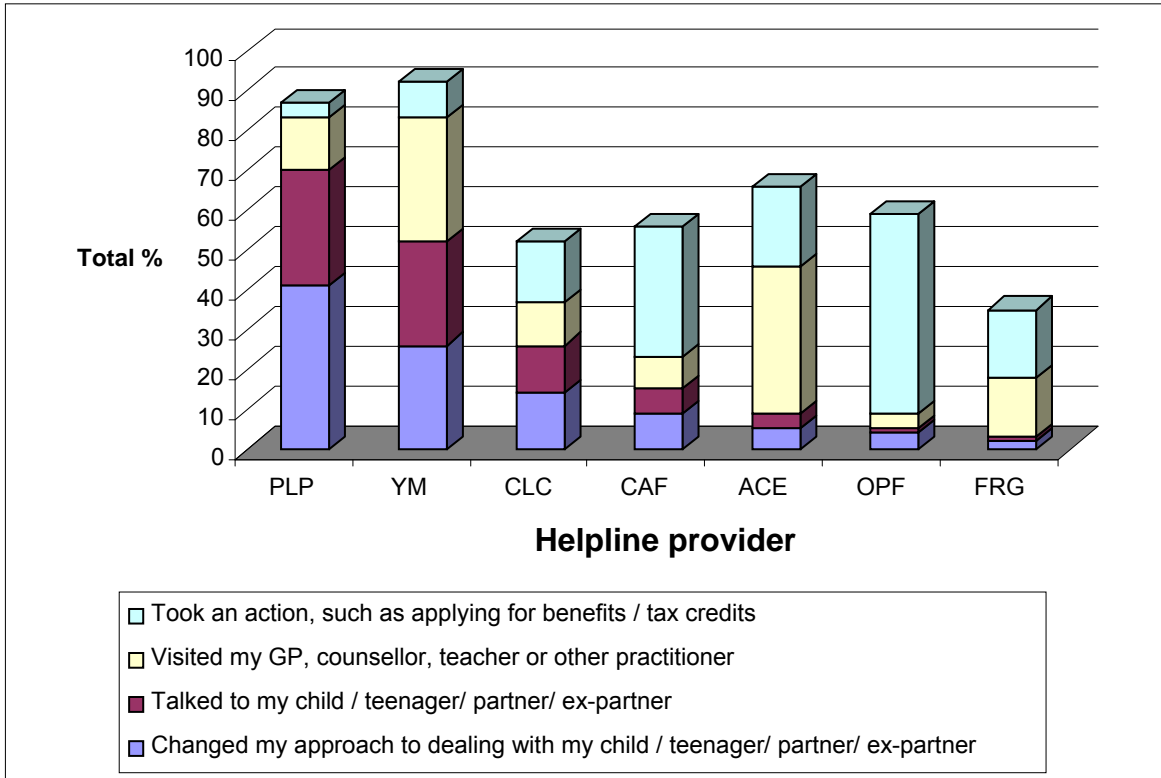
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: (980)[28]

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[28] Multiple responses were recorded, so the % totals do not sum to 100%.

From qualitative feedback it was evident that, whilst parents routinely identified having adopted new approaches to deal with family issues, **very few considered that they had changed their parenting style in any fundamental way**. In the majority of cases, the issue or situation was influenced by external factors - such as a custody case, benefit entitlements or an education appeal. In these situations, a combination of selective practical changes (such as applying for entitlements) and one-to-one support had often led to improvements to parents' confidence. This was particularly so, where there had been a previous negative experience of seeking information or advice.

A number of parents reported that their situation had further improved as a result of having been signposted to other services for support. The individual cases were highly varied and included where parents had been referred to see a GP, Human Rights Adviser and Children's Solicitor, which had resulted in a positive outcome for them.

The YM helpline was also funded to offer a more detailed callback service to parents[29]. Outcomes for users of this more specialist service were also very positive, mirroring those results for the wider helplines above. For example key benefits were around softer outcomes such as feeling reassured (92%), feeling better informed (90%) and feeling more confident (87%). No single score was lower than 78% across all outcome measures ('change my approach'). In terms of taking action, a third of all of the participating in a callback went on to visit their GP or other professional / practitioner and over one in ten got a referral to a specialist service (12%).

2.5.3 Longer term outcomes

In terms of longer term outcomes, while all the parents interviewed in depth interviews were satisfied with the advice given by the helplines, they less commonly reported more substantial longer term changes to their situation as a result of contacting a helpline. For those not experiencing longer term outcomes, this was mainly because although the information provided was helpful at the time it was not sufficient to impact greatly on their problem due to the scale of the issue they faced, for example custody issues.

A few parents reported they were still following the advice given to them which concerned child maintenance payments and a custody case. They said they felt in control and able to cope with their situation due to the information that the helplines provided (GB and CLC in this case)[30].

> *"Getting somebody to give you advice on how these things work has been invaluable; to know that there are advice lines out there that can point you in the right direction."* (Father, CLC)

One parent felt that their parenting style had permanently changed as a result of her contact with a helpline; this parent now adopts a more listening style and subsequently the child's behaviour has improved. This parent felt the behavioural improvement had ultimately led to the child being better able to settle at a new school after being excluded and was in part due to the legal help and parenting advice provided by ACE. However examples such as this were less common.

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[29] A specific set of questions were asked in the standardised survey about outcomes from the Young Minds (YM) callback service. See Qs 27-31 in the Technical Annex. Base = 59.
[30] Please note sample sizes for qualitative interviews at the individual service level were small.

3.0 Text messaging services

Three new text messaging services were developed as part of Parent Know How. These were: 'Ask ACE' developed by Advisory Centre for Education which provided advice on educational issues including exclusions and bullying; Parentline Plus' text service which offered advice to parents of teenagers as part of their Gotateenager website and was trialled in one geographical area; and Relate's text service which offered advice for parents on relationships[31]. These projects represented the first time text messaging had been piloted for parent support. While a relatively small pilot of three projects, the text services supported by the Parent Know How Programme offered an opportunity to test to assess the effectiveness of text messaging technology in providing support services to parents. Findings from the evaluation of these text services should therefore be considered indicative but not conclusive in terms of the potential for adoption of this type of technology in future for parenting type services. Each service agreed reach targets with the department prior to launch[32]. This chapter is based on information from monitoring data, surveys and qualitative interviews with parents[33].

Key findings: text messaging services

Reach

- The overall reach of text messaging services was smaller than originally anticipated, with a total of 2,178 parents reached. This represents 33% of the overall target (and only 5% of original targets before they were revised).

- Research undertaken with other third sector text service providers post-launch indicated that the early estimates set by providers in conjunction with the Department were overly ambitious. Reach has been negatively affected by fluctuations in demand during school holiday period in the case of Ask ACE and due to delays in the launching of Relate's text service. The Gotateenager text service was only piloted in one geographical location, and also suffered from fluctuations in demand. Low reach may be a reflection of a lack of demand, and the niche subject matter covered by some of the services, but also reflects the lack of experience in managing text services, and the limited marketing of the services.

- Providers found it challenging to effectively market their text services, partially due to underestimating the budget that would be required for marketing; not having dedicated marketing staff; and one providers' internal policy that prevented any individual service being marketed over others.

Service users

- The Ask ACE service was taken up by a broadly representative group in terms of the age and income profile of users, with results very much in line with the broader profile of Parent Know How funded services. However, base sizes were small and should be treated with caution.

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[31] For further details on all of the services see Annex One.
[32] Reach targets were agreed with the Department at the start of the contract based on evidence based estimates of demand and take up.
[33] Survey results are only available for the 'Ask ACE' text service since it was not possible to survey users of the other two text services due to the small numbers of users. Feedback on these two services is solely from qualitative interviews and monitoring.

- Due to the low reach of the Relate and Parentline text services no conclusions can be drawn about the types of parents accessing the services.

- Only three respondents who used Ask ACE were aged over 55; this may be because older users were less familiar with texting but also because of the subject matter which Ask ACE dealt with (i.e. issues for school age children). The Ask ACE service was fairly well used by parents of children with a disability (18 of 59 respondents).

- Significantly more mums than dads were accessing the text services (41 mums versus 5 dads) and this reflected wider patterns of uptake of parent support services and was slightly lower than equivalent helpline service figures[34].

Satisfaction

- Survey feedback on satisfaction was only available for one of the three text service providers. Data was not available for Relate's and Parentline's SMS services due to the low reach of those services, meaning that it was not possible to quantitatively assess satisfaction with all the services. Data for Ask ACE indicated that 79% of users were satisfied (very or fairly) with their experience (47 respondents) and 4 respondents were very dissatisfied. These figures fall just short of agreed Departmental benchmarks.

- Reasons for dissatisfaction centred on problems accessing preferred communication mechanisms. Specifically, parents preferred to contact ACE's helpline in the first instance and said they would do so again if they needed further advice, rather than using text services.

- When it came to simpler queries, text users of the services were more likely to be satisfied with the service.

Customer experience

- User experiences of texting varied. While the majority (96% or 42 respondents) said they found the Ask ACE service easy to use, qualitative feedback indicated some parents did struggle with using text services and found the process slow.

- Appropriate use of the technology was challenging for some queries. For example, parents using Ask ACE found it difficult to restrict their question to a specific number of characters for a text message, leading to frustrations when queries were misinterpreted. This was less likely to be the case with queries sent to Relate's service which were looking more for signposting or reassurance. This suggested certain types of information were better suited to text support than others.

- A small proportion of parents preferred texting as a means of communication and would use it to access parenting support, particularly where subject areas lend themselves to shorter, more targeted responses.

- Users of all services found the text systems and advisers responsive and speedy. Users liked the immediate responsiveness of a text service, and valued this type of support in situations when they could not access other (preferred) channels such as helplines.

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[34] On average 17% of all callers to helplines are male and dads range from 5-25%.

- Eight in ten users (79% or 37 respondents) thought that the level of detail provided was about right, but the remainder would have preferred additional information (9 respondents).

Outcomes for parents and families

- Contact with text message services had limited outcomes for parents; the main area being around helping parents to feel more informed. For example Ask Ace gave parents the information they needed to be able to speak to their child's school more confidently about admissions or exclusions.

- As with the helplines described in the previous chapter, users of Ask ACE had some indications of improved soft outcomes; such as feeling more confident, reassured and better informed. Very few parents identified more specific improvements to their relationship management or parenting styles. It should be noted that any outcomes recorded were at the time of the survey, an there was no evidence to suggest that outcomes were sustained in the longer term.

- A minority of parents went on to take action as a result of their text service experience. For example, users of Relate's service used the information to speak to their partner about an issue and some Ask ACE users used the information in meetings with the school.

3.1 Reach

Reach was defined as the number of unique users accessing or contacting a service. In the case of text messaging this referred to the number of unique users of a text service[35]. The text messaging services developed as part of Parent Know How were all new services and any parents they reached contributed to an increase in the overall level of parents reached. Each service set targets for the numbers of unique parents reached against which progress is measured (Table 3.1) except Parentline whose text service targets were set against total incoming texts received.

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[35] As identified by unique mobile phone numbers.

Table 3.1 Total unique users of text services against targets

	Original target to date[36]	Revised target to date[37]	Total unique users	% of target reached[38]
Ask ACE	35,415	2,028	1,644	81%
Parentline Plus[39]	95	95	234	246%
Relate	4,413	4,413	300	7%
Total	39,923	6,536	2,178	33%

Source: Monthly monitoring data

Overall, investment in text messaging services reached 2,178 parents. The reach of text services was much smaller than originally anticipated, with services reaching only a third, 33% of the revised target (and only 5% of their original target). Feedback from ACE suggested that research undertaken post launch with similar text services (e.g. Samaritans and Brooke) led them to believe that original estimates were too ambitious. Ideally this research should have been undertaken at an earlier stage (either during the preparation of the bid or during the initial planning stage) to avoid such issues. ACE's targets were revised downwards, following which the service reached 81% of its target. Parentline set smaller, more achievable targets for texts sent to their service based on feedback from the other text providers and reached nearly 250% of this target.

3.1.1 Factors affecting reach

Reach was affected by series of factors. Usage of Ask ACE fluctuated and was affected by school holiday periods. This was to be expected, given the educational subject matter of the Ask ACE service. The advice offered through Ask ACE was very specific and parents would only need to contact ACE in certain circumstances; this meant the text service was targeting a niche market. Low reach may therefore be a reflection of a lack of demand, but also reflects the lack of marketing of the text services. On the whole text services would have benefited from a larger scale and dedicated marketing effort. The level of funding set aside for marketing was inadequate to raise awareness and improve reach. Marketing tactics that did work according to feedback from ACE included strategic actions such as: getting the text number onto exclusion letters; and working with admissions officers to ensure they pass on Ask ACE's details to parents. ACE also tried putting posters in ladies washrooms in shopping centres but this led to an increase in unsolicited, inappropriate texts. ACE reported they were wary of spending too much marketing their text service as they were unsure if their service would be continuing post June 2009. They also felt they would have benefited from a dedicated press and PR officer for the service which suggested that existing staff lacked the skills or experience to market a text service effectively. In addition, staff changes during the implementation stage of the project meant that experience built up as the project developed was lost.

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[36] Original targets to 31 Dec 2008.
[37] Revised targets to 31 Dec 2008.
[38] Based on revised targets.
[39] Targets set were for total texts received not unique users of text service, as was agreed with other providers. This means targets were not fully comparable.

Relate and Parentline's services were launched later on in the programme and were running for only four months at the time of writing. Both of these services also had low levels of uptake.

Relate reported they had struggled to find the right software for the text service and that they had some early issues around users inadvertently getting charged for messages. The issue was resolved, but led to a delay in their launch. A lack of project direction and project management in the early stages of the project also appeared to delay getting Relate's services up and running. This may have been due to a lack of a dedicated project manager or because staff were trying to fit in the project alongside other responsibilities.

Relate found it challenging to encourage parents to use the text service because their main route for marketing was via their 'Relate for Parents' website which was also new and did not receive enough traffic to stimulate demand (also see evidence in Chapter Four). Relate acknowledged that the hard to reach parents they originally intended to access via SMS were less likely to have internet access and therefore less likely to find out about and use the service. Web marketing was the main route they had tried to date, however the new site was not very clearly promoted on the main Relate website and traffic across from this highly popular site was not capitalised upon. Relate recognised that the lower than anticipated level of hits for the website was an issue and were planning to continue to refresh content to attract more users. Relate also marketed its text service via Relate coffee mornings and via a range of leaflets and posters however these appeared to be small scale and did not result in driving significant demand for texting. Finally, Relate's corporate policy to not publicise one service over any other limited the extent to which the Parent Know How services could be marketed and negatively affected service reach. Going forwards Relate were looking for new ways to market the service, for example via Relate's work in schools.

Parentline's text service to parents of teenagers was tied into their Gotateenager website. Since the text service was an 'add on' to their initial proposed web and social media service it appeared to suffer from a lack of allocated budget with regard to project management and marketing. Parentline recognised that levels of usage were very closely linked to marketing activity because the text usage levels dropped right off in months when they hadn't actively marketed the service (for instance the service had 187 users in October 2008 falling to just 13 users in November 2008). Parentline recognised that the service needed 'constant pushing' to keep the numbers up. The service was being expanded at the time of writing into a second location in an effort to boost reach. Since the text service was an 'add on' to the main service it may have suffered from a lack of time and resources as the project team attempted to take on too much.

3.1.2 Level of interaction

On average parents sent 1.9 texts each to the service. The number of contacts per parent varied between text services (Figure 3.1 overleaf). For Ask ACE the figure was around 1.5 texts, so for every two incoming texts from parents ACE sent out three replies. This figure was significantly lower than the originally anticipated figure of 5.24 texts per parent suggesting either that incoming queries were not as complex as anticipated or that it was possible to condense answers more succinctly than expected. Relate sent out one text message reply to every incoming message and Parentline sent out around 2.7 texts for every incoming text. This was surprising given that Parentline was operating a 'key word' system with automated responses whereas ACE and Relate were offering personalised responses to individual queries. Part of the learning from developing the text services will be to understand how many texts were required to effectively deal with parents' enquiries and what topics or keywords were most effective.

Figure 3.1 - Total incoming and outgoing text messages to text services
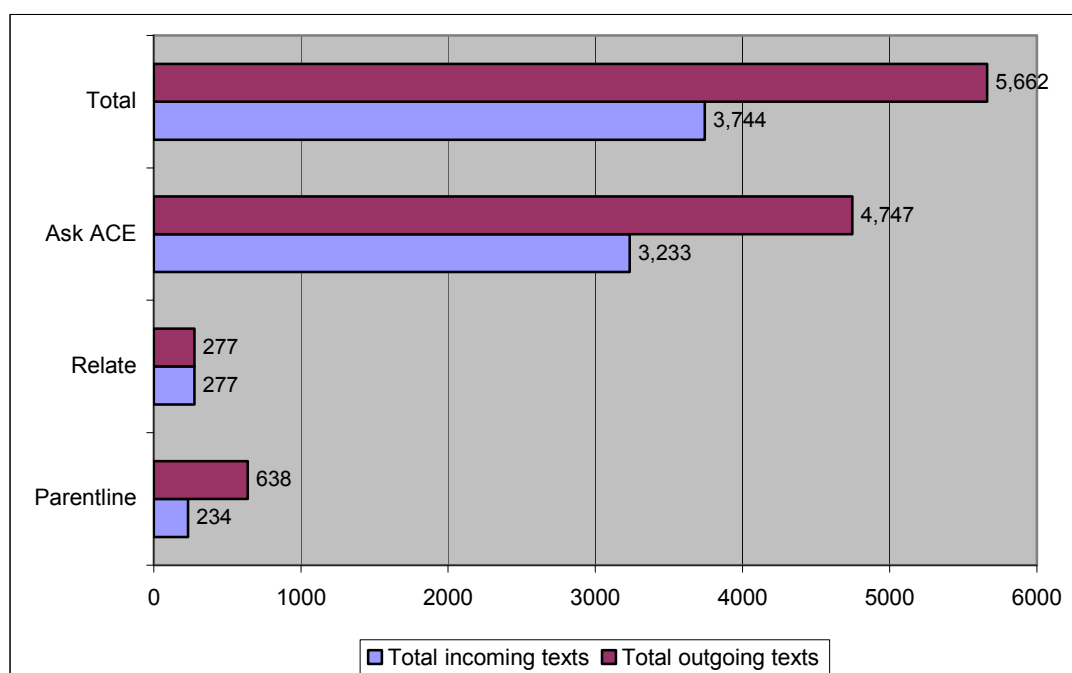
Source: Monthly monitoring data

The survey evidence also suggested that two thirds of users (66% or 39 respondents) reached through the Ask ACE text service had not previously accessed another organisation or service offering support to parents. This suggested that the text service was encouraging some parents who had not previously accessed support to do so.

3.2   Service users

The evaluation aimed to gauge both the extent to which the SMS services were accessed by a representative cross section of the population, and whether the priority parent segments were reached, via a range of demographic data. These included dads, parents of disabled children and parents of teenagers. Survey data was not available for Relate's and Parentline's SMS services due to the low level of reach of both services; and base sizes for ask ACE were small, meaning it was not possible to accurately gauge what types of users have accessed text services.

3.2.1 Gender and caring roles

The majority of respondents in the Ask ACE text service survey were mothers (41 respondents or 69%). Rather smaller proportions of users were fathers (5 respondents or 8%), grandparents (without care of child) (3 respondents or 5%) and other relatives (2 respondents). Of those users, around half were married with children (49% or 23 respondents), lone parents made up over a quarter (28% or 15 respondents) and one in six users cohabited with their own or step children (17% or 6 respondents). Two callers were lone father households (4%). The majority got in touch with Ask ACE about their child (80% or 47 respondents). With mobile phone penetration standing at 84% of the population in the UK;[40] this data suggests indicatively that there is a long way to go in attracting a representative cross section of the population to use parenting based text services. Dads in particular did not appear to have been attracted to using text services, though this may be

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[40] Deloitte Digital Index, October 2008

linked to the subject matter covered by the Ask ACE service which may typically be seen as the mother's domain.

3.2.2 Age

The largest share of Ask ACE users were aged 35 to 44 (42% or 25 respondents) and less than a quarter were younger (25 to 34) or older (45 to 54) than that (22% or 13 respondents apiece) which suggested that text messaging appealed to a fairly wide range of age groups (see Figure 3.2). Only three respondents using Ask ACE were aged over 55. Parents contacted Ask ACE about a wide age range of school age children from 4 years through to 16 years of age, with a quarter of all contacts relating to children aged 11-12 (15 respondents) most likely in relation to issues around school transitions. Ask ACE was less likely to reach parents of teenagers, since it dealt with educational issues and children aged 17 and over were less likely to be in full time education.

Figure 3.2 - Age range of users of Ask ACE text service
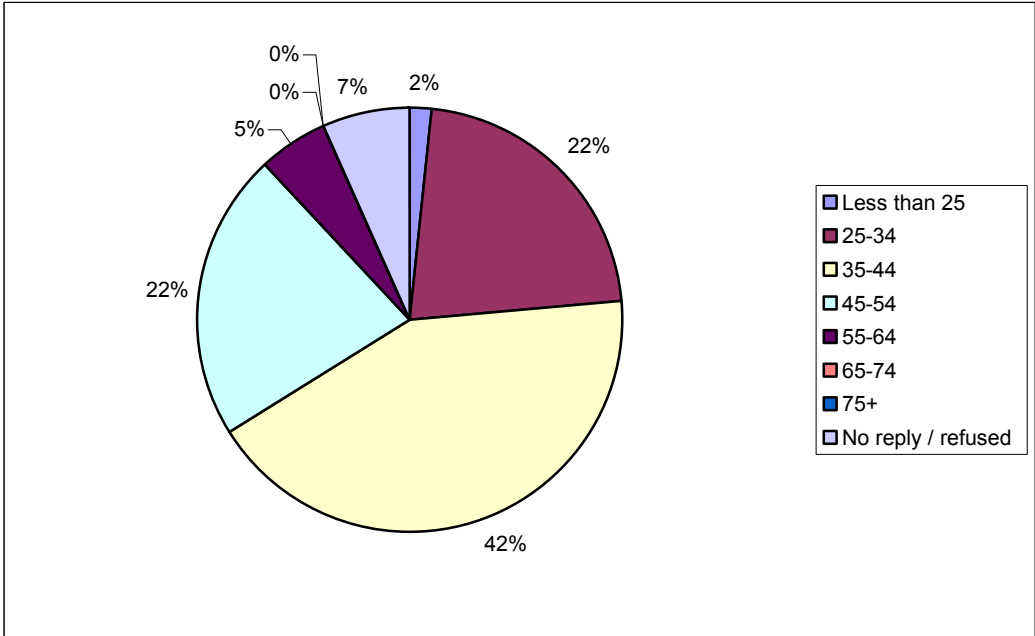
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 59

3.2.3 Disability

Ask ACE was effective in reaching parents of children with a disability with a third of all users reporting that their child had a disability (31% or 18 users)[41]. As a broad indicator, this was higher than the occurrence in the general population of children and young people as measured by the Office for National Statistics[42].

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[41] The survey asked 'Does the child/young person you contacted Ask ACE about have a disability?'
[42] Source: Office for National Statistics data (2000) from General Household Survey says that 19 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls aged under 20 years reported having a mild disability in 2000. Mild disability is the term used to represent longstanding illness and disability referred to in the General Household Survey. The evaluation question was based on *self reporting*, as were the figures quoted from the General Household Survey (GHS) making them broadly comparable. The GHS question wording includes 'long standing illness or disability'. See http://www.statistics.gov.uk/children/downloads/disability.pdf

3.2.4 Ethnicity

The majority of Ask ACE's users were of 'White British' origin (78% or 46 respondents). While this figure was slightly lower than the national average of 92.1% for the population as a whole,[43] smaller numbers of users fell into a range of other ethnic groups including 'White Other' and 'Black African', 'Indian', and 'Black Other' (*n*= less than three respondents each). However five respondents refused to answer this question therefore it was difficult to conclude whether Ask ACE was being accessed to any great extent by parents from a BME background.

3.2.5 Income

Parents with a wide range of income levels accessed Ask ACE including 17% (10 respondents) with a household income of less than £15,000 per annum. Ask ACE appeared to reach users across a range of income levels, including those on lower incomes and these figures were broadly in line for average figures across all of the other services funded through Parent Know How.

3.2.6 Topics covered

Users of the text service could text an open-ended question to ACE and received an individualised personal text or texts in response. Sometimes texts spanned several messages in order to get all the necessary information across. Survey data indicated the majority of survey respondents texted Ask ACE with a query about educational concerns, bullying or school exclusion (80% or 37 respondents). This was in line with feedback from ACE which suggested that the majority of contacts were relevant to the subject areas they covered and only a few irrelevant or nuisance texts had been received. Relate noted that text message users generally contacted them about similar issues to those raised in Relate counselling, such as divorce and separation, child contact issues and issues around step families. They noted there have been fewer contacts about teenage behaviour than they expected.

3.3   Satisfaction

Benchmark targets for user satisfaction – like those set for helplines - were agreed between the Department and two of the three text messaging services. These targets, based on the COI benchmark, were agreed with Relate[44] and ACE[45]. For Parentline's text service, user satisfaction was not a contractual requirement.

Survey feedback, available for Ask ACE only, indicated that 79% (47 respondents) were satisfied with their experience of the service (very or fairly) and around 7% (4 respondents) were very dissatisfied (see Figure 3.3). These figures fall just short of agreed benchmarks. However a high proportion (83% or 49 respondents) said their expectations were met when they used the Ask ACE service. Survey evidence for Relate's and Parentline's SMS services was not available due to low reach therefore it was not possible to quantitatively assess satisfaction with those services.

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[43] Source: Office for National Statistics Census data (2001). In the last UK census the size of the White British population was 54.15 million or 92.1%. The size of the minority ethnic population was 4.6 million in 2001 or 7.9 per cent of the total population of the United Kingdom.
[44] To achieve 90% of users being 'happy' or 'very happy' with the service.
[45] To achieve 80% satisfied with the service and no more than 3% 'unhappy'.

Figure 3.3 - Satisfaction of users of Ask ACE text service

Legend:
- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know
- No reply

Pie chart values: 47%, 32%, 3%, 2%, 7%, 2%, 7%
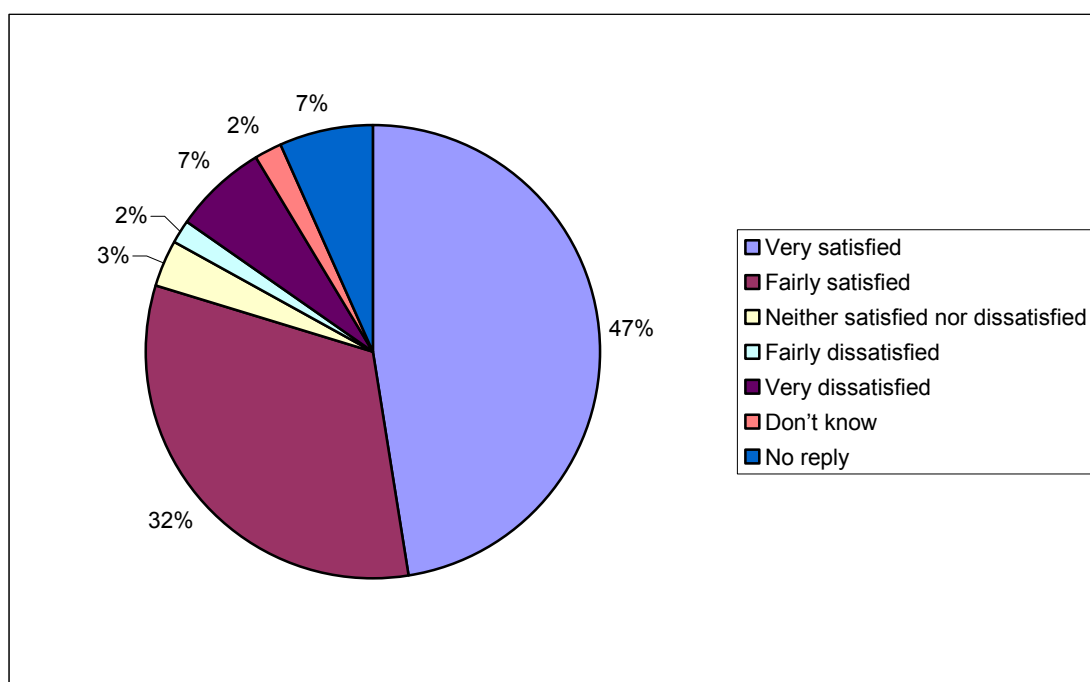
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 59

The qualitative interviews gave some additional feedback on satisfaction with the text services, though from a relatively small sample size. Parents expressed reasonable levels of satisfaction with all the text services. In the case of Ask ACE, while parents felt that texting was a convenient method of accessing information, they said it would not be their first choice of communication with ACE on many, more complex, questions. Indeed, several of the parents interviewed said they had contacted ACE's helpline in the first instance and would do so again if they needed further advice rather than using text services. One reported that in future they would prefer to try email if the helpline was busy, instead of using texting as it would allow them to get a more complex query answered. Qualitative feedback from interviews with parents who had used Relate's text service indicated they were very satisfied with the service and felt the information they were given fully met their needs; however interviewees recognised that they generally had fairly straightforward queries.

3.4 The customer experience

In addition to user satisfaction (Section 3.3) the evaluation captured both quantitative and qualitative data relating to more specific aspects of the customer experience including ease of use, usefulness and response times of the information received.

3.4.1 Ease of use

Users' experiences of the text services varied. While the vast majority of parents (96% or 45 respondents) said they found Ask ACE 'easy' or 'very easy' to use, qualitative feedback from parents and from ACE indicated some parents did struggle with using text services. Many parents reported that they found texting itself easy to do; however some had difficulties as they were unfamiliar with texting and found the process slow. Evidence also suggested that using the technology appropriately for the queries was sometimes challenging. For example, parents reported that they found it difficult to restrict their question to a specific number of characters for one text message.

> *"I need to speak to someone; I can't put what I really need to know in a text."*
> (Mother, Ask ACE)

One user said they felt the instructions for using the SMS service given on ACE's helpline message were confusing. This caused the user to interpret the instruction 'text ACE' literally and tried to include the word ACE in the text number. This problem was most likely due to parents being unfamiliar with using information based text services, but indicated the service may have benefited from offering clearer instructions.

Users of Relate's text service had fewer problems using text messages; this could be because they were naturally more familiar with the medium or because the service was not being accessed as an alternative to a helpline. Users of Relate's service reported that they would prefer to use texting rather than Live Chat or a helpline as it was more convenient and was often their preferred means of communicating. For those who did not feel comfortable talking on the phone or writing down their problems (as in Live Chat), text was an easy alternative.

3.4.2 Usefulness and quality of information

Parents were generally positive about the quality of information provided by Ask ACE. In terms of level of detail, parents seemed generally content. For Ask ACE, while four in five (79% or 37 respondents) said the level of detail was 'about right'; the remainder (19% or 9 respondents) felt the information provided was not detailed enough. In qualitative feedback, one parent reported that the service was able to fully answer the question sent but conceded that the question had to be very carefully worded to ensure an accurate response.

> *"You have to be quite specific on what you want to ask…in a telephone conversation you can go off on a tangent and it doesn't really matter as you can always go back to it….If you don't get it right, they'll be texting you something totally different."*
> (Mother, Ask ACE)

In one case this difficulty led to a parents' query being misinterpreted twice by the advisor and the parent ended up calling the ACE helpline to have it resolved. One user reported that this experience led to a lack of trust in the information provided, and she rang the Department to confirm the information was accurate.

Parents were generally happy with the tone of the information provided. For Ask ACE, more than four in five (87% or 41 respondents) reported that the tone was 'about right' in terms of level of formality. Clarity was also good, with nearly nine out of ten users reporting that information was 'clear' or 'very clear' (87% or 41 respondents).

On balance the majority of Ask ACE users found the information they received useful (78% or 46 respondents) however over six respondents (10%) reported the information was not very useful or not at all useful. This suggested that on certain topics or where misunderstandings occur between text users, information can be mis-communicated.

Users of Relate's service also found the information clear and useful. Qualitative feedback indicated that they were not looking for answers to specific individualised problems, but instead looking for reassurance or signposting (for example to a counsellor) which were perhaps easier to provide via a text message. This suggested certain topics or types of information lent themselves more readily to text messaging than others.

3.4.3   Response times

Response times varied from 15 minutes to two hours with one text user having to wait two days for a response. Overall, users of text services were generally surprised by the speed of the response to their questions as they expected it would take longer to get an answer.

> *"I was expecting up to five to six hours for them to find out [the answer] and send one back."* (Mother, Relate text service)

> *"Their response was almost immediate. I couldn't believe how quickly they got back."* (Mother, Ask ACE)

Opinions on the response times were also related to the parents' expectations rather than the length of time it actually took to get a response. For instance, a user who waited two days for a response was happy with this response time as they did not require or expect an answer urgently. However the user who waited a couple of hours for a response felt that this prevented a *'free flowing'* text conversation which was what they had expected.

Feedback from parents on response times was clearly linked to their expectations around contacting ACE more generally. Parents indicated that their preferred method for contacting ACE was via the helpline but that text services offer a more instantaneous response when all helpline advisers were busy. A key reason for using the text service therefore was that parents expected to receive a timely response, and this was perceived to be *'the next best thing'* to actually speaking to an adviser on a helpline.

> *"I just prefer face to face and I do prefer even a phone conversation to a text. Its just more personal and you feel like when you are speaking to someone...they wean a bit more out of you and you think 'oh yes that actually is what I wanted to ask as well'."* (Mother, ACE text service)

One user felt that the text service was more convenient than the helpline as it was available over a longer time period. For parents who do not have time to keep calling a helpline during a working day, for example, the text service was available and considerably less time consuming to use. In this sense, in organisations like ACE where text and helplines coexist, text services were providing useful capacity to the helplines at busy times. More widely, the funded text services were also providing a more timely and instant response than other – more traditional – parent information channels can offer. Text services, therefore, had some success in reaching and providing services to 'busy parents.' It is likely that more work will be needed to promote and market these services to this group as parents as naturally they may be less likely to engage with more traditional marketing approaches.

3.4.4 Channel choice and the cross channel experience

In the case of ACE, parents were utilising all three channels of communication (website, helpline and text service) to make contact. For example, parents found ACE's website via an internet search. The website signposted them to the helpline, which was their preferred choice of communication. They then moved to the text service after hearing a recorded message that was played when the helpline was busy. When the text service could not fully answer the question one parent then called the helpline again at a quieter time of day and was able to talk to an adviser. In these cases parents were using text generally – but not wholly - because they could not access their preferred route.

In the case of Relate and the Gotateenager text services, users were selecting text messaging when alternative channels *were* available, as an add on or to gather specific information they could not access elsewhere. Overall this suggested that a small proportion of parents preferred texting as a means of communication and may use it to access parenting support, particularly where subject areas lend themselves to shorter, more targeted responses or via keywords. However in cases where an organisation was offering multiple contact channels, many parents were only accessing texting when alternative preferred medium were not available; and were happy to try alternatives to get the information they need.

3.5 Outcomes for parents

Information about outcomes for parents from using text messaging services was very limited given the lack of survey data for two of the three text services. Qualitative evidence suggested text messaging services had some limited positive outcomes for parents which were generally across soft outcomes, and mainly in helping parents feel more informed. Survey feedback illustrated that some parents using Ask ACE experienced improvements in some soft outcomes. Survey evidence suggested outcomes were more likely to be linked to parents feeling better informed (69% or 41 respondents), more confident (63% or 37 (69% or 41 respondents) and more reassured (59% or 35 respondents) (see Figure 3.4). There was limited evidence of text messaging creating any changes to parents' approach or parents taking any action as a result of the contact (28 respondents would approach things differently, 47%).

Figure 3.4 - How has your contact with Ask ACE changed things, to what extent do you feel…?
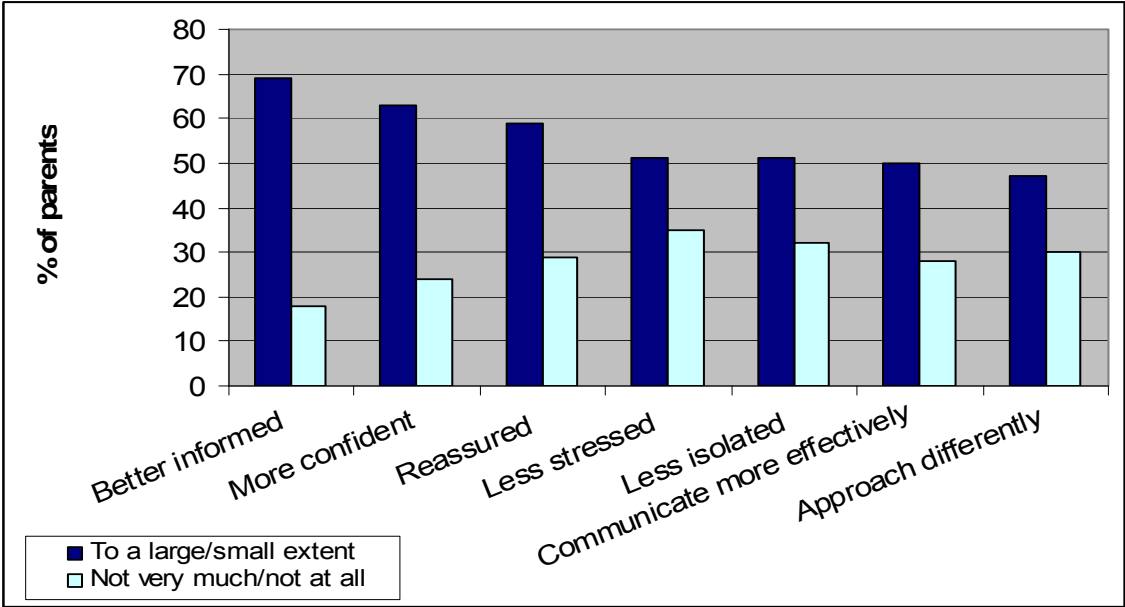
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 59

Qualitative evidence also suggested that having contact with the Ask ACE text service gave parents the information they needed to be able to speak to their child's school more confidently about admissions or exclusions.

Evidence to indicate an impact on parents' situation was more limited. Half of Ask ACE respondents said the service had helped their situation a lot or a little (30 respondents) but a further 16 respondents said it had 'no effect' on their situation or were not sure what part it played, and seven respondents said it was 'too early to say'.

Qualitative feedback also suggested that text services' main impact had been to help parents feel more informed or improve parents' knowledge or understanding of their situation. For example, Ask ACE respondents said the service had increased their knowledge concerning the process of applying for or appealing against a decision concerning secondary schools places. For one parent preparing to apply for a secondary school place for a child, the advice received from ACE gave them confidence in filling in the application form correctly. For another parent appealing for a secondary school place for their child, this knowledge helped to strengthen their appeal case and the respondent reported this 'gave them hope' that the appeal might be successful. This parent reported that contacting Ask ACE had altered their approach to the appeal hearing; following ACE's advice they had developed a more structured, clear argument and prepared questions for the panel.

> *"I have been revitalised to fight my son's case in this matter. I felt aggrieved prior to our contact [with Ask ACE] and now I know that we have been dealt with in an underhand manner I feel justified in questioning decisions further."* (Mother, Ask Ace) [46]

Relate's text service users said they received information that made them feel more reassured in the way they were handling their situation and gave them more confidence to address issues with their partner. One user did not report any outcomes directly from the text service as they used this service to gain a referral to a counsellor; however the outcome from meeting the counsellor was that the respondent felt more prepared for the custody case.

Evidence of parents taking action following a text exchange was fairly limited. For Ask ACE survey feedback suggested that 16 respondents used or contacted another service; however other evidence suggested this probably included trying to contact ACE's helpline for more information. Smaller numbers of Ask ACE respondents said they applied for benefits or tax credits (15 respondents) and one in five said they visited a GP, teacher or other practitioner (13 respondents); this probably included visiting the school to discuss an exclusion or bullying incident. Qualitative feedback suggested that most users took some sort of action following the text exchange, however the extent to which this action improved their situation varied.

Feedback from the other two services was more limited. One Relate user reported that they had gained the confidence to confront the situation with their ex-partner which did help to resolve the issue. There was no evidence of outcomes from users of Parentline's text service.

It should be noted that any outcomes discussed above were as recorded at the time of the survey and there was also no real evidence to suggest that any types of outcomes were sustained in the longer term.

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[46] Please note sample sizes for qualitative interviews at the individual service level were small.

4.0 Web and social media

This chapter looks at the new web and social media services for parents developed and piloted as part of Parent Know How. It covers the social networking websites: CoupleConnection, Dad's Space, DadTalk, One Space for lone parents and Gotateenager. It also covers the support boards and relationship courses provided by NetMums, the social networking sites and 'Second Life' facility developed by Contact a Family (CAF), and Relate's website and 'Live Chat (instant messaging) service[47] [48]. The chapter is based on information collected from monitoring data, surveys[49] and qualitative interviews with parents. Due to a small base size, results for Contact a Family should be treated as indicative only.

Key findings: web and social media

Reach

- Investment in web and social media services reached over 300,000 parents up to the end of December 2008. This is from a baseline position of zero parents reached through DCSF supported web based parenting channels in the preceding financial year. This represents over four fifths of the pro rata target for this point in the contract (87%). Most web and social media providers could be expected - at the overall level 0 to get fairly close to reaching the overall target by the end of the initial contract period, with some providers continuing to lag against individual targets.

- Problems such as delays in launching; a lack of experience of managing technology projects of this type; a lack of functionality compared with original plans; and problems with technology partners all contributed to missed targets. Many providers underestimated how much budget and time would be required to market their service, and how frequently they would need to update and develop new content to keep it fresh.

Service users

- Three quarters of web/social media users had not previously contacted an organisation or service offering support or advice to parents (72% on average). This figure rose to 82% for Dad's Space, suggesting that a 'new' tranche of parents had been reached via some services.

- Mums remained the predominant carers accessing information and support across many of the web based services. However, those services that were directed specifically at dads did have greater success in engaging dads, step fathers and non resident fathers.

- Web and social media services were less likely than Parent Know How services as a whole to reach parents of children with a disability, with the exception of services provided by Contact a Family. However, web-based information proved to be in considerable demand for parents of teenagers, based on the experiences of the specific services that were funded.

- Web services were mainly reaching White British parents, and the services reached out to parents from minority ethnic groups broadly in line with the relative population.

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[47] Further details on all of the services are provided in Annex One.
[48] Reach targets were agreed with the Department at the start of the contract based on evidence based estimates of demand and take up.
[49] Full survey results in the form of a marked up questionnaire are available in a technical annex provided under separate cover.

Satisfaction

- The average satisfaction rating for web and social media services was 71%, which is below the Department's benchmark figure of 80%. Qualitative feedback indicated parents were particularly satisfied with the support provided by the more interactive web services but were less satisfied with the information they got from websites, indicating it lacked detail.

- All of the interviewees who used a social network felt the service was appropriate for them, as their aim was to meet similar parents. This was particularly so for the parents of disabled children. These parents routinely developed new friendships and received support from parents in similar situations and expert support from moderators.

Customer experience

- Web and social media services were relatively easy for parents to use ('easy' for 79% on average), even if they were unfamiliar with using forums or social networks.

- Services were seen to be responsive and available at times of the day when other services or support would not be available. Responses in some forums were slower. This was reported to have been because it can take longer to establish a 'critical mass' for web forums.

- The experience of established organisations was a factor in encouraging existing service users to migrate from one service (e.g. a helpline) to the online environment.

- Some web service users said they had a strong preference for web based support and were natural internet users; they preferred the anonymity it lent them and felt daunted by helplines. Web and social media services filled a gap in provision, as parents could make contact with similar parents that they could not do elsewhere. Some parents said they would like the opportunity to migrate from online to offline channels.

Outcomes for parents

- Contact with web and social media services appears to have had some positive short term outcomes for parents, around feeling better informed and more reassured.

- Web services helped parents to overcome feelings of isolation; and the 'social' aspect of social networks was clearly important, particularly for parents of disabled children.

- A few services had promising outcomes in terms of strengthening relationships, and encouraging parents to use or contact another service or seek a referral to a professional. Such actions were taken in similar proportions to those parents who took action as a result of contacting the helplines.

- Overall, services aimed at dads appeared to be achieving fewer outcomes than services used by mums and direct impacts on children were more limited.

4.1 Reach

In the case of web and social media services 'reach' is taken to refer to the number of unique users of a site and/or its content[50]. The web and social media services developed as part of Parent Know How were all new services and any parents they reach contribute to an increase in the overall level of parents reached. Each service set targets for the numbers of parents reached. Progress towards these targets is measured (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 - Reach of web and social media services against targets

Parent Know How web and social media services	Overall target reach (to contract end June 09)	Target for reach to date (to 31 Dec 08)	Actual reach (to 31 Dec 08)	% of target reached
Attic Media with Respect - Dad's Team	147,700	34,700	100,385[51]	289%
Attic Media with Respect - Dad's Space	57,000	23,000	19,760[52]	86%
Contact a Family - social networking services and Second Life	29,515	11,750	41,249[53]	351%
Family Matters Institute - DadTalk	13,846	5,721	8,365	146%
NetMums - Parent supporters, support boards and relationship course	51,845	29,485	44,542[54]	151%
One Plus One - CoupleConnection	67,356	22,500	17,292	77%
Parentline Plus - Gotateenager	85,500	31250	48,989	157%
Relate - Relate for Parents website	195,000	168,749	4,410[55]	3%
Relate - Relate for Parents Live Chat	16,380	8,189	781	10%
SPAN - One Space	20,000	13,000	15,472	119%
TOTAL	684,142	348,344	301,245	87%

Source: Monthly monitoring data, 2008

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[50] This also includes numbers of downloads of videos (as in the case of YouTube content) or number of unique visitors to a website.

[51] Dad's Team also has a target set for 'direct users'. Definition of Direct = 'Traffic that comes from Dad's Team activity (e.g. video and other content) which then goes to Dad's Space. (I.e. it can be deduced from this that a user saw Dad's Team activity and then actively decided to come to the Dad's Space site)' NB 'Direct users' are a sub set of total users. Total direct users to date is: 6,657

[52] Dad's Space also has a target set for 'direct users' and for their father-child1-2-1 service. Definition of Direct = users are those 'who spent over 2 min's on content pages'. NB 'Direct users' are a sub set of total users. Total direct users to date is: 10,318. Total users of 1-2-1 service is: 6.

[53] Figure based on video views, podcast downloads, virtual visits and document accesses, visits to social networking sites and RSS subscriptions. All figures for page views have been divided in the ratio 3:1.

[54] This breaks down into 8,501 parents directly supported by a parent support worker, 10,541 parents taking part in the relationship course and 25,500 of parents viewing and being helped by the support service posts on Forum. In addition, there have been 1.35 million users visiting web pages in the support boards of Parent Know How funded pages (based on the ratio of 3:1 page views to unique visitors for 4.07 million page views.

[55] Relate only provided web user statistics for two months of the four they were in operation. An average has been taken of those two months and pro-rated across the four months to account for missing statistics.

Investment in web and social media services reached over 300,000 parents. This was from a baseline position of zero parents reached through DCSF supported web or social media channels in the preceding financial year. This figure represents over four fifths (87%) of the target reach for web and social media services to this point of the year. Many of the services have, despite a slow start, seen steady growth in recent months, including Dad's Team, One Space for single parents and DadTalk and this has improved overall reach figures. However the figure masks some differentials. One or two providers remained behind reach targets, including Dad's Space, particularly its '1-2-1' area for fathers and children which only has six couples piloting it at present, and Relate's social media services including their 'Relate for Parents' website and Live Chat service, neither of which have reached the targets for reach.

Overall the pattern of growth was as expected. In the first few months, providers focussed on designing and building their services. There were some delays at this stage which affected how quickly services went 'live'; these are described in more detail below (section 4.1.1). Only once services were fully up and running, did providers begin to focus on raising awareness of their services. Overall the funded web and social networking sites have expanded the reach of parent support beyond the 2007 to 2008 levels.

4.1.1 Explaining reach figures

The reasons behind the above patterns of reach were varied.

As might be expected, well established providers who were offering new services to their **previously established audience** performed well. For instance NetMums who already hosted a well established online community of parents had no difficulties in meeting, and surpassing, reach targets (151%). Additionally, there have been 1.35 million parents visiting Parent Know How funded web pages in NetMums' support boards[56]. Similarly, CAF's services in Second Life and Facebook, and Parentline's Gotateenager site have also seen levels of traffic well above their initial targets (351% and 157% respectively).

While some had 'ready made' audiences in place, other providers did not have an established audience to draw on. For example One Plus One found that reaching parents was more challenging. Dad's Team, while not having an established audience, has been effectively building relations with partner and host sites using whole range of methods from cold calling, to building on existing contacts and this had led to massive growth (248%) in the figures for views of the Dad's Team content in the last quarter of 2008. A lot of this traffic was generated via competitions (see 4.1.2 below). Dad's Team now aims to target some larger partners since most current partners were smaller niche markets.

Some providers set themselves **ambitious reach targets and ambitious timetables** which were often unachievable (as was the case with text messaging, see Chapter Three). This was often based on a lack of initial research into what reach or timescale might be appropriate and a lack of experience of the new technologies being developed. Relate set enormously ambitious reach targets that were not reached. Their targets were based on the reach of the main Relate website but since their various sites were not particularly well joined up, the reach failed to translate across to the new services. Some providers had difficulties getting appropriate technology partners in as quickly as they had hoped (for example Relate) and this ultimately delayed launch dates and therefore reach figures. Also, Relate reported that Live Chat sessions lasted longer than they anticipated (23 minutes compared to 10 minutes) which affected how many users could take part in one session. Relate were looking at extending opening times (beyond 9pm) to allow more Live Chat sessions to take place.

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[56] Based on a ratio of 3:1 page views to unique visitors for 4.07 million page views.

They also found they needed more licences to allow them to bring in more counsellors to run sessions.

Good project management and effective partnerships were key factors in the success of services. Where there was strong organisational commitment to the project and a strong or enthusiastic project manager, projects were more likely to do better. Staff turnover affected some services where the experience that had been built up was lost as key staff moved on (for example at ACE and CAF). DadTalk struggled to meet reach targets because they were targeting a very specific target group (dads from BME groups) and because they had difficulties with partner organisations they had planned to work with to target this group. DadTalk reported that they found it difficult to work with one of their partners, 'the Orangee', as they were a commercial organisation and the work that was required for DadTalk did not fit very well on top of their existing commercial commitments. There were also difficulties with another partner, the 'Young Leader's Academy', following the departure of a very high profile member of staff. The difficulties may have been due to a lack of experience of partnership working and due to fundamental differences in ethos which meant the partnerships did not work as planned. Ultimately this meant DadTalk struggled to tap into the target audience they were aiming for (i.e. BME dads). At the time of writing, DadTalk were exploring opportunities with alternative partner organisations.

Technological set-up was also a factor that affected reach. Those providers who commissioned and worked with an external, private sector, technology partner faced delays in getting their services up and running, or found it more difficult to make changes to their sites quickly enough (for example SPAN's One Space). Some providers such as One Plus One and Parentline had difficulties early on in managing the subcontract arrangement with their private sector supplier; perhaps because this type of project management arrangement was less familiar to them. For example providers found it difficult negotiating with external suppliers to get things done: Parentline said they found it difficult early on to 'establish the authority' in the sub-contractor relationship and One Plus One reported difficulties getting their technology supplier to design the site in the colour scheme they wanted.

Having up to date content that was regularly updated was an issue for some providers. SPAN (One Space) and Family Matters Institute (DadTalk) reported difficulties in getting initial visitors to return to the site and in getting registered users to post messages. Having the capacity and capability to make regular changes to the site and 'keep it fresh' was a factor in this (for example many providers had to rely on external suppliers to make changes to the site which took time, such as Relate and One Plus One). Continually developing new 'content' was also a challenge for some (which was often not budgeted for). To combat this, many providers have used the additional funding awarded by the Department to develop new content, such as the 'Family Quilt' in SPAN's One Space.
In some cases particular **pieces of content or functionality** proved successful. Parentline felt that features such as the 'Jargon Buster' and comics had been popular on their site, and CAF reported that the podcasts and parent-generated content on their Second Life and Facebook pages worked well in attracting users.

> *"Anything that involves a parent talking about their child that other parents can identify with, that basically hits the nail on the head in terms of what parents are looking for."*
> (Contact a Family)

Other providers faced **specific barriers** to expanding reach, given the very targeted nature of their services. For example Attic Media working with Respect were doing intensive partnership work to raise awareness of Dad's Space 1-2-1 service targeting non-resident fathers and their children via CAFCASS. Referrals from CAFCASS have taken a long time to come to fruition but at the time of writing were set to commence in 2009, and the 1-2-1 site

will now be promoted in the monthly staff bulletin that goes to all CAFCASS staff. Getting their offer embedded within CAFCASS has been a major challenge for Dad's Space with as yet remains untested.

> *"We really do feel now that we have come part of, effectively, their [CAFCASS'] infrastructure and that should produce some really nice returns for us."* (Dad's Space)

Feedback from fathers testing the service was that they were already accessing alternatives online (e.g. Facebook) which offered similar functionality and did not want to 'rock the boat' regarding contact arrangements in terms of the level of access they currently had to their children. With this in mind, Dad's Space was exploring potential for growth of the service for fathers at an earlier stage of the process, so before fathers become separated from their children and begin to access alternatives. Dad's Space was also exploring other avenues for the service. For example they were working with the Ministry of Justice to promote the 1-2-1 site amongst fathers in the army living away from children and were also developing relations with a large fostering agency. Opening the service up to all dads, whether separated from their children or not, may also be an opportunity to fully test out the service.

Contact a Family reported that they have found some social media sites to be more effective than others in expanding their reach. For instance, while Facebook has steadily grown in popularity, other sites such as Bebo and MySpace have not proved as popular, mainly because they tended to attract a younger demographic who were less likely to be parents. Other aspects CAF had planned to launch, such as a discussion forum on their main site had met with technical difficulties and been not been launched at the time of writing.

4.1.2 Marketing

The marketing of services had not been well developed. Providers generally underestimated how much of their budget and time would be required to market their service and how frequently they would need to market it and update content to raise and maintain interest levels. A common assumption in website design is that if you build a website, people will automatically find and use it. Websites, particularly those with social networking elements take time to embed and reach a critical mass of users; some of the sites had not yet reached this stage. It also takes time for trust to build within a site, particularly when very personal issues were being discussed, as One Plus One noted. Marketing such new services requires *'continual and creative attention'* (feedback from Relate) as well as specialist knowledge about driving traffic on the web, which many providers did not have from the start and had to learn quickly. One provider (Relate) had a policy of not marketing one service over any other; this hindered their ability to raise the profile of their suite of Parent Know How funded services. Traffic to the Relate for Parents website was also slow to pick up and since this was the main route for marketing the Live Chat (and SMS) service this has impacted on take up. Very few providers had a dedicated person in charge of marketing, mainly due to lack of budget or lack of recognition of the importance of marketing. This also meant their implementation teams lacked key skills sets for expanding the reach of services.

Providers tried a range of marketing activities. However none of the providers did any specific analysis or tracking of marketing activity and the effectiveness of these activities was purely based on anecdotal evidence. Activities included:

- **Traditional press** (newspapers, magazines and radio such as Times, Guardian, Daily Mail, Marie Claire) - this proved effective for larger providers who could draw on their experience in reaching national media (for example One Plus One and Parentline) but other providers it proved costly (for example Dad's Space) tried this route but found it did not translate into hits on the website.

- **Links to other websites** (other Parent Know How sites, blog sites and sites such as Facebook) - many of the providers developed Facebook profiles as the project evolved as this helped to draw people into their main site. Dad's Space found that linking their videos to other online blogs on external sites drove traffic to their site.

- **Mail-chimp** (for email newsletters) - SPAN tried this approach but found that it led to people clicking once on the website but not returning.

- **Google Adwords** - One Plus One tried this, and found it to be effective but had not budgeted enough to be able to use it to its fullest potential.

- **e-Cards** - One Plus One developed this towards the end of the evaluation period and anecdotally felt it was a nice way of getting users to share the site with friends or family

- **Competitions** - Dad's Space used competitions to great effect; they accounted for four of the top five most popular pages on the website in December 2008.

- **Targeted leafleting** such as in Children's Centres, shopping centres - ACE tried this but it only had a limited reach and the activity was too geographically focussed.

- **Government publications** (such as Pregnancy Handbook and Birth to Five handbook) - One Plus One had managed to secure a way to input into some key publications, however this was only just starting by the end of the evaluation period.

- **Conference stands** - providers found these to be effective in networking to the sector but very costly financially and in terms of staff time.

- **Partner work with organisations and practitioners** (such as people running parent groups, counsellors, health visitors and registrars) - these were effective in reaching parents on the frontline but again were fairly small scale.

- **Outreach work in rural areas** - SPAN felt this worked well for raising the profile of their site where isolation was an issue (particularly for single parents).

- **Collaboration with other providers** - providers were increasingly looking for opportunities to work together to market their services - for example a joint PR campaign was in development between DadTalk and NetMums where 'Dads storm NetMums' and provide advice on the site for a day[57].

Survey data indicated that the most common method for finding out about web and social media services was friends, family or word of mouth (34%) followed by a fifth (20%) who found the services via a web search engine (e.g. Google). Only 8% of respondents said they had used or contacted the organisation previously (i.e. had previous knowledge of that organisation). This suggests that for web and social media services the most effective marketing methods were those which enabled parents with no prior knowledge to quickly locate the service - for example web advertising and establishing good links to other relevant sites, like Facebook and DirectGov.

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[57] Further details on collaboration between providers are provided in Chapter 5.

Overall, for many providers managing and marketing a web or social media project was relatively new to their organisation and had proved a steep learning curve. Many organisations recognised they had learnt a lot about managing a new media project and built capacity within their organisations in terms of new skills and competences, as a result of this experience.

> *"We delved into using audio content to reach parents but we didn't push that further until Parent Know How happened. I think that's the ethos for the whole project really, its things we had tapped into beforehand but didn't have the resources to push forwards."* (Contact a Family)

Providers reported that increasing attention will be paid to marketing as the programme continues but so far there was little evidence that learning around what had worked or not worked so far had been shared or passed on. It was also unclear whether providers had planned adequate resourcing for marketing should they be funded going forwards beyond the end of the initial contract period.

4.1.3 Reaching new parents

There was evidence that web and social media services reached parents who had not previously accessed information, advice or support. On average, approaching three quarters of respondents had not previously contacted an organisation or service offering support and advice to parents (72%). This figure rose to 82% of Dad's Space users who had not previously accessed any kind of parenting support, suggesting that a 'new' tranche of parents had been reached via the service. The figure was also relatively higher for Relate's services; 77% of their users had not previously accessed an organisation offering support or advice.

NetMums reported that their parent supporters were now able to support a much wider range of parents than was previously possible because of the range of specialists they had been able to bring in through the Parent Know How funding (including advisors from CAF, Women's Aid, One Plus One, ACE, Relate and Parentline Plus). Bringing in an advisor from Relate was a direct result of collaboration through Parent Know How, to meet the need NetMums saw in their forum for experts who could deal with relationship issues.

4.2 Service users

The evaluation aimed to gauge both the extent to which the web and social media services were accessed by a representative cross-section of the population, and whether the priority parent segments were reached (particularly fathers, parents of disabled children and parents of teenagers).

4.2.1 Gender and caring roles

Across many of the services mums remain the predominant carers accessing information and support from web based services; for example mums make up over half of all users of Gotateenager, Relate and One Space and over three quarters of all NetMums' users (78%) (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 - What is your role within the family?

Caring role	Couple Connection (%) (n)	CAF (%) (n)	Dad's Space (%)	DadTalk (%)(n)	Gotateen (%)	NetMums (%)	Relate (%)	One Space (%)(n)
	Base 48	Base 27	Base 648	Base 67	Base 101	Base 250	Base 104	Base 66
Mother	40 (19)	48 (13)	16	10 (7)	59	78	53	58 (38)
Father	8 (4)	4 (1)	36	57 (38)	6	*	10	5 (3)
Step-mother	2 (1)	0	1	0	4	1	2	2 (1)
Step-father	0	0	1	0	2	*	2	0
Non-resident mother	0	0	*	0	0	*	0	0
Non-resident father	0	0	2	4 (3)	2	0	1	0
Grandparent	0	4 (1)	2	0	1	0	0	0
Relative/ friend	0	0	7	2 (2)	1	0	8	3 (2)
Professional / practitioner	8 (4)	0	1	6 (4)	0	0	0	5 (3)
Pregnant mum / dad to be	2 (1)	0	1	0	0	2	1	0

Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Columns do not sum to 100% due to the exclusion of others, don't knows and no replies. For providers with a base size of less than 100 the count is given in brackets after the percentage .Percentages are used for ease of comparison.

4.2.1.1 Dads

The overall ability of web services to reach and support dads was very mixed (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 - Proportion of dads reached by web and social media services
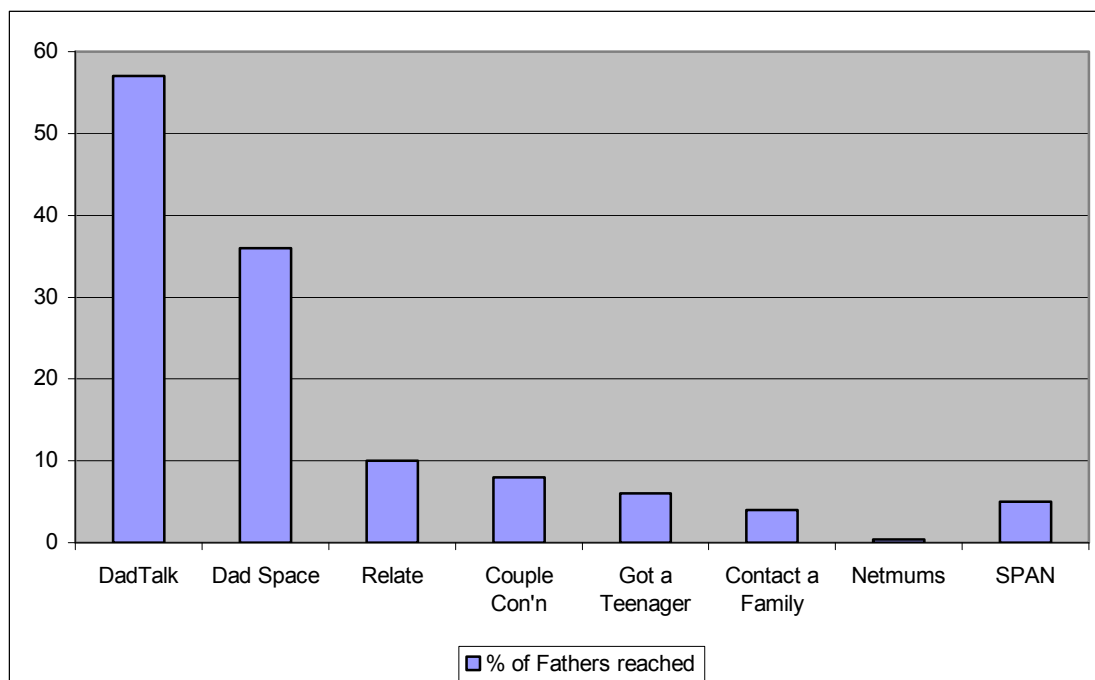
The sites targeted directly at dads attracted a range of male carers; ranging from 39% (Dad's Space) and 61% (or 41 dads for DadTalk)[58], although it must be noted that significant proportions refused to answer the question (24% and 15% or 10 users respectively, see data in Table 4.2). Feedback from dads was that they were happy to find a website that catered exclusively for them. Other websites aimed at parents in general attracted much smaller proportions of dads (ranging 1% to 13%). Website registration data provided by Relate and CoupleConnection indicated that over a quarter of all registered users of the CoupleConnection were male (27%) and one fifth (20%) of all Relate Live Chat users were dads concerned with access and contact issues.[59] DadTalk noted that in addition to website traffic, they had received a number of unsolicited emails from dads asking legal questions, mainly relating to child contact (through the Legal Eagle section of the site). DadTalk had built an understanding with Children's Legal Centre (CLC) who had provided legal advice in the form of email responses to those emails. DadTalk felt there was a latent demand for this type of support for dads, but at the moment there was no specific funding for CLC to deal with those queries and so far it has been provided purely on an informal, voluntary basis.

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[58] Including dads, step dads and non resident fathers.
[59] Information collected by Relate (Live Chat) and One Plus One (CoupleConnection) from registration data for users of services during Sept-Dec 2008, supplied during bi-annual monitoring.

4.2.2 Age

Parents using web and social media services were of a broadly similar age profile to users of all Parent Know How funded services (including helplines and text messaging). Compared to the population of internet users as a whole (taken from nationally representative data)[60] users of web and social media parenting services appear to be older than the typical age profile for internet users. This was probably because while internet users tended to be younger, people accessing parent support services were more likely to be slightly older, particularly in the case of parents of teenagers.

Table 4.3 - What is your age?

Age range	All Parent Know How services (%)	All web and social media services (%)
	Base 2,351	Base 1,311
<25	5	6
25-34	23	24
35-44	35	30
45-54	19	15
55-64	3	3
65-74	1	1
75+	*	-
No reply / refused	13	22

Source: ECOTEC, 2008

Age breakdown by service showed that NetMums in particular was reaching younger parents, with more than half their users being aged 34 and under (53%). Gotateenager in particular was reaching significantly more older parents, particularly those in the 45 to 54 age range (33% compared with 15% overall). DadTalk was attracting more parents in the 35-44 age bracket than other web services as a whole (42% or 28 parents, compared with 30% overall). Other services were attracting parents broadly in line with the overall age profile. Additional data supplied by Relate indicated that their Live Chat service had attracted parents across a wider age range than is usually the case with Relate's services. The Live Chat service had attracted parents from all age ranges and nearly as many 25 to 34 year olds (30%) as 35 to 44 (35%). This suggested the service was encouraging more young parents to ask for support which was an unexpected outcome for Relate[61].

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[60] Office for National Statistics (2008) Internet access 2008. First release, 26 August 2008. Pg 5. Available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=5672
[61] Information collected by Relate from registration data for users of Live Chat services during September 2008 and supplied during bi-annual monitoring meeting.

The age of service users' children was also important. At the overall level, services were reaching parents with children across a wide spread of age groups. Many of the services that were not targeting a specific target age group, for example the two dads services, One Space and Relate were attracting parents with children across a very broad range of ages from 0-19 years. The age profile of NetMums' users' children was notably younger, with over half of children being under five years (53%) compared with one in five on average (20%). Over half (53%) of NetMums' users' children were pre school age (under 5 years). Additional evidence supplied by NetMums also confirmed the finding that NetMums users were more likely to be in the 25 to 34 age bracket than the general population of internet users[62]. One Space noted that they had noticed a proportion of activity on their social network relating to parents with four children. Evidence suggested that the CoupleConnection was reaching the smallest overall proportion of parents; over two thirds (33 of 48 respondents) 'did not reply' concerning the age of their children and nine in ten said they contacted CoupleConnection about 'themselves' or 'a partner' (43 of 48 respondents). CoupleConnection registration data indicated that two thirds (65%) of their registered users were parents (including 5% expectant parents) suggesting around a third of users were not parents.

4.2.2.1 Parents of teenagers

Services aiming to reach parents of teenagers, notably Gotateenager were effectively reaching this priority parent segment. For example more than two thirds of parents using Gotateenager had children aged 13-19 (66%) significantly more than the overall figure for web services of one in six (16%). Other web and social media services that aimed to reach parents of teens amongst other target groups (such as NetMums and DadTalk) did not do so to any noticeable extent. Indicative survey data suggested One Space may also have reached more 12-14 year olds than other web services (14% or 9 respondents compared with a 5% average) and did have content explicitly aimed at parents of teens. An unexpected outcome for Gotateenager was that the website was accessed by more teenagers as well as their parents than was anticipated[63].

4.2.3 Disability

On average, web and social media services were less likely than Parent Know How services as a whole to reach parents of children with a disability (6% compared with 13%). This was probably because two helplines: Contact a Family and also ACE were directly targeted at, and reaching high proportions of parents of disabled children. Of all the web and social media services, Contact a Family appeared most likely to reach parents of a disabled child but base sizes were too small to draw firm conclusions[64]. CAF also reported anecdotally that their web services were being accessed by professionals working with families in this position[65]. One Space and CoupleConnection were the two providers reaching the small numbers of parents of children with a disability, but again base sizes were too small to draw firm conclusions[66].

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[62] Although 25-34 users usually account for 20% of the online population, they account for approximately 42% of traffic to Netmums. Source: NetMums audience research (2008), based on data for the 4 week period ending 02/08/2008.
[63] Gotateenager have since developed a comic-strip type scenario for parents and their teenagers to work through as a logical next step for their site.
[64] The base size was only 27 therefore results should be treated with caution.
[65] Source: Contact a Family bi-annual monitoring interview.
[66] One Space reached 11% parents of a disabled child (base size 66) and One Plus One reached 10% (base size 48).

4.2.4 Ethnicity

Web and social media services have reached predominantly White British parents and overall there was limited evidence of web and social media services particularly reaching out to minority ethnic groups. Survey evidence suggested that two thirds of users of web and social media services were White British (67%), and around 8% were from a mixture of ethnic groups including White Irish, White Other, and Black Caribbean; a quarter declined to respond to this question (25%). Users of Relate and NetMums were more likely to be White British (75% and 74% respectively); other services were broadly in line with the service average.

DadTalk was specifically targeted at fathers from a Black Caribbean background, and slightly more survey respondents from DadTalk were Black Caribbean than average (6%, or 4 Black Caribbean dads, compared with 1% on average) however this figure was lower than could be expected for a targeted service. DadTalk tried specific marketing approaches to reach ethnic minority fathers, including working with Black community and faith group partners. However the service experienced difficulties which meant it struggled to tap into Black fathers. For example relationships with two of their key partners whose role it was to tap into this audience did not come to fruition and they could not access Black fathers effectively via those networks (see 4.1.1). There was also a lack of expertise within the core project team (outside of those partners) of targeting this target group and there was limited collaboration between Dad's Space and DadTalk meaning that Black fathers were not cross-referred between the two services. Overall, this meant that the DadTalk service struggled to reach BME target groups.

4.2.5 Income

Web and social media services were reaching families from a wide range of income brackets, including those with a lower household income, of less than £15,000, who were most likely to be reliant on benefits (13% on average). This was encouraging since national data on the population of internet users showed that lower income households were less likely to access the internet than higher income households.[67] One Space for single parents was slightly more likely than other services to be reaching families with incomes less than £15,000 (22 of 66 respondents). Evidence supplied by NetMums also indicated that users of their site were more likely to be from lower social grades. While social grade D/E users usually account for 20% of the online population (and 12% of the population overall), they accounted for around 32% of traffic to NetMums[68].

4.3 Satisfaction

Benchmark targets for user satisfaction were agreed with three of the web and social media service providers, namely:

- Contact a Family (CAF) social networking services (target = 90% satisfied);

- Relate's Live Chat service (90% 'happy' or 'very happy'); and

- One Plus One's CoupleConnection website (60% 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied').

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[67] Source: National Statistics (2007) 'Digital age takes hold but some still miss out' National Statistics available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/fda0307.pdf
[68] Source: NetMums audience research (2008), based on data for the 4 week period ending 02/08/2008.

For the remaining providers and for ease of comparison, the COI benchmark is used: a minimum of 80% of parents being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' and no more than 3% of parents reporting being 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'[69]. It should be noted this was not a contractual requirement for the majority of innovation services[70]. This section also draws on survey data and feedback from in depth interviews with parents using the web and social media services.

Overall parents were satisfied with the web and social media services available with the average satisfaction rating standing at 71% for web and social media services (Table 4.4). Only one provider, NetMums, reached or exceeded the COI benchmark for satisfaction, with 88% very or fairly satisfied. Only one provider, DadTalk came close to the overall benchmark at 78% very or fairly satisfied (50 of 67 respondents), but this is based on a small base size and results should be treated with caution. Other providers fell short of the benchmark. On individually set targets, Relate missed their individual target by 28%, and CoupleConnection reached their target (68% against a 60% target), though this remained well below COI benchmarks.

Table 4.4 - Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your experience?

Satisfaction level	Couple Connection (%) (n)	CAF (%) (n)	Dad's Space (%)	DadTalk (%) (n)	Gotateen (%)	NetMums (%)	Relate (%)	One Space (%) (n)
	Base 48	Base 27	Base 648	Base 67	Base 101	Base 250	Base 104	Base 66
Very satisfied	23 (11)	33 (9)	28	39 (26)	32	73	32	36 (24)
Fairly satisfied	42 (20)	22 (6)	40	36 (24)	31	15	30	32 (21)
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19 (9)	15 (4)	12	15 (10)	12	1	7	15 (10)
Fairly dissatisfied	2 (1)	-	1	-	5	1	3	-
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	1	5	2	2	-

Source: ECOTEC 2008, numbers are given in brackets after percentage scores for providers with a base of lower than 100. For providers with a base size of less than 100 the count is given in brackets after the percentage .Percentages are used for ease of comparison.

At the other end of the scale, the majority of providers hit the benchmark target for dissatisfaction with only one provider, Gotateenager just missing the target (5% compared to benchmark 3%).

[69] This COI benchmark is used with the Helplines.
[70] The telephone survey provides the main source of data in this respect.

Qualitative feedback from in depth interviews with parents indicated **good levels of satisfaction** with web and social media services; parents were particularly satisfied with the support provided by some of the more interactive web services. Parents particularly seemed to appreciate the 'friendliness' and 'understanding' they experienced from other parents as well as from moderators when participating in discussion forums. There was also a feeling of **encouragement and supportiveness** among users which was not always experienced by parents in their daily lives. For instance one parent using Contact a Family's Facebook group said they normally felt discriminated against due to their child's disability but in the safety of the group they felt encouraged to share their child's achievements and receive supportive comments from other parents. Parents who spoke directly to a moderator (for example within NetMums or via Relate's Live Chat) received tailored support and personalised information which was relevant to their needs. Those parents using a social network felt the service was appropriate for them as their aim was to meet similar parents - for example those with disabled children - and they were able to build friendships and receive support from parents in similar situations.

> *"Its nice to go somewhere where you can get help and find others that understand what you're going through."* (Contact a Family Second Life user)

> *"They have answered my queries and supported me throughout the last few months and always mail to see how I am doing whether I have posted on NetMums or not. I think that is wonderful and shows real care and commitment."* (NetMums user)

Among users of the information giving websites, levels of satisfaction were more mixed and seemed to vary more than amongst users of interactive social media services. Some users seeking information felt that the information on the website was completely relevant to their needs and they found something that applied to them every time they accessed the website. For one parent this seemed to be the case with the Gotateenager website, because she had four children between ages of 10 and 16, and always found something that applied to one of her children. One user of CoupleConnection praised the articles that she felt were well written and gave a good depth of information; this parent felt that the quality of the articles reflected that they had been put together by experts. There was also praise for the way NetMums managed to combine local information in its information structure.

> *"The whole website was very interesting and informative and the fact that you can tailor it to your area is great as the information is all local. The whole site has a very welcoming and supportive feel to it from the start."* (NetMums user)

However other parents felt that **sites lacked detailed enough information**. For example one parent felt e-learning modules were too basic for her (Gotateenager) while another felt the information was relevant but did not provide enough information to be helpful (Dad's Space). For some websites that did not have locally based information, some parents suggested more information on local activities for children would be beneficial (One Space and DadTalk). These views seemed to reflect the difficulties of providing information for all parents on a website.[71] Feedback from stakeholders also noted that some services have tended to present information in a 'clunky' way by simply offering paragraphs of text or PDFs to download and had not presented content in an innovative manner.

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[71] In future this might be overcome by giving websites the opportunity to link to local information via the ISPP (see the report's introduction).

Parents made some **suggestions for improvements** to the services. These tended to be specific to the type of service they had accessed. For instance parents using NetMums' relationship course (which was developed in tandem with One Plus One) suggested that email reminders could be sent to help them keep up with the course. (NetMums and One Plus One had already made some changes to the course based on user feedback, including shortening the course and making it appropriate for people to complete alone as well as in a couple). Other parents using social network sites said they would like to have local networks available in order to meet nearby parents. This illustrates the link between the online and the offline, suggesting that some parents would like to be given the opportunity to migrate into face to face services. Only one parent was disappointed with the service received; in this case the parent was advised by One Space site to speak to a counsellor but was not given information on how to access a counsellor. On some of the smaller sites users felt the community had not developed enough (for instance One Space and DadTalk) and this was perhaps putting people off accessing the site, until a critical mass was reached, or until people had developed enough trust in the discussion to feel confident enough to post.

> *"I did look at the forum but I think a lot of these things, until there are a lot of people using it they tend not to be that useful...there are not a lot of comments and I think people just tend to browse and look for an answer rather than type in."* (DadTalk)

> *"As anonymous as it is, it still feels like being in a room with people you have to get to know first."* (Dad, DadTalk)

4.4 The customer experience

Alongside user satisfaction, the evaluation captured both quantitative and qualitative data relating to more specific aspects of the customer experience. In the case of web and social media services, these specifically related to ease of use and usefulness of the information or service received.

4.4.1 Ease of use

Quantitative and qualitative feedback indicated that parents generally found the web and social media services very easy to use (see Figure 4.2 overleaf). On average, the majority of parents found the services 'easy' or 'very easy' to use (87%) with figures for individual providers ranging from 95% and 88% for NetMums and Dad's Space respectively through to 75% (20 of 27 respondents) for CAF's services. This is to be expected since NetMums users were probably familiar with its format, whereas CAF's users may have found using Second Life (a virtual reality world) more challenging.

Figure 4.2 - How easy or difficult did you find it to use the web and social media services?

1%

2%

4%

7%

49%

38%

☐ Very easy   ■ Easy   ☐ Neither

☐ Difficult   ■ Very difficult   ■ Don't know
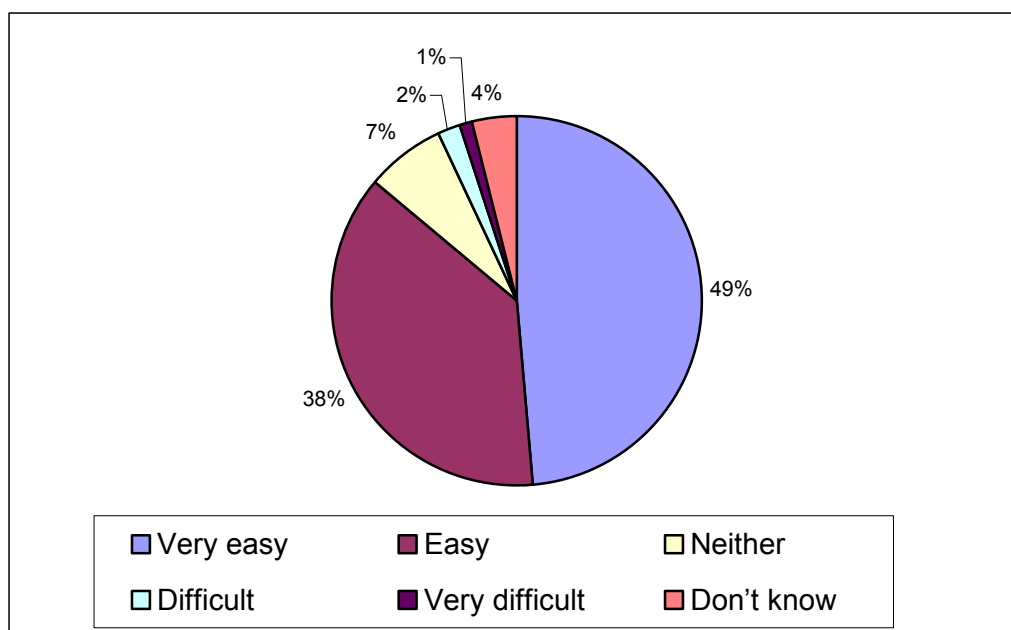
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 1311

It is very likely that parents who were less comfortable using new technologies were not accessing the web and social media services (or were put off from doing so) and therefore users of the services were already much more familiar with the technologies. However qualitative feedback from parents suggested that across the board that social media services were easy to access even if they were unfamiliar with using forums or social networks. Feedback indicated that websites were generally **well designed and easy to navigate**. Parents using Live Chat said they found it self-explanatory even if they had not used this type of technology before.

A few minor issues regarding ease of use were mentioned. Users of some social media sites said it was **not obvious how to respond to messages** and did not feel confident in starting a new post (DadTalk and CoupleConnection). One user of the CoupleConnection discussion forums felt that although she was a regular internet user, she found the message boards hard to use and that the layout needed to be clearer.

> *"The site also needs to be much simpler to read and it needs to be easier to reply to posts. There should be a button to press if you want to post a message and a button to press if you want to reply to one and that should be it."* (Mother, CoupleConnection)

Also in relation to CoupleConnection, one parent felt it would be helpful if the home page of the site explained more clearly about the three levels of services[72] that were available within the site and how the three areas linked together as this was unclear to her. This may have been beneficial to encourage more couples to register for the 'Work it out' section which was not being used to a great extent at the time of writing.

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[72] 'Check it out' where users can read articles and gain information, 'Talk it out', where users can participate in discussion forums and 'Work it out' where couples can register for more interactive joint services.

One dad experienced a technical fault with Relate's Live Chat but this did not put him off using the service as he put it down to problems with the internet. When he logged back on later the site worked well and he was impressed with how smoothly it worked. One parent reported difficulties understanding the abbreviations other parents used on forums since they were not used to using forums.

4.4.2   Aesthetics

In qualitative feedback only a few parents commented on the aesthetics of the web and social media sites. All of these were positive and commented on the use of graphics with one user feeling a picture of a father and son encouraged him to look at the websites (DadTalk). One parent felt use the website had a 'crisp feel' (DadTalk), another felt that the layout of the website worked well (NetMums) and similarly one user liked the design and colour of the website she accessed (CoupleConnection). One dad suggested that the graphics on Dad's Space were a little 'young' for the child he was concerned with. This illustrates the difficulty mentioned elsewhere of targeting content - and design - at a wide age range.

4.4.3   Tone of voice

Parents did not have any concerns about the tone or way things were put across by the web and social media services and were very positive about the services they had used. Users that had received individual advice or support from advisers online praised their level of knowledge, ability to be non judgemental and their empathy.

> *"There was empathy there which makes you feel at ease when you are on your own and have got a problem. It's nice to think somebody is listening, really."* (Mother, Relate Live Chat)

Parents who used web and social media services felt they were supported and the tone was described as 'friendly'. One parent (One Space) felt it was very important as she had used another forum ('Mumsnet') and found the other mothers were more judgemental and gave unhelpful comments. Similarly a user of Contact a Family's Facebook group felt that users were more supportive and friendly than she has found in other sites for parents with children with special educational needs.

> *"People listen and reply and they are polite, [the CAF site] is different [from other sites]. It's more friendly."* (Mother, Contact a Family innovation)

There was an initial concern from one parent that an online relationship course (as supplied by NetMums and OPO) would be impersonal but this did not turn out to be their experience of it. Parents felt there was regular contact and the tone of the course was friendly.

4.4.4 Responsiveness

Parents were generally very satisfied with the response times of the web and social media services. For instance parents that used forums such as NetMums were very happy with the quick response they received from moderators, which sometimes took just an hour. Users of Relate's Live Chat service were pleasantly surprised there was an adviser there ready and waiting to talk with them. It was also important to parents that moderators responded to them in the evening which was when they had time to talk or felt particularly low or alone. Parents using CAF's Facebook group were satisfied that they built up a network of friends which took between a couple of weeks and a couple of months. There was only one parent who accessed a forum and felt the response from other parents was slow but this parent understood this was probably because the forum was very new. As previously noted, achieving a 'critical mass' for web forums often takes time and some services had not yet reached that stage.

Specifically to the NetMums and OPO relationship course, a couple of parents noted that the course was quite fast paced and if they were unable to commit time to completing the course regularly they fell behind or did not have time to reflect on what they had learned.

4.4.5 Usefulness of information, advice or support

Overall approaching three quarters of parents found the information, support or advice they received from web or social media services useful, (72% on average across all the services) compared with only 4% who did not find the information useful (see Figure 4.3). Individually, providers' scores ranged from 86% and 77% or 37 respondents (NetMums and Couple Connection respectively) through to around two thirds of respondents for CAF, Gotateenager and Relate. Only two providers had more users than the average reporting that the information was not useful: Gotateenager (15%) and Relate (7%). This could be linked to issues discussed above around information not being detailed enough or not suited to all types of parents accessing the sites.

Figure 4.3 - Overall, how useful did you find the web and social media services?
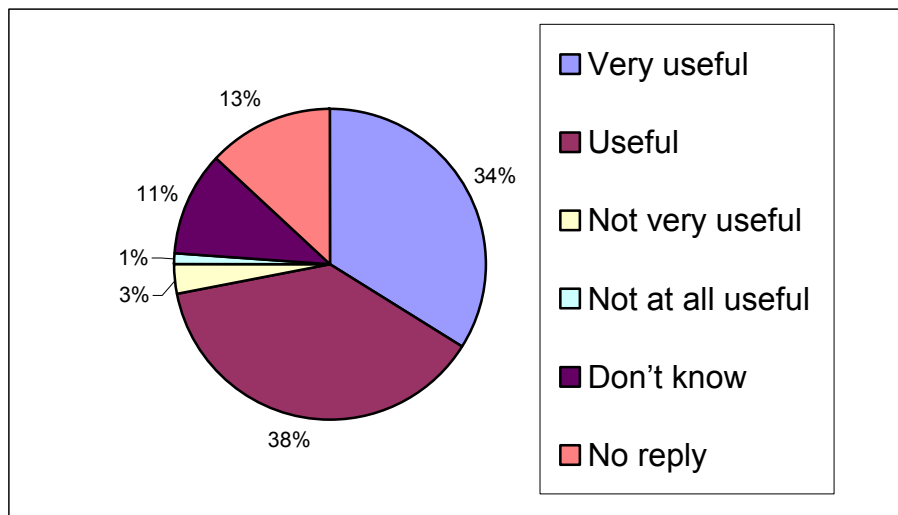
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 1311

4.4.6 Channel choice

The qualitative evidence clearly indicated that web and social media channels were providing an additional source of information and support to parents which they could not access through other channels. Parents using these types of services said they had a strong preference for web based support and were natural internet users. Therefore using these types of channels came naturally to them. One user of One Space site reported they made a 'conscious decision' to access a forum rather than using a helpline as they found it easier to write a message and found the experience of using a helpline *'daunting'*. Other users said they preferred the anonymity that web services could offer when dealing with emotional or embarrassing issues. Dads in particular reported they liked the anonymity the internet afforded them. This gave them the confidence to discuss personal or emotional issues more openly than they would otherwise.

> *"It gives you that little bit of anonymity and avoids the emotional aspect to a degree so I'm protected from that. You can be general without exposing yourself. I get emotional when I talk about this subject [daughter being estranged from him] and I don't like getting emotional in public."* (Non resident father, Dad's Space)

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Using a forum also gave parents emotional support which may not be available from other channels; at times of the day that other channels could not match and when they were more 'in need'. These types of services give parents someone to talk to (social or moral support). Unlike other channels, using a forum gives users time to think and reflect before responding to the moderator's advice.

For a few parents, accessing web and social media services filled a gap in provision that they could not access elsewhere. For example parents using CAF's Facebook group reported that the network helped them to overcome their feelings of isolation and helped them to meet parents with disabled children which they found difficult in their real lives. This is a very positive indicator of the potential demand for web based support for parents of children with disabilities; especially given that this customer group were found to be amongst the most prevalent users of parenting services in a recent national survey[73].

A few parents with specific issues needed advice urgently and were flexible about what medium they used as long as they got the help they needed.

> *"I'll use any method possible to try to get my goal, the information I needed. So whether it's a helpline or Live Chat...I don't have a preference at all."* (Non resident father, Relate Live chat)

Only one user (Relate Live Chat) would have preferred to talk to someone over the phone if she had had the option because she said she would prefer talking to someone rather than typing.

4.4.7   The cross channel experience

In terms of movement between Parent Know How services (the cross channel experience) some parents reported they had been accessing a provider's existing services (e.g. a helpline) for a few years and were satisfied with the support received; this encouraged them to use the new web or social network services. For instance one parent who had been using the Contact a Family helpline and due to the quality of the advice given decided to migrate to the Facebook group to receive support from other parents. This evidence showed the value of supporting specialist voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver new forms of parenting services, particularly given the limited opening hours of many helplines versus the 24 hour support that can be provided via web and social media.

In addition there was some evidence to suggest parents would have benefitted from services being better joined up. For example one user of CoupleConnection stated that they would have liked the opportunity to go into a Live Chat session with a counsellor or other users[74]; this suggests there was a missed opportunity for CoupleConnection to link up to Relate's relationship counselling support via Live Chat; or that more intensive peer support could be provided via such a mechanism in future.

> *"It would be good if there was an instant chat facility to use with say a counsellor or even other members who are online at the same time so you can immediately discuss your problems instead of having to wait for people to reply to your posts."* (CoupleConnection user)

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[73] YouGov (2007) - a national survey of parents' perspectives on parenting services was conducted on behalf of the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners. The research identified that parents of children aged under 12 months (23%) and those with disabled children (22%) were the most likely to have used parenting services
[74] This functionality is now possible with the latest version of Facebook.

In terms of movement between web and social media services, monitoring data suggested that linkages between the various web and social media services were slowly growing through 'click-through's' on each of the Parent Know How funded sites. The volume of click through's grew during the evaluation period indicating that services were increasingly cross referring parents within the Parent Know How family of services.

All of the web and social media services received at least 14 click-through's from a partner site and the range was 14 (for FMI's DadTalk) through to 87 (for One Space), with the mean being around 46[75]. Parents were most likely to arrive at a web and social media site from either Parentline Plus' main website (114 referrals or 31%) or NetMums (122 or 33%). Some interesting patterns included 44 arrivals from NetMums to CoupleConnection suggesting a need for more detailed information on relationships and 37 arrivals from NetMums to Gotateenager which suggested a useful link for parents of older children than NetMums' typical audience. One Space for single parents also received 35 click-through's from NetMums, suggesting a desire for information specific to single parents amongst mums. Very few sites were able to provide metrics for numbers and destinations of parents leaving their site. Of those that could provide this data, NetMums was significantly the most prolific onward referrer with 699 parents being referred onto Parent Know How partner websites in December 2008. Overall this demonstrates the importance of NetMums and Parentline as 'gatekeepers' or first points of contact for parents to go on and access other more targeted services.

It should be noted that not all providers were able to provide monitoring data about cross-channel referrals. This was usually due to their web statistics packages being unable to track where visitors arrived from or left to; and this area could be explored more in future.

4.5   Outcomes for parents

The evaluation sought to explore outcomes for parents using the Parent Know How services, over the short and longer term, primarily through the survey and in depth initial and follow up interviews[76]. This section explores these findings.

4.5.1 Short term outcomes

There was some evidence to show that contact with web and social media services had positive outcomes for parents. For data at the overall level, between four in ten and six in ten parents said they experienced outcomes to a large or small extent (see Figure 4.4). In particular parents reported feeling 'more informed' (61% to a large or small extent on average) and feeling 'reassured' (55% on average). At the overall level, parents were less likely to make practical changes such as being 'better able to communicate' or 'approach things differently' as a result of their contact with a web or social media services (at only 41% and 40% on average).

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[75] Based on monitoring data for all web and social media providers for December 2008.
[76] Initial interviews were conducted within 2-3 weeks of initial contact or usage of Parent Know How service. Follow up interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of participants at + three months.

Figure 4.4 - How has your contact with…changed things, to what extent do you…?
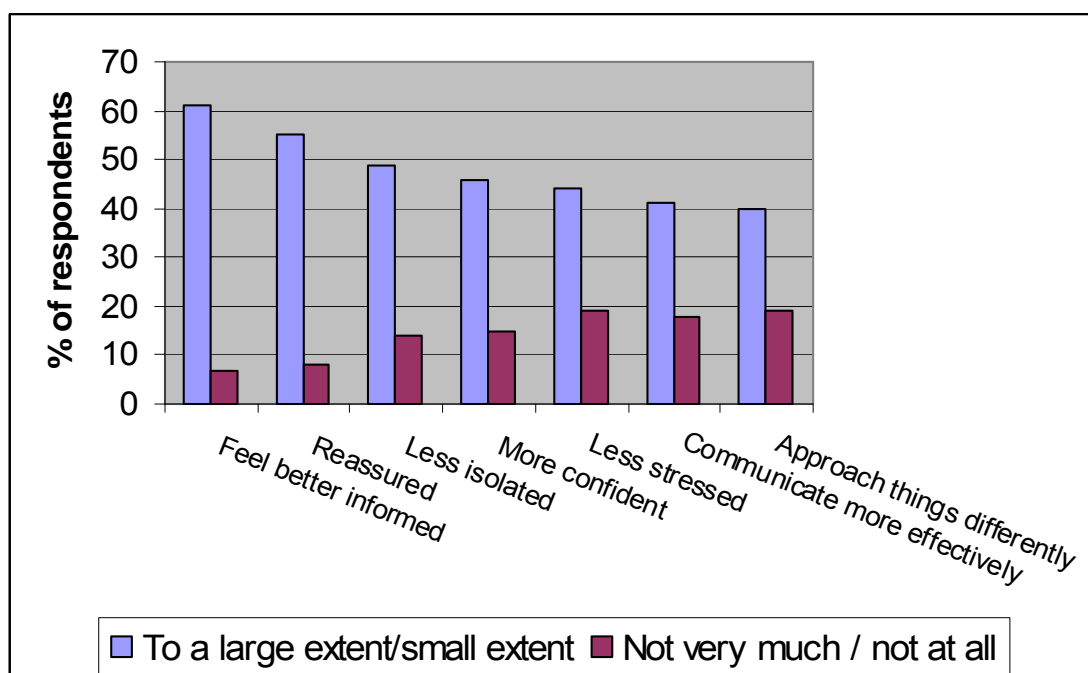
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 1311

Across all types of outcomes, NetMums performed strongest with at least three in five parents reporting benefiting from each outcome (59% said they would approach things differently). Parents using NetMums were most likely to feel reassured (78%), better informed (78%) and less isolated (76%). Levels of stress were most likely to be lessened by using NetMums (70% felt less stressed compared with an average of 35% across all web and social media services).

Parents using One Space were also likely to feel better informed (45 of 66 respondents) and more reassured (39 of 66 respondents). Parents using Dad's Space, DadTalk and Contact a Family's web services were least likely to report positive outcomes across all indicators. This was perhaps because these services were less well established; because parents had used these services over a less prolonged time period or because of the 'light touch' nature of the services. In the case of CAF this may be because coping with a child's disability is an ongoing issue and was also due to small base sizes.

Survey evidence suggested that overall web and social media services helped the situation for parents 'a little' or 'a lot' in around half of all cases (49%) and for one in ten parents the contact with a web or social media service did not have any effect on their situation (10%). A negligible amount of parents said the contact made the situation worse (less than half a per cent). Again, NetMums was more likely to have an impact with three quarters (76%) of NetMums users saying it helped their situation (a little or a lot). The very positive result for NetMums boosts the average figure for all the services; with NetMums' results removed the average score reduced to 39%. Parents using DadTalk, CoupleConnection and Contact a Family were less likely to say using the service had helped their situation. As previously noted, for users of CAF's services this may be because coping with a disability is an ongoing issue, however base sizes were too small to conclude this firmly.

In terms of taking action as a result of using web and social media services, there were positive results for some services (Figure 4.5). Gotateenager and NetMums both helped parents to 'talk to their child/teenager' (with 31% of NetMums' users and 27% of Gotateenager's users agreeing). CoupleConnection also had some examples where users had talked to their partners as a result of using the service (15 of 48 users or 31%). NetMums and Gotateenager also helped parents to 'change their approach to dealing with their child/teenager' (35% of NetMums and 20% of Gotateenager's users). Other services had less impact in these respects.

Figure 4.5 - Did you take any actions as a result of your contact with…?
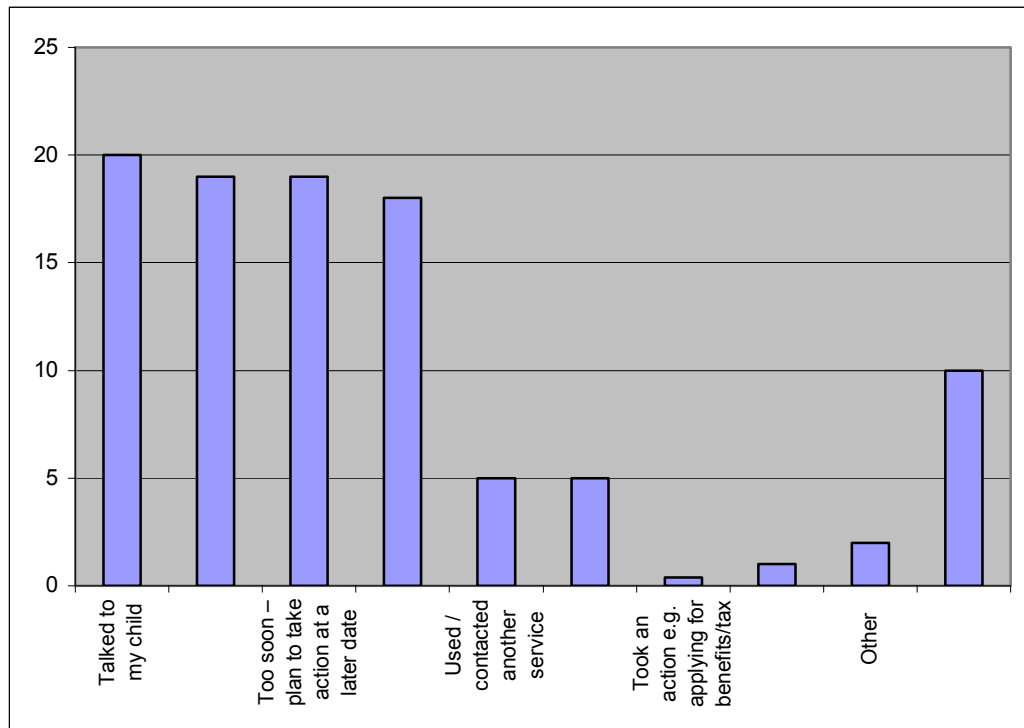
Source: ECOTEC, 2008 Base: 1311

NetMums demonstrated positive results in terms of convincing parents to get in contact with a professional with one in five NetMums users going on to visit a GP, counsellor or other professional (22%) and a further 4% of NetMums' users getting a specialist referral. Other web and social media services were not specifically designed to make referrals of this type. None of the services had any noticeable impact in terms of encouraging parents to apply for a benefit or tax credit as a result. For many of the other web services, large proportions of parents had not taken any action or reported it was too soon to take action. Furthermore it may be unrealistic to expect parents to take actions such as seeking a referral or applying for a benefit directly as a result of browsing a parent support website, particularly those which are 'lighter touch' such as the dads services.

4.5.1.1 Soft outcomes for parents

The qualitative evidence collected also illustrated that web and social media were – to some extent - contributing to soft outcomes for parents, particularly around feeling better informed, better supported, building confidence, and feeling less alone.

Being able to discuss things with people in a similar situation or advisers with relevant experience or expertise was an important outcome for parents who had used the web services. Some dads said they appreciated having parenting information presented from a **dad's perspective** which made the information more digestible.

> *"I think that their [Dad's Space's] value is more added in the personal kind of thing: the dad interviews and the dad perspective and the dad car review, that was quite interesting because the thing with factual information is that you can find that anywhere and there are so many websites on child growth and healthy eating, whatever it be...so I don't think they should be aiming it as much at factual information I think the value is added in getting men's perspective on things."* (Non resident father, Dad's Space)

Parents said they benefited from the **moral support** they received from the web and social media sites and the realisation that they were not the only ones experiencing problems. This relieved loneliness for parents who did not feel able to talk about the problems to friends or family. This suggested web based support can fill a gap for those without their own social networks and on occasions where parents did not feel it appropriate to discuss certain issues with their own family or friends.

> *"Before I spoke to Live Chat I felt I had hit a brick wall. Speaking to the adviser you realise you are not the only one and basically you have got a light at the end of your tunnel."* (Non resident father, Relate Live Chat)

A few parents felt the support they received from other parents either gave them a chance to talk to someone or reduced their **feelings of isolation** and dealing with the issue on their own, this was particularly true for single parents and parents of disabled children.

> *"Looking through the site, I feel less isolated and confident that this site could help me and my child with all kinds of issues. I will definitely visit regularly."* (Lone mother, One Space)

> *"It's just someone to chat to who knows what you're going through and can offer advice. I've made quite good friends on there and we chat and moan and they understand whereas other people with able-bodied children don't."* (Mother, Contact a Family web and social media services)

> *"It's refreshing to find people who understand. The worst thing is that as a parent with Aspergers [and with children with Aspergers] you think you're alone and my children went through some very strange stages that I'd never dream of talking to other parents as people think you're insane and then I go on websites like this and see stories about how "my 5 year old did this"...and that's happened to me - and its so refreshing to talk about your children without being ashamed!"* (Mother, Contact a Family Facebook)

In an exceptional case one user of a forum felt that making a post acted as an outlet and gave a sense of immediate relief that they had been able to express themselves.

> *"Nice to offload and get advice and be anonymous."* (Married father, One Plus One)

There was some qualitative evidence of outcomes for parents in terms of **self confidence**. Parents who used a social media website with a forum component (such as DadTalk, NetMums, CAF, Relate's Live Chat or One Space) felt that the support received from the other parents and moderator led to an increase in their self confidence and they felt more able to cope with the situation facing them.

> *"I think confidence was the main one it gave me… I got their view on it, and I got it out of my spinning head and now I can go and tackle it."* (Father, Relate Live Chat)

> *"It made me more confident going into meetings [with school]. If I am going into the school I post on [NetMums] and I go in there feeling more confident and I know what ground I'm on and what I'm doing where as first of all I was going into it a bit blind."* (Single mother, NetMums)

There was **limited evidence of any harder outcomes** for parents using web and social media services. Two examples did arise, around family finances and wellbeing. Qualitative feedback suggested that the factual information some parents found out on the websites had helped them to investigate saving bonds or claim benefits and this had led to an improvement in their financial situation. In a couple of cases, single mothers that had used NetMums' forums and who were experiencing some form of depression said the support received helped them cope with their illness, improved their wellbeing and gave them motivation to carry on. For one parent this also indirectly impacted on her child's wellbeing. One other parent had decided to arrange counselling after speaking to an adviser.

Several parents interviewed felt there were **no real outcomes** or impact on them from using web and social media services as they were only browsing for information. One website user felt that the articles she read were interesting and thought provoking but led to no real impact on her situation (CoupleConnection) or were not relevant at the time they visited the site. Some said they would return if and when the information became relevant.

> *"There's lot of things there that I know I will come back and read when it's more relevant."* (Mother, One Space)

Quantitative data for CoupleConnection indicated the service was broadly in line or just below the average for all innovation services across all the various outcomes[77].

4.5.1.2 Outcomes for partners and families

In general parents said their **partners were not directly impacted by the services**. For mothers, the main reason for this was that their partner or husband was not interested in seeking advice or support. However in one case a user's husband started off feeling sceptical but changed his mind when he realised the service and the book she had been recommended had led to a change in her parenting style and subsequently resulted in a better behaved child.

Parents using NetMums and OPO's online relationship course reported some positive outcomes around feeling more encouraged to communicate and – most importantly – listen to their partner. Parents tended to feel the course helped to strengthen their relationship and give their family *'staying power'*. There were no direct impacts of the course on their children however indirectly parents felt their children would benefit from seeing a stronger parental relationship.

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[77] For instance 'feel more informed' CoupleConnection 62% compared to an average of 61% across all web and social media services. For instance 'helped the situation a little or a lot' CoupleConnection 42% compared to an average of 49% across all web and social media services.

4.5.1.3 Outcomes for children

Most parents felt that accessing web and social media sites **did not have a direct impact on their children**. In some cases this was because they were only browsing the site and they felt there was no impact on either them or their children. In other cases parents accessed support to help with an issue related to their children but which did not directly impact on their child. However in a few cases parents reported improvements in their child's behaviour which was partly due to the advice given from services (for example Relate Live Chat and Gotateenager). One father mentioned that his child's social skills had improved due to him following a suggestion on the Dad's Space website and purchasing a suitable toy. A few parents reported making made changes to their parenting style such as enforcing stronger boundaries, for example as a result of using Relate Live Chat and Gotateenager.

One unexpected outcome for two users of Gotateenager was that their families started to use the website as well which has led to them discussing issues as a family that they have all seen on the website.

4.5.2 Longer term outcomes

There was very **little evidence of longer term outcomes for parents or families**. This was partly because many of the new services had only been in operation for a few months at the time of writing. Very limited numbers of parents were therefore able to take part in a follow up interview.[78] Those who did provide feedback reported that they struggled to find the time to implement all of the suggestions they had read and that little longer term impact had been felt. In this respect all of the parents interviewed suggested email updates on 'what's new' or 'hints and tips' would have been helpful to keep the information fresh in their minds. Only one of the users interviewed had continued to use the service in the intervening period (she had continued with the NetMums and OPO's relationship course). This parent felt the course had continued to have a positive impact on her and her husband; taking part in the course had meant they had not had to seek formal marriage counselling. This parent felt the positive impact of the course had a knock on effect for their children as they can see their parents were happier[79].

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[78] Completed three months after their first use of the web or social media service.
[79] Please note sample sizes for qualitative follow up interviews at the individual service level were small.

5.0 Collaboration and working together

This chapter reviews the evidence for collaboration between the Parent Know How service providers, and the extent to which this has resulted in innovative approaches and / or built capacity within the programme. The chapter draws on the bi-annual monitoring data collected from each provider during the first three quarters of the programme, as well as qualitative interviews conducted with policy stakeholders from within the Department.

Key findings: Collaboration

Collaboration between providers and partner organisations

- The early collaboration between the helplines took place bilaterally and included the joint development of quality standards, moderation and cross-referrals. A virtual sub-group was also established by the helplines during the year, to provide informal support around topics such as child protection, technical issues and monitoring.

- There was more limited collaboration between the innovation providers. This was mainly due to the challenge of developing wholly new services, and the resulting delays to some of the services being launched. However, some of the providers developed joint marketing materials and shared content for their websites.

- The level of collaboration between the helplines and innovation services was perhaps the most disappointing area of joint working. A lack of regular opportunities to find out about each others services and differences in technical language and ethos were thought to be the main barriers. Examples of promising practice included ACE providing adviser time to support the coffeehouse hosted by Netmums, and YM providing content inputs to the Dad Space website. The Department's expectations were for a higher level of collaboration around joint content development in year two.

- The key challenges to future collaboration for all providers were thought to include:
    - capacity - due to the risk of services being unable to manage call transfers
    - costs - which were thought to be prohibitive for any more substantial joint work
    - a perceived lack of demand from parents to be passed between services; and,
    - perceptions of the 'competitive' nature of the funding amongst the providers, although the Department actively sought to provide reassurances that this was not the case.

Collaboration with external partners and the Department

- There was a cautious start to the relationship between the providers and their technology partners, which was thought to reflect wider issues of third sector and private sector collaboration and the cultural challenges this presents. Providers with in house technical expertise usually developed faster as a result, but the involvement of technology partners was already beginning to introduce new expertise to the services.

- There appears to have been a missed opportunity for more substantial private sector partnership - particularly in respect of levering-in additional sources of funding for the programme, and with regard to developing genuinely innovative provision.

- The majority of feedback on working relations with the Department was very positive. The face-to-face roundtable meetings were found to be time intensive, but had become increasingly useful over time. The Department was thought to have played a key role in publicising the programme in the national press, and raising awareness with local authorities.

Capacity building

- Providers routinely identified that their staffing capacity had increased as a result of Parent Know How, and some helplines were in a position to extend their opening hours as a result. Whilst this extra capacity had sometimes improved levels of reach, recruitment delays and staff turnover meant that these benefits were not fully realised within the timescale for the programme.

- The smaller providers in particular identified considerable improvements to their organisational efficiency and quality standards as a result of Parent Know How. This was achieved through a combination of extra funding for IT equipment, and the level of rigour that was required to meet the PKH Quality Standard. The combination of extra staffing and resources also had a knock on effect of improving internal communications and professional development within some providers.

Synergies with other policy developments

- There was recognition amongst providers of the need to join-up the information offered through the programme with local sources of information for parents. The stakeholder interviews indicated that ISPP has a key role to play in this respect, and there was consensus that the platform stands to benefit the Parent Know How providers by providing access to centralised information and raising their profile.

- Some stakeholders felt that there were still challenges for Parent Know How to emerge from having a 'niche' status within the sector, to feature more prominently within other areas of policy development. These issues were thought to be largely resolvable as the family of services becomes embedded, and with the further development of a centralised communications strategy for parents by Government.

5.1 Collaboration and learning between the providers

The monitoring data showed mixed evidence of collaboration during the programme, with the helplines and innovation services starting from quite different positions in developing their service. The key issues are discussed below.

5.1.1 Helplines

The majority of helpline providers described having longstanding networks in place, which pre-dated the Parent Know How programme. These networks provided the basis for most of the early collaboration within the programme. GB, ACE and CLC had all undertaken some cross-referrals prior to the programme, for example, which meant there was a mutual understanding of the services offered by each provider. It was generally thought that Parent Know How had intensified this existing collaboration, by providing extra capacity for joint working, and extending the range of services and expertise on offer.

Most of the joint working between the helplines took place on a bilateral basis, during the early stages of the programme. This was usually prompted by the need to acquire specialist knowledge or advice as each service developed; often on a fairly ad hoc basis. GB was already working with CLC for cases with a 'legal' dimension, for example, but found that they needed to consult more regularly due to the increased numbers of complex cases involving an access or separation issue. Similarly, YM encountered a need for extra specialist support for parents of disabled children, and was exploring links with CAF to address this need. In this sense, the need to collaborate was initially driven by gaps in what each provider was able to offer to parents on a stand-alone basis.

The monitoring data showed that it took longer to establish more structured collaboration between the helplines collectively as a group. The DCSF round table sessions were used for this purpose in the first instance, but were not thought to have provided adequate contact time or continuity in relationships to offer a coherent support framework. A 'virtual' helplines sub-group was subsequently developed, to provide greater focus. This forum was used to discuss a number of common topics, which included:

- child protection

- signposting and referrals

- quality matters

- software and technical issues; and,

- monitoring systems.

The main benefit of the forum was the informal support network that this provided for the helplines. One provider identified how the helplines were mainly small third sector organisations, who had found the technological aspects of the programme challenging. Having peer support was thought to have made the providers more *'IT savvy'* and developed a greater sense of being a *'family of services'.* Providers felt this was lacking during the earlier stages in the programme, due to the perceived level of 'competition' that existed for the funding. Despite subsequent reassurances by the Department this was not the case, and that each provider would be measured against their own targets, some providers considered that this competitive atmosphere had persisted.

A final area of collaboration was to establish actual joint systems or infrastructure. This activity took longer to develop, once it became evident that there were benefits for making improvements to service efficiency. The main examples were as follows:

- Joint service protocols - ACE and GB were at consultation stage in developing a new quality standard to underpin their joint working, whilst CLC and YM had established a moderation system to deal with each others' customer complaints. This was thought to have made the process more impartial for service users; and,

- Joint referral systems - PLP had established a shared online booking system with YM and CLC. This meant that advisers were able to pre-book callers for 'second tier' callbacks, so that the other providers within the system could view the bookings and keep the time-slot free. This was thought to have been effective in helping to reduce callback times. YM had also set in place a system for 'warm transfers' with PLP. The early signs were that the system was running smoothly, although it had only been taken up by half of the callers who were offered the service. Anecdotal feedback showed that some callers found the approach inconvenient or preferred to make the call themselves at a different time once they had discussed it with their partner.

These developments stopped short of the joint development of new provision, which is perhaps disappointing given the programme aims and the emphasis on partnership working.

5.1.2 Innovation services

The innovation providers were at an earlier stage in working together. This was thought to be due to the challenge of developing wholly new services within the available timescale, which often meant that collaboration took lower priority. This issue also affected cross-channel provision, as some of the providers felt it important to fine tune their service before taking larger numbers of referrals from the helplines.

Networking activities focussed mainly on the Department round table meetings, although several workshops were organised outside of this setting. A number of the providers had attended 'marketing' workshops, which providers widely thought were useful. PLP also organised an initial meeting for other providers of text-based services. ACE was the only provider to have launched at that stage, however, so the opportunity for providers to compare service issues was limited.

There were some examples of joint marketing between the web-based services. ACE had developed content for the PLP website about bullying and teenagers, and also developed some jointly branded factsheets with OPO. CLC also developed some publicity content for the One Space and Dad's Space websites. Some of the providers identified that joint marketing had slowed due to a lack of opportunities to meet on a face to face basis, however, and that further work was needed to ensure that the innovation services are fully networked.

There were also some examples of cross-referrals and support between the web-based services. The partnership between Relate and Respect was one example. Relate was able to signpost parents to the Dad's Space website, which provides a secure environment to facilitate family communication with the non-resident parent. Respect was able to signpost clients to Relate's Livechat service to help them access psychological therapies and help with changing assumptions and behaviours. This was assisted by some joint training and work shadowing; a Relate Counsellor worked with the Respect Content Group from the start of the programme, attending meetings and contributing to the content of their website.

5.1.3 Helplines and innovation services

The level of collaboration between helplines and innovation services was perhaps the most disappointing area of joint working. The majority of providers felt that these links were still fairly underdeveloped, approaching the end of the first year. For example, one provider spoke of the *'different ways of working and language, and… different products and formats to understand'*. A lack of opportunities to find out about the providers' respective services was thought to have been a barrier, although the later round table meetings shifted towards more of a 'showcasing' approach involving both sets of providers.

Nevertheless, a number of positive areas of joint working were reported, which included the following:

- ACE had piloted offering several hours per week of adviser time to support the 'coffeehouse forum' provided by Netmums. This was found to be mutually beneficial, because the ACE staff received supervision and training. The ACE advisers were used to providing 'hard' (factual) advice through the helpline, and found it challenging to adapt to the 'softer' advice that is required for web. The arrangement has since proven to be a success, however, and ACE intend to offer extra adviser time; and

- YM had provided content inputs for the Dad's Space website on the theme of separation and divorce, and received technical guidance about website use in return, whilst GB had developed a factsheet about non-resident fathers to share with the innovation services.

The stakeholder interviews held within the Department showed that there was an expectation for joint working to *'move up a step'* in the second year of the programme. It was hoped that the technologies offered through the programme would improve responsiveness to customer demand, by suggesting new ways of generating and presenting content.

5.1.3.1 Challenges to further collaboration

In moving forward, providers identified a number of common challenges to improving the levels of collaboration between helplines and innovations, and especially with regard to cross-referrals:

- Capacity was found to be a challenge for many of the providers, and particularly so for the helplines. It was not considered advisable to cross-refer in situations where supply outstripped demand, due to the risk of parents being unable to get through. (This might result in them becoming disillusioned, and not re-contacting the service.) FRG had initially made a line available for transferring callers to ACE, for example, but withdrew this after it emerged that they were not in a position to handle caller volumes; and,

- Costs presented a challenge for some aspects of collaboration that were considered the most worthwhile by the providers, such as joint marketing. Providers felt that additional funding support may be necessary to kick-start collaborative projects between the helplines and innovation services, as this otherwise posed a risk of displacing staff from core provision and therefore targets not being met.

Crosscutting all of the above, competition between the providers remained an issue. There was an overall reluctance to invest in joint infrastructure or services, until the future funding of individual providers was secured, although the Department actively sought to provide reassurances that this uncertainty was unfounded and should not impede collaboration.

5.2   Collaboration and learning with external partners and the Department

A further aspect of joint working within the programme was between Parent Know How providers and their technology suppliers or other partners.

On balance, those providers with technical expertise in house reported developing their services more quickly. This was mainly due to their greater familiarity with the providers' internal systems. In contrast, some of the providers with an external partner found that it took longer to launch their service. This was sometimes due to differences in how data was collected and presented. For example, FRG had some early problems in using the data provided by an externally hosted call centre, which did not meet requirements.

Some differences in ethos between the service providers and their multimedia partners were also thought to pose a challenge to joint working. It was noted that parent information has traditionally been provided by a network of third sector organisations, and that private sector involvement represented a very different approach that requires time to bed in. Most providers had reported few, if any difficulties in working with private sector partners. However one provider had encountered difficulties in managing their technology supplier, for example, which led to misunderstandings over their website functionality. Another had resisted involving external partners, but found that they did not have the appropriate technology or skills in house to use what was produced on their website. These scenarios were thought to have been largely avoidable, and there was a general consensus on the need for additional support from the Department around managing private sector suppliers, albeit to a varying extent.

Access to new skills and expertise was cited as one of the main advantages of working with technology partners. For example, Cynap has worked closely with marketing staff at ACE to raise awareness of the benefits of instant messaging. This was passed on to the project team, who reported being more comfortable with the medium and having used it as a core part of the service. Attic Media also ran a discussion group for the web services, which was well received. Despite these positives, however, the potential role of the private sector within the programme appears to have been somewhat downplayed by the providers, and there was perhaps a missed opportunity for taking forward genuinely 'innovative' approaches during the development of the programme.

The Department had anticipated providers using the programme to broker private sector investment, whereas in practice the role of private partners was usually to provide technological capacity on a subcontractor basis. This was perhaps linked to the wider issue of the providers' shortfall in capacity and knowledge for marketing, and might be addressed by reviewing the PR arrangements for the programme.

5.2.1 Collaboration with the Department

Feedback from providers about working with the Department was very positive overall. The face-to-face roundtable meetings were mainly found to be useful, although a number of providers commented that it was difficult to attend so many different meetings and had missed a number of them. There was a consensus that the Department had been responsive to feedback, and that the round tables had become more useful over time as a result of this.

The providers had mixed views on how best to further improve the round tables, but there was some demand for additional networking time and more advance notice of the topics to be covered. This would enable the providers to identify the most appropriate person to attend: whether a project manager, marketing officer, or member of operational staff. Specifically requested topics included marketing, following a popular session provided by Digital Public, and group 'brainstorming' activities on particular service delivery issues.

Although the providers viewed the round tables as an important forum for coming together, a number of more informal 'breakaway' groups had also taken place. This was considered important for sub groups of providers that were developing similar types of services. For example, a meeting had been held for the instant messaging services, and a telephone sub-group had been established.

In addition to the face-to-face roundtable meetings, a number of the providers commented that the Department had played an important role in supporting the project publicity (including through press coverage). One provider further highlighted the linking role of the Department in raising awareness of Parent Know How with local authorities.

5.3 Overview of capacity building

Capacity building for the providers and their partner organisations was one of a number of key success measures and a key aim of Parent Know How.

The qualitative feedback showed that staffing capacity was consistently increased as a result of the programme funding, with some providers more than doubling the size of their customer facing teams. Recruiting extra staff had often brought new skills into each organisation or advice work, in addition to new training and professional updating for existing staff. For the helplines, this usually enabled the provider to increase their opening hours as well. In GB, the additional recruitment meant that it was feasible to hold weekly team meetings to for the first time. This was described as a whole 'new way of working'. ACE had introduced a new

supervisory structure as a result of the expansion to the advice team, provided IT training to all of their staff, and installed new hardware to meet the technological requirements of the programme.

Most of the providers were able to boost their reach to some extent with the extra staffing resource, although delays to recruiting and training staff meant that the potential benefits were rarely achieved in full (as highlighted in Sections Two to Four). CLC improved their caller response rate from 5% to 20%, but have since re-estimated the potential reach from an original target of 6,000 to a possible 12,000. In contrast, YM found that there were diminishing returns to be achieved from extending their helpline opening hours. A review of caller data showed that the key issue was managing peaks and troughs in caller numbers throughout the day, rather than extending the service per se. The solution was to provide additional capacity from sessional staff at peak caller times.

A further aspect of capacity building was to improve the organisational efficiency and quality standards of some of the providers. The Parent Know How Quality Standard was thought to have helped to formalise staff selection and recruitment, and set clear guidelines for operating standards. For example CAF had updated their company policies in order to meet the standard for the programme. Whilst providers felt there was some disruption to services as a result of time spent in their upgrading systems, most agreed this was an extremely worthwhile investment.

Looking ahead, one provider identified a priority for joint training for helplines and innovation services. This followed some inappropriate referrals from helpline staff, who did not appear to be correctly categorising parents' queries based on the range of support that is offered by the provider. Additional joint training around referrals was thought to be one way of addressing this issue. As with other more time-intensive collaboration, it was thought that the priorities for joint training should become clearer at the end of the current funding round. At this stage, it would be possible to identify the providers and services to be funded into 2009 to 2010 and to get a clearer overview of their training needs as a 'family' of services. The main area of concern was the loss of this capacity if funding was not renewed for individual providers.

5.4 Synergies with other policy developments

The providers were aware of the need to join up the information and advice offered to parents through the programme - at a national level and via a range of media channels - with the information provided by local authorities, and at a neighbourhood level. It was recognised that a common approach was needed to quality assure content and avoid duplication. Moreover, providers reported that requests for information on a specific topic often led to parents making specific enquiries about services in their local area. A mechanism was needed for synchronising the data that is held at these different scales.

The providers generally lacked the capacity to raise awareness with local authorities to any significant extent during the early stages of the programme, but the Department was perceived to have played an important role in getting Parent Know How *'on the map'* at a local level. Similarly, the providers reported having a limited awareness of how the Information Service for Parents and Practitioners (ISPP) might help to integrate national and local sources of information, because this was still at an early stage in development.

The internal stakeholder interviews with the Department outlined a clearer role for ISPP in relation to the programme. It was widely thought that the platform had the potential to strengthen the smaller third sector organisations within Parent Know How, by providing them with access to a wider bank of information and raising their profile with local authorities. It was also hoped that the interface between local and national sources of information would help to establish the contribution of Parent Know How alongside other parental information services and different modes of access.

Some stakeholders felt that there were still challenges for Parent Know How to emerge from having a 'niche' status within the sector, to feature more prominently within other areas of policy development. This was thought to relate to the lower profile of third sector involvement in delivering parent information services, relative to Family Information Services and Extended Schools. The programme has also faced challenges in securing a profile *within* the third sector, due to the smaller and specialist providers that have been funded who do not have the voice of larger third sector organisations. These issues were thought to be largely resolvable as the family of services becomes embedded, and with the further development of a centralised communications strategy for parents by Government. This strategy was thought to be moving in the direction of a single interface, although it was recognised that this remained a long-term vision and would require further intelligence on parents' behaviours for accessing information and advice.

6.0 Cost effectiveness

This chapter provides an overview of the success of individual and overall investment in the various Parent Know How services. The chapter looks at the cost per parent helped[80] achieved by the funded services, compared with target values. We consider each of the three families of services in turn before looking at services targeting particular parent segments. The chapter is based on monitoring data along with targets specified in provider contracts/grant agreements[81]. Information on project spend was provided by the Department[82]. The analysis also draws on qualitative evidence obtained through bi-annual monitoring visits, stakeholder interviews, and parent workshops. Actual outputs and expenditure relate to the period from start of contract/grant agreement to 31st December 2008.[83] The cost per parent helped[84] was calculated by dividing total actual spend for this period by the total number of parents helped[85]. It should be noted that the actual unit costs calculated for innovation projects (text/web services) presented in sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 are based on all costs incurred to end December 2008, therefore are likely to have been skewed by the relatively high level of start-up/development costs which such services would be expected to incur. Unit cost figures which attempt to adjust for these start-up costs have also been calculated and are presented in section 6.1.5.

Key findings: cost effectiveness

Helplines

- Overall, helplines were expected to achieve a cost per parent helped of £31.07 during 2008 to 2009, which was slightly below the actual unit cost of £32.00 achieved in the previous year (2007 to 2008).

- At the end of the third quarter the helplines had achieved 60% of the annual target for the number of parents being helped, resulting in an actual unit cost of £39.13.

- Individual performance was variable with four providers having, so far, missed their cost per parent target by 20% or more.

Text services

- After allowing for revised user numbers, the overall target cost per parent for text services was £55.31, which was significantly higher than equivalent figures for the other types of service.

- In general, text services have struggled to attract users and this was reflected in the actual cost per parent of £213.83 which was achieved in the period to the end of December 2008.

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[80] Parents helped refers to the total number of parents reached by the funded services. This is defined differently according to the type of service: for helplines reach is defined as the number of unique calls taken by the service; for text services it is the number of unique users sending messages to the service; and for web/social media it is the number of users of a service. The cost per parent helped can also be referred to as the provider unit cost.
[81] And any subsequent revisions.
[82] Further clarification has been sought from providers where necessary.
[83] Helpline grant agreements started on 1st April 2008 and text/web service contracts began in February/March 2008.
[84] Helpline grant agreements also stated a target cost per parent contact – which is a broader definition of support than cost per parent helped. However, this analysis is focused on cost per parent helped.
[85] This is the same as the formula used by DCSF at contracting/grant agreement stage to allow comparison between actual and target figures. NB: target unit costs for helplines have been re-calculated based on the core grant only and so may differ from those stated in provider contracts. Again this has been done to allow comparison.

Web and social media services

- Web and social media services have the lowest target cost per parent (£4.54).

- At the end of December 2008, taken together these services had achieved an actual unit cost of £7.58. However, individual analysis showed that while three services had already achieved a unit cost below their target figures; four services had recorded an actual figure which was more than 100% above the target set at contract stage.

- Overall the actual cost per parent was 67% higher than the target figure although this was unsurprising given the high early stage development costs which such services require. Adjusting for these set up costs reduces the target unit cost for all innovation projects to £5.46, and produces an actual achieved figure of £5.52.[86]

6.1 Review of cost effectiveness across families of services

6.1.1 Helplines

Table 6.1 provides a comparison of actual and target unit costs for helpline services.

Table 6.1 - Helplines, actual and target unit costs

Provider	Funding[87]	Target Reach	Target Unit Cost[88]	Actual Spend	Actual Reach	Actual Unit Cost	Unit Cost Differential
PLP	£1,926,337	80,100	£24.05	£1,444,753	48,676	£29.68	+£5.63 +23%
CAF	£283,956	7,500	£37.86	£212,967	6,358	£33.50	-£4.36 -12%
ACE	£562,774	11,548	£48.73	£422,081	4,777	£88.36	+£39.62 +81%
YM - helpline	£303,957	6,000	£50.66	£227,968	2,231	£102.18	+£51.52 +102%
YM - callback	£86,600	2,000	£43.30	£64,950	1,322	£49.13	+£5.83 +13%
FRG	£258,670	5,000	£51.73	£194,003	2,169	£89.44	+£37.71 +73%
CLC	£187,000	6,000	£31.17	£140,250	4,347	£32.26	+£1.10 +4%
GB[89]	£154,999	3,000	£51.67	£116,249	2,272	£51.17	-£0.50 -1%
Total	£3,764,293	121,148	£31.07	£2,823,221	72,152	£39.13	+£8.06 +26%

Source: DCSF and ECOTEC analysis

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[86] Comprising both web and social media and text services. See section 6.2.5 for more details of this adjustment.
[87] Core grants for the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009.
[88] Recalculated from contract based on core grant only.
[89] Actual reach for GB has been apportioned based on the amount of total funding provider by DCSF (60%) to give a figure of 2,272 unique callers to date resulting from Parent Know How funding (from an actual total of 3,787).

Overall, the services have claimed three quarters (75%) of their annual budget (in line with their agreed payment schedule) but only achieved 60% of the target annual reach (with actual achievement varying between 41% and 85% amongst providers).

At this stage, two providers were below their target cost per parent helped and a further one was only 4% above the target set. However, four providers have missed their target by a significant margin (ranging from 23% to 102%). In the case of PLP, evidence suggested the service has experienced a lack of demand and, based on previous experience, the expected annual reach will be 66,500, or 83% of the target reach which has a significant impact on overall reach and overall costs. Overall, over the first three quarters the helplines have achieved a unit cost which was 26% above the target figure. If this overall unit cost does not fall over the remaining three months, this will result in higher than anticipated cost per parent figure for helplines in 2008 to 2009.

6.1.2 Text Services

Table 6.2 below provides a comparison of actual and target unit costs for text services.

Table 6.2 - Text Services, actual and target unit costs

Provider	Funding[90]	Target Reach[91]	Target Unit Cost	Actual Spend	Actual Reach	Actual Unit Cost	Unit Cost Differential
ACE - Ask ACE	£566,175	4,828[92]	£117.27[93]	£389,965	1,644	£237.21	+ £119.94 102%
Parentline Gotateenager[94]	n/a	130	n/a	£5,000[95]	234	£21.37	n/ a
Relate - SMS service	£190,328	8,719	£21.83	£70,726	300	£235.87	+ £214.04 981%
Total	£756,503	13,677	£55.31	£465,727	2,178	£213.83	+ £158.52 287%

Source: DCSF, Providers and ECOTEC analysis.

[90] Funding awarded for the period to June 2009. Both funding and actual spend figures exclude VAT.
[91] Reach defined as number of unique users, with the exception of PLP which records the number of texts received. Target for the period to end June 2009.
[92] This is a revised target (the original target specified in the contract was 62,326).
[93] The unit cost shown is based on the revised target reach. If based on the original reach target the unit cost would have been much lower at £9.08.
[94] The PLP text service emerged as a spin-off from the company's web and social media service and was originally piloted in one area only (now being expanded to two areas). Therefore Parentline's contract does not detail a specific funding allocation for this element, nor specific targets (although targets were subsequently agreed with DCSF).
[95] Approximate spend from overall PLP Innovation Project funding allocation.

Both ACE and Relate's text services have struggled to attract users (see Chapter 3) and as a result were significantly above their target unit costs[96]. Parentline's Gotateenager text service has already exceeded the target which was set post-contract but as this has developed as a spin-off to the main web and social media site it did not have a defined Parent Know How funding allocation and thus no target unit cost[97].

6.1.3 Web and social media services

Overall, the web and social media services have spent 71% of the funding allocated for the period to end June 2009, highlighting the front-loading of costs which this type of service required (e.g. development and set-up costs). In terms of achievements, when setting milestones consideration was given to the fact that development time would be required before services were fully up and running. Table 4.1 in Chapter Four shows analysis of progress against targets to the end of 2008. Six out of the ten services had exceeded target reach (by margins ranging from 19% to 251%) while the remaining four had underachieved (by between 23% and 97%).
Table 6.3 provides a comparison of actual and target unit costs for web and social media services.[98]

The tendency for a relatively high proportion of costs to be incurred in the early stages of the web and social media projects meant that it was unsurprising that the majority were not yet delivering at their target unit cost (this issue is discussed further in section 6.2.5). It would be expected that actual unit cost would fall over time as development work comes to an end and user numbers increase. However, despite this, the analysis showed that, by the end of December 2008, three providers (NetMums, SPAN and CAF) had already achieved a cost per parent helped which was below their target figure (by margins of 20%, 25% and 35% respectively). In contrast, three services recorded actual unit costs which were more than 100% in excess of targets. Relate had experienced particular problems in attracting users which in turn, impacted negatively on actual unit costs. In addition, the 1-2-1 element of Dad's Space was still being piloted with a very small number of users (n=6) and so unit costs have not been produced for this part of that particular service. Overall, the web and social media projects have achieved an actual unit cost which was 67% (£3.04) higher than the eventual target; however, it would be expected that this actual unit cost would fall over time given the relatively high early stage development costs which services of this type typically incur.

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[96] Even for the Ask ACE where the unit cost shown is based on the revised target reach (see footnote four above).
[97] It should also be noted that discussions with the provider suggest that the set up of this service has been primarily funded from non-Parent Know How resources.
[98] It should be noted that these projects differ in terms of the range of web services and levels of support provided which would be expected to go some way to explaining the variation in unit costs between projects, as shown in table 6.3.

Table 6.3 - Web and social media services, actual and target unit costs

Provider	Funding[99]	Target Reach[100]	Target Unit Cost[101]	Actual Spend	Actual Reach	Actual Unit Cost	Unit Cost Differential
Gotateenager - PLP	£571,428	85,500	£6.68	£461,792 [102]	48,989	£9.43	+£2.75 +41%
NetMums	£484,015	51,845	£9.34	£330,985	44,452	£7.45	-£1.89 -20%
Couple Connection - OPO	£472,493	67,356	£7.01	£341,519	17,292	£19.75	+£12.74 +182%
DadTalk - FMI	£189,600	13,846	£13.69	£131,072	8,364	£15.67	+£1.98 +14%
One Space - SPAN	£275,072	20,000	£13.75	£160,220	15,472	£10.36	-£3.39 -25%
Attic Media - Dad's Space Public[103]	£516,861[104]	86,300	£4.30	£216,678 [105]	30,078	£7.20	+£2.90 +68%[106]
Attic Media - Dad's Team[107]	£490,515	171,850	£2.85	£377,661	107,042	£3.53	+£0.68 +24%
CAF - web and social networks	£128,004	29,515	£4.34	£115,695	41,249	£2.80	-£1.54 -35%
Relate - Live Chat	£181,775	16,380	£11.10	£68,410	781	£87.59	+£76.49 +689%
Relate - Website	£66,001	195,000	£0.34	£8,550	4,410	£1.94	+£1.60 +470%
Total	£3,375,764	743,692	£4.54	£2,412,580	318,135	£7.58	+£3.04 +67%

Source: DCSF, Providers and ECOTEC analysis

[99] Funding awarded for the period to June 2009. Both funding and actual spend figures exclude VAT (figures on actual spend provided by DCSF were subsequently adjusted to remove VAT).
[100] Target for the period to end June 2009.
[101] Figures as taken from contracts.
[102] This is total spend for PLP's Innovation Project (i.e. no adjustment has been made for the small amount of spend on text services as this did not impact on the subsequent calculations).
[103] Total direct and implicit users. Direct users are a sub-set of implicit users – total direct users to date is 10,318.
[104] This is the total budget for the Attic Media project so therefore includes the cost of both Dad's Space Public and 1-2-1 elements.
[105] Actual spend for Dad's Space is an approximate split between the two elements.
[106] The 1-2-1 element of Dad's Space has not been included in this table given that it is currently being piloted with a restricted number of users (n=6).
[107] Total direct and implicit users. Direct users are a sub-set of implicit users - total direct users to date is 6,657.

6.1.4 Targeted Services

A number of services target the underserved parent segments which were highlighted by the Department and are compared below. These comparisons mainly serve to illustrate the range and depth of services targeted at dads, parents of teenagers etc, however it is not appropriate to directly compare these very different types of services and these are for illustration only.

6.1.4.1 *Dads*

The following table provides a comparison of actual and target reach and unit costs for services targeted at dads.

Table 6.4 - Services reaching dads, actual and target unit costs

DadTalk	13,846	8,364	£13.69	£15.67
Attic Media - Dad's Space (public area of site)[108]	86,300	30.078	£4.30	£7.20
Attic Media - Dad's Team	171,850	107,042	£2.85	£3.53
CLC - helpline[109]	6,000	4,347	£31.17	£32.26

Source: DCSF, Providers and ECOTEC analysis

The table shows all of the services targeted at, or reaching, dads to be in excess of their target unit cost at this stage. Interestingly, if projects are ranked from highest to lowest by actual unit cost the resulting order is the same as it would be for target cost figures. For example the CLC helpline has a relatively high unit cost which reflects the specialist nature of the advice provided; this service has been included in the list as it has proved successful at attracting dads (or male carers).

6.1.4.2 Parents of teenagers

The following table provides a comparison of actual and target reach and unit costs for projects which are targeted at parents of teenagers.

Table 6.5 - Services reaching parents of teenagers, actual and target unit costs

Provider	Target Reach	Actual Reach	Target Unit Cost	Actual Unit Cost
PLP - Gotateenager	85,500	48,989	£6.68	£9.43
One Space - SPAN[110]	20,000	15,472	£13.75	£10.36

Source: DCSF, Providers and ECOTEC analysis

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[108] Again, the 1-2-1 element of Dad's Space has been excluded due to the fact that it is still being piloted.
[109] Although not specifically focused on dads, monitoring data shows that the CLC helpline has attracted a relatively high proportion of dads and so data for the CLC service has been included here as a comparator.
[110] This web service has a section which is targeted at parents of teenagers but overall figures are being used as a comparator to the PLP service.

Only one project was specifically focused at parents of teenagers: Parentline's Gotateenager site. This service has made good progress in attracting target groups although was just above its target unit cost at this stage. One Space has also been successful in attracting some parents of younger teens and a proportion of content was targeted at parents of teenagers. One Space has achieved an actual unit cost which was below target however, both actual and target unit cost values were above those currently being achieved by Gotateenager.

6.1.4.3 Parents of disabled children

The following table provides a comparison of actual and target reach and unit costs for projects targeting parents of disabled children.

Table 6.6 - Services reaching parents of disabled children, actual and target unit costs

Provider	Target Reach	Actual Reach	Target Unit Cost	Actual Unit Cost
CAF - helpline	7,500	6,358	£37.86	£33.50
CAF - web / social media	29,515	41,249	£4.34	£2.80

Source: DCSF, Providers and ECOTEC analysis

All of the services provided by CAF have been successful in reaching parents of disabled children. The web and social media services in particular have exceeded reach targets earlier than planned, showing that there is a significant demand for this type of support for this parent segment. In addition, all types of service have achieved a cost per parent which is below target. The helpline has a much higher unit cost reflecting the more in depth nature of the service. This data highlights the potential for web / social media services to be a cost effective and complementary way of delivering support to a potentially larger cohort of parents. However, the volume of calls being received by the helpline has exceeded the third quarter milestone showing that many parents will continue to prefer this method of accessing information and advice. The interviews and surveys also suggested that the two were not mutually exclusive, however, and that the level of specialist information offered by the helpline sits well alongside the role of web and social media in offering parent-to-parent support.

6.1.5 Innovation services: set up cost adjustment

The evaluation recognised that the newly-developed innovation services (both text and web and social media) were likely, by their nature, to have high development costs which occurred in the early stages of the project lifetime. Therefore in order to give a more representative view of the cost per parent helped we have attempted to separate these set-up costs[111] and share them over the three year potential project lifetime. Table 6.7 shows the adjusted target and actual cost per parents helped figures which result from this exercise to apportion the set-up costs over a three year period. For example, in the case of Gotateenager, Table 6.3 shows a target unit cost of £6.68 and an actual figure of £9.43. However, with set up costs removed from year one spend and shared across the three year potential project lifetime, this gives an adjusted target of £5.51 and an actual unit cost to end December 2008 of £7.12.

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[111] It should be noted that these set-up costs are defined as costs associated with development of the service which are assumed to have been incurred at an early stage in the project (but not necessarily pre-launch).

Table 6.7 - Adjusted cost per parent figures

Provider	Adjusted Target Unit Cost - Year 1[112]	Adjusted Actual Unit Cost - to end Dec 08[113]	Adjusted Unit Cost Differential
Gotateenager - PLP	£5.51	£7.12	+£1.61
NetMums	£7.60	£5.17	-£2.43
CoupleConnection - OPO	£5.24	£11.97	+£6.73
DadTalk - FMI	£10.56	£9.83	-£0.73
One Space - SPAN	£11.57	£7.18	-£4.39
Attic Media - Dad's Space[114]	£4.09	£8.66	+£4.57
Attic Media - Dad's Team	£1.67	£1.39	-£0.28
CAF	£3.16	£1.85	-£1.30
Relate - Live Chat[115]	£9.78	£56.48	+£46.70
Relate - SMS	£18.06	£112.80	+£94.73
ACE - Ask ACE	£82.35	£121.84	+£39.49
Total	£5.46	£5.52	+£0.06

Source: ECOTEC analysis

Undertaking this adjustment has changed both target and actual cost per parent figures and, most significantly, had a favourable impact on the difference between these two numbers with five providers recording actual cost per parent figures which were below their target (compared to three services before targets were adjusted). However, this analysis still shows the text services and Relate's Live Chat and website to be significantly more expensive (on a cost per parent basis) than other innovation projects.

As a further adjustment, Table 6.8 shows the figures which result from removing the assumed set-up costs[116] entirely[117].

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[112] Calculated by firstly comparing the year 1 budget with the estimated year 2 costs, the difference between the two figures was then assumed to represent initial set up/development costs and so was subtracted from the year 1 budget. This difference was then shared over the 3 year potential project lifetime and the appropriate allowance added back to the residual year 1 budget. The adjusted target unit cost was therefore calculated by taking the adjusted year 1 budget figure and dividing by the target reach. This approach is intended to provide an indicative estimate and has therefore not accounted for any planned expansion/change to any of the services.

[113] Calculated by assuming that all initial set up costs have been incurred in the period to end December 2008, as a result the estimated set up costs have been removed from the total spend to end December and replaced with a portion calculated to represent a nine month share. This adjusted spend figure has then been used in conjunction with the actual reach to calculate an adjusted unit cost.

[114] Includes both public and one-to-one elements.

[115] It has not been possible to use this methodology for the Relate web service given the limited level of spend which has taken place to date.

[116] Again, it should be noted that these set-up costs are defined as costs associated with development of the service which are assumed to have been incurred at an early stage in the project (but not necessarily pre-launch).

[117] This is equivalent to assuming that the projected year 2 costs represent the cost of providing the service excluding all set-up costs.

Table 6.8 - Further adjusted cost per parent figure

Provider	Adjusted Target Unit Cost – Year 1	Adjusted Actual Unit Cost - to end Dec 08[118]	Adjusted Unit Cost Differential
Gotateenager - PLP	£4.92	£6.35	+£1.43
NetMums	£6.73	£4.41	-£2.32
CoupleConnection - OPO	£4.35	£9.38	+£5.02
DadTalk - FMI	£8.99	£7.88	-£1.11
One Space - SPAN	£10.48	£6.13	-£4.36
Attic Media - Dad's Space[119]	£3.34	£6.93	+£3.59
Attic Media - Dad's Team	£1.08	£0.67	-£0.40
CAF	£2.57	£1.54	-£1.03
Relate - Live Chat[120]	£9.12	£46.11	+£36.99
Relate - SMS	£16.18	£71.77	+£55.59
ACE - Ask ACE	£64.89	£83.39	+£18.50
Total	£4.57	£4.33	-£0.24

Source: ECOTEC analysis

As the same adjustment has been applied to each project the conclusions the relative findings are the same as those set out above in relation to Table 6.7.

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[118] Calculated by assuming that all initial set up costs have been incurred in the period to end December 2008, as a result the estimated set up costs have been removed from the total spend to end December. This adjusted spend figure has then been used in conjunction with the actual reach to calculate an adjusted unit cost.
[119] Includes both public and one-to-one elements.
[120] It has not been possible to use this methodology for the Relate web service given the limited level of spend which has taken place to date.

6.1.6 Value for money and future funding

The following table provides a summary of the target and actual (to end December 2008) cost per parent helped figures for the three different types of service, and includes the actual figure for helplines funded by DCSF in 2007 to 2008 as a comparator.

Table 6.9 - Overview of Parent Know How Services[121]

Service	Budgeted Spend	Actual Spend	Target Reach	Actual Reach	Target Unit Cost	Actual Average Unit Cost
Helplines	£3.76m	£2.82m	121,148	72,152	£31.07	£39.13
Text Services	£0.76m	£0.47m	13,677	2,178	£55.31	£213.83
Web/Social Media Services	£3.38m	£2.41m	743,692	318,135	£4.54	£7.58
Total (2008/09)	£7.90m	£5.70m	878,517	392,465	£8.99	£14.53
Helplines (2007/08)	-	*£3.2m*	-	*100,000*	-	*£32.00*

Source: DCSF and ECOTEC analysis

Overall the services funded in 2008 to 2009 were expected to have a unit cost which is less than 30% of the unit cost achieved by the helplines which were funded in 2007 to 2008. However, to the end of December 2008, the 2008 to 2009 services actually achieved a unit cost which is 45% of that achieved in 2007 to 2008. Web and social media services have the lowest unit cost (both target and actual) highlighting that this channel has high potential to be a cost effective means of providing initial and deep level support to parents via a variety of web services. Helplines have a target unit cost which is slightly below that achieved in 2007 to 2008; however, overall this has not been achieved over the first three quarters of delivery. Text services have a significantly higher target cost per parent which actual data shows was missed by a significant margin[122].

Regarding value for money, helplines have been awarded grants to provide services for the three year period 2008 to 2011. However, some providers were unlikely to meet their target unit costs for the first year, with three helplines exceeding targets by more than 50% after three quarters of delivery. Helplines had set their own targets for the year but were latterly realising these were too ambitious and they had a lack of capacity to answer the volume of calls being received at peak times. Innovation projects were funded for the first time in 2008 to 2009 and were seen as pilot interventions initially contracted to deliver until the end of June 2009. Even accounting for the resource intensive development activity, which was required before services could be launched, it is clear that a number of these services have not performed as expected. In particular, the text services appear to offer poor value for money and a further three web and social media providers have delivered services which exceed target unit costs by a considerable margin.

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[121] Actual figures are those achieved between start of contract and 31st December 2008. Target figures are those which apply to the current contract period.
[122] It is acknowledged that the presentation of figures for the three service types is for illustrative purposes only, as it is not possible to make a like-for-like comparison given the different types of services being offered.

Of the funding covered by this evaluation, nearly half (48%) was provided to helplines with 43% to web and social media projects, with the remaining 9% allocated to text services. When asked what investment decisions they would make[123], parents who participated in workshops for this study, on average, also allocated about half of funding (46%) to helplines, 27% to websites, and 19% to articles in newspapers and magazines. Fathers and those in socio-economic groups B, C1 and C2 allocated relatively more to websites while mums, parents of disabled children, parents of teenagers and those in socio-economic group E allocated relatively more to helplines. These findings highlight that there is a need for the Department to fund a mix of channels in order to achieve maximum reach and meet the needs, and preferences, of different parent segments.

In leverage terms, added value appears to have been limited with the majority of providers reporting that no match funding was sourced, the exceptions being CLC and Gingerbread which had both accessed other funding streams[124]. However, some organisations (for example PLP and OPO) were able to make a contribution towards costs from their own resources, and some (such as PLP and SPAN) make use of volunteer inputs.

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[123] Feedback from 77 parents in the four regional parent workshops.
[124] CLC use funding from another source to fund supervisors, with one supervisor required for every four advisers. GB's advice line is funded by four different sources with the Department's contribution estimated at 60%.

7.0 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Parent Know How aimed to deliver better outcomes for children and parents by increasing the reach of parenting support funded by the Department and improving the support to particular service users, including segments of parents that were previously underserved. It specifically aimed, through the innovation fund to pilot new channels of delivery of support to parents for example text messaging and social media. Below are conclusions on the evidence around each of the evaluation objectives.

7.1.1 Reach

Investment in Parent Know How funded services[125] reached 375,768 parents in the period from 1st April 2008 to the 31 of December 2008. Four fifths (80%) of parents reached were reached via web and social media services. Helplines accounted for approaching a fifth of the total reach (19%), with text messaging services so far contributing the smallest proportion at just over half a per cent (0.6%). The figure for parents reached was approximately 85% of the targets that were originally agreed with the Department[126] (pro rata target for this point in the year). While helplines and web and social media have achieved around 80% of their respective target (for the year to date), text messaging has reached around a third (33%). Helpline performance has remained steady across the period of delivery; however innovation services have shown some growth in latter months.

Despite this growth, however, the evidence suggested that the annual target is unlikely to be achieved at the overall level by the end of the 2008 to 2009 period. This can largely be explained by the focus of the first few months on development (of wholly new innovation services) and the recruitment of new staff and building of capacity within the helplines. Overly ambitious targets and timescales set by many providers have also led to a shortfall against target reach, whilst some organisations suffered from a lack of strategic direction or strong enough project management. Many of the providers were unfamiliar with and lacked experience of implementing projects using the new technologies being tested. The marketing undertaken by the providers were rarely found to be adequate, appropriate or of a sufficient scale to generate the desired reach. The providers had widely underestimated the costs, time inputs and frequency of marketing and creation of content that was required to maintain levels of interest in the services and generate new users.

The overall figures mask some differentials in performance in the providers' individual figures. Among the helplines, performance against targets varied from providers at around 37% of their predicted reach for the period, to those achieving over 125% of their predicted reach. Among the web and social media providers shortfalls in some providers[127] were compensated for by several other providers reaching significantly more than the figures stated in their targets (NetMums, Dad's Team etc). Text services have been slower to grow and demand for these types of services remains unproven and not fully tested.

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[125] Helplines and innovation funded services combined (in other words helplines, text messaging and web and social media).

[126] Reach targets were agreed with the Department at the start of the providers' contracts and were based based on the providers' own evidence based estimates of demand and take up.

[127] For example due to late launches or providers not having launched all of the aspects of their service that were originally planned.

7.1.2 Service users

Parent Know How services were generally being taken up by a broadly representative group of users compared with the general population. The family of Parent Know How services were designed to target specific parent segments, and evidence suggested they were starting to reach some parent segments (for example parents of teenagers and disabled children), as well as offering more broadly based support across the spectrum of parents. Information on specific parent segments is provided below (Section 7.1.6).

7.1.3 Satisfaction

The overall satisfaction rating for Parent Know How funded services (helplines and innovations) was 80% satisfied (very or fairly) with only 1% of users very dissatisfied[128]. These figures meet the Department's benchmark targets for satisfaction ratings[129], suggesting that the Parent Know How funded services achieved an acceptable standard of service delivery overall. The helplines achieved a consistently high level of satisfaction, with scores ranging from 89% to 98% satisfied, and it is notable that some 75% of helpline users rated their experience at the highest level of satisfaction ('very satisfied').

In contrast, the newer services did not meet the benchmark target, with web and social media services falling short at 71% satisfied and 1% dissatisfied. Satisfaction with web services was higher with the social networking aspects of services and less so with the information giving areas, with parents indicating these lacked detail. Text messaging also fell just short of benchmarks at 79% satisfied and 7% very dissatisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction with text services were mainly because parents preferred to contact a helpline in the first instance and said they would do so again if they needed further advice rather than using text services. Overall, text worked best where it was in response to simple queries.

7.1.4 Customer experiences

Feedback from parents about their experiences of using the Parent Know How funded services to date was generally positive. The majority of users found the services 'easy' to use (94% for helplines, 89% for text message services and 87% for web and social media services), however some parents suggested ways of making social networks or forums more 'obvious' to use. Text messaging was a familiar technology for those who chose that channel and proved generally very easy to use, although some parents found it challenging to get their query into the limited character spaces. In many cases texting appeared to be being used as an alternative - and more immediate - communication mechanism when the preferred route (usually the helpline in the case of ACE) was unavailable. This perhaps emerges as being a particular niche for the service, alongside other modes of parental information, alongside its 'any time, any place' functionality.

Web and social media sites also proved easy to use, even for users who were less familiar with moderated forums. The web and social media services seemed to be appealing to parents searching for support that was available out of working hours, and for social or moral support which might not be available from other types of services. Helplines have naturally been more difficult for parents to get through to, than web or social media services, with on average only a third of parents getting through on their first attempt. However, many parents valued the helplines for the 'one stop shop' type service as well as for the specialist information and advice they could provide. Call takers were routinely felt to have very good telephone manners and be highly skilled, helpful and empathetic towards callers' situations.

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[128] Base = 2,351
[129] The COI benchmark is 80% satisfied (very or fairly) and no more than 3% very dissatisfied.

Evidence suggested that parents' tenacity for seeking out information from a variety of channels has been underestimated, and perceptions that cross-referral is off-putting for parents were not entirely upheld by the survey data.

7.1.5 Outcomes

Overall, the funded services were often more successful in achieving soft outcomes than they were in directly resolving the presenting issue or problem. All the funded services showed evidence around supporting soft outcomes for parents to a greater or lesser extent, including feeling better informed, more reassured, more confident and less isolated. Services were overall less likely to lead to parents communicating better; go on to access a referral to an additional advice or support or claim a benefit, and they rarely led to adjustments to parenting styles or routines.

The helplines performed the strongest in relation to all of the outcomes indicators within the survey. For example the majority of parents calling helplines (83%) felt better informed (for example about their rights / possible courses of action), this is to be expected since contacting a helpline is a much more in depth or prolonged experience for a parent. As might be expected, equivalent figures for text and web services were somewhat lower at 70% and 61% respectively. Survey results for feeling reassured, confident, less isolated, less stressed, more able to communicate and taking action as a result all followed this pattern.

Text services appeared to be having positive outcomes for parents, particularly around confidence; for example in giving parents the information they need to be able to speak to their child's school more confidently about admissions or exclusions. Web and social media services were particularly helping overcome parents' feelings of isolation and the social networking aspect appeared to be beneficial for many parents helping them to feel 'they are not alone'.

Helplines were the most effective in helping the presenting situation or issue. For example, three in five parents overall said the contact helped their situation (59% 'a little' or 'a lot') but this figure was significantly higher for helplines (73%) and lower for text services (52%) and web and social media services (49%). This is to be expected given the depth of advice and personalised support that can be made available by a helpline compared with that offered via text or web.

The emphasis of the helplines on advice, information or support was strongly correlated with the types of follow up action that were taken by parents. For example, a considerable proportion of parents contacting PLP and YM used the information that they were given to adjust their approach towards managing family relationships, whereas only a handful of parents reported taking this action for GB and FRG. In contrast, CAF and GB appeared to be highly successful in providing parents with practical information to help them make applications or claims for benefits.

The services seemed to play an important signposting role for parents, by referring them on to other services. It is possible that harder outcomes were achieved at this later stage that could be linked back to the programme (for example as a result of expert advice about disabilities entitlements, a parent might go on to access additional benefits or get extra support for their child at school).

The evidence suggested that only a minority of parents were experiencing sustained changes to parenting style approaches as a result of their contact with a Parent Know How service.

7.1.6 Supporting specific parent segments

7.1.6.1 Dads

The overall ability of funded services to reach and support dads was very mixed. Websites targeted directly at dads attracted 39% (for Dad's Space) and 61% (or 41 dads for DadTalk) male carers (including step dads and non resident fathers), although it must be noted that significant proportions refused to answer the question (24% and 15% respectively). Feedback from dads was that they were happy to find a website that catered exclusively for them. Other websites aimed at parents in general attracted much small proportions of dads (ranging 1% to 13%) and these figures were slightly lower than the performance of helplines in this respect (5-25%).

Text services did not appear to be particularly successful at attracting male carers (8%). Websites targeted at couples fared better at attracting dads, including Relate and CoupleConnection (whose registration data suggested a quarter of all registered users were male). Qualitative feedback indicated dads liked to be able to discuss relationship problems 'virtually' and 'anonymously' and also liked the chance to gets dads' perspective on certain information (i.e. via dad-specific websites) without having to speak to someone directly. Dads who called helplines, on the other hand, were doing so because they could not access detailed or specific enough information on the web or because they needed legal advice. Dads demonstrated a particular need for information and advice relating to legal issues like child support and contact; this consistently came through all channels of support being provided (from helplines to Live Chat). The Children's Legal Centre (CLC) helpline performed well in attracting fathers, with a third of all callers being male carers (30%) since it specifically deals with contact and access issues. This proportion was comparable to one of the specific dads' websites (Dad's Space 39%). DadTalk reported growth in demand (in the form of unsolicited emails) for support on legal issues after launching its Legal Eagle section and developed a new delivery mechanism with CLC to cope with this.

There was some evidence that 'new' dads were being reached via the dad services. (For example 82% of Dad's Space users had not previously accessed any kind of parenting support.) This suggested that dads that used services were not being displaced from elsewhere but were genuinely accessing services for the first time.

The quality of experience and 'depth' of help that dads receive is relevant. The syndicated content approach is designed to access dads wherever they might be on the internet and push dad-related content in a 'light touch' manner (e.g. via entertainment websites). A high proportion of activity in some dads' services (e.g. Dad's Space and Dad's Team) has therefore been linked to entering competitions for example. As such this means that the large volumes of users accessing Dad's Team content may be simply entering a prize draw which is a much less detailed or prolonged experience than contacting a website or helpline to discuss child maintenance issues. This is also reflected in the quality of web survey responses with large proportions refusing to answer and a relatively small proportion of dads being recorded (39%). In terms of volume of dads reached, the majority of experiences have therefore been at this 'less detailed' level (e.g. accessing a competition) with a much smaller proportion of dads accessing more detailed information or individual support.

Overall this evidence suggested that no particular route piloted to date within Parent Know How was more effective than others in reaching dads and that, depending on their needs, dads will use a variety of channels. However the quality of content and suitability of how the service was marketed clearly were clearly factors affecting levels of uptake.

7.1.6.2 Parents of teenagers

Only one service explicitly aimed to reach parents of teenagers, Gotateenager, and it did reach significantly more parents of teens than any other type of service (66% compared to the overall figure of 29% across all Parent Know How funded services and 16% across web and social media services). Other web and social media services aimed to reach parents of teens amongst other target groups (such as NetMums and DadTalk) but did not particularly achieve this. The only other service to have particular success in reaching parents of teens was the Young Minds helpline which reached significantly more parents of 14-16 year olds compared with helplines more generally (31% compared with 12%). No services reported doing marketing specifically to reach parents of teens.

While some parents of teenagers felt website content was well suited to their needs, such as users of Gotateenager and One Space, others felt content was not age-appropriate, particularly users of Dad's Space who felt content was a little 'young'. Single parents looking after teenagers in particular felt they benefited from the social network aspects of many sites. Other than that, experiences of the various funded services did not really vary.

7.1.6.3 Parents of disabled children

Overall, approximately 13% of parents using Parent Know How funded services cared for a child with a disability.[130] Among the helplines this ranged from 0-47% of callers and among SMS and web and social media service users the range was 0-44%. Services provided by Contact a Family were naturally strong in this respect, and the Ask ACE service was also used particularly by parents of children with a disability (31% of all users). This is at least ten per cent higher than the prevalence amongst children in the general population.[131] Other web and social media services were less likely than other services as a whole to reach this parent segment (0-11%) suggesting that targeted services directed specifically at this target group's needs were the most effective in reaching this group.

In terms of qualitative feedback on satisfaction, customer experiences and outcomes, parents of disabled children particularly welcomed the opportunity to meet and share experiences with parents in similar situations via the internet; an opportunity that new channels had provided which did not previously exist. They benefited from accessing specific information in discussion forums for example on special schooling or living with a particular condition.

7.1.6.4 Parents from a BME background

Overall, Parent Know How services reached a broadly representative group of parents in terms of ethnic background, with no single group particularly over- or under-represented. This is to be expected since the majority of services were broad-based in their focus, providing information, advice or support to the general population rather content or service delivery models that were directed to specific ethnic groups. The DadTalk web and social media site however was specifically targeted at fathers from a Black Caribbean background, but the proportion of survey respondents of a Black Caribbean background was lower than might have been expected for a targeted service (6% or 4 dads compared with 1% on average). This was primarily because the planned partnerships with organisations that were going to help DadTalk reach the BME target group work did not come to fruition and DadTalk operated without key partners for some of the duration.

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[130] According to survey data.
[131] Source: Office for National Statistics data (2000) from General Household Survey says that 19 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls aged under 20 years reported having a mild disability in 2000. Rates of severe disability stood at 11 per 10,000 for the male population and five per 10,000 of the female population aged under 17 years in 2000.

7.1.7 Gaps in service delivery

There were no immediately identifiable gaps in service delivery mechanisms, subject areas covered or parent segments targeted were identified by providers or parents. It is fair to note, however, that the programme carries its own design effects with regard to the parent groups that were targeted by the Parent Know How providers; and limitations in the monitoring data available also limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn. Thus there remains scope for further research or user testing to ensure that other potential target groups are being reached and engaged.

For example potential groups of parents with specific information, advice or support needs that did not feature prominently within monitoring data and were not tracked in the survey data include, for example: parents of children within the youth justice system; young carers; and new migrant families.

In terms of topic areas, enquiries around debt and financial inclusion were a key subject area that many providers felt they increasingly had to deal with. Ensuring that existing staff have relevant skills to handle these types of queries and putting in place appropriate and effective referral mechanisms to help parents get the specialist help they require, will be important moving forwards. The Legal Services Commission is due to launch a national helpline which will be dealing with debt as one of its key issues; linking closely with this service will be important.

7.1.8 Collaboration and working together

Collaboration between Parent Know How funded providers has developed slowly throughout the programme, with strong existing relationships between helplines being furthered, and collaboration between innovation providers growing slowly. The level of collaboration between the helplines and innovation services was perhaps the most disappointing area of joint working. Demands on time and capacity to collaborate as well as the background of internal competition have hindered this process. The Department's expectations were for a higher level of collaboration around joint content development in year two. There was a generally cautious start to relations between third and private sector providers and there appears to have been a missed opportunity for more substantial private sector partnership, delivering the benefits of genuinely innovative content or provision. The programme has had some positive benefits in terms of building capacity among providers in terms of building staffing and skills. The combination of extra staffing and resources had a knock on effect of improving internal communications and professional development within some providers.

7.1.9 Cost effectiveness and future funding

While many providers have just missed reach targets therefore resulting in missed cost per parent targets, other providers have performed well in terms of reach and associated costs. Due to problems attracting users, text services have proven the most costly to deliver on a per parent basis. Many web and social media services have demonstrated an ability to reach large numbers of parents at a relatively low cost per parent level. Overall the actual cost per parent for web services is 67% higher than the target figure although this is unsurprising given the high early stage development costs which such services require. Adjusting for these set up costs reduces the target unit cost for all innovation projects to £5.46, and produces an actual achieved figure of £5.52, only marginally above target.

Future funding decisions will need to take cost per parent into account, alongside other performance indicators such as evidence of demand, quality of service and user satisfaction, and outcomes achieved to make an informed assessment. Clearly, the Department cannot justify funding services for which there is no proven demand or where organisations have not

met required delivery standards. Moreover, the feedback from parents indicated that there is a need for the Department to fund a mix of channels in order to achieve maximum reach and meet the needs, and preferences, of different parent segments.

As with the provision of face to face information, support and advice, there is evidently balance to be achieved between reaching significant numbers of parents cost effectively, whilst bearing the higher costs of more targeted work that prove effective with priority customer groups of parents.

7.2 Recommendations

The evaluators' recommendations arising from the evaluation are as follows.

7.2.1 Recommendations about future funding

Recommendation 1: For the Department to ensure continued funding for a mix of channels, in order to achieve maximum reach and meet the needs, and preferences, of different parent segments, socio-economic groups and demographic groups and to continue to pilot services that remain un tested.

Recommendation 2: For the Department to rationalise those areas of service provision that risk duplication, by supporting providers to collaborate on joint content and marketing, and to ensure that each provider is focused on their relative strengths.

Recommendation 3: For the Department to review helpline funding allocations with a view to reallocating resources between the helplines to meet patterns of demand (for example legal advice, support for parents of disabled children), weighted according to which groups are targeted (accounting for some groups being harder to reach than others), and taking account of the nature of information and advice provided.

Recommendation 4: For the Department to continue funding web and social media services as a highly cost effective way of providing support to large volumes of parents and where there is proven demand.

Recommendation 5: To consider the extent to which funded services targeting dads focus on reaching large volumes via syndicated content approaches with a 'light touch' experience versus more in depth support and advice which tend to have better outcomes.

Recommendation 6: To further pilot a variety of other approaches to reaching dads including for example an email based support line, specifically for dads who prefer not to use a telephone helpline and cannot get the tailored information they require from websites[132].

Recommendation 7: For the Department to consider the best placement for funding support for couple relationships where children are not involved, given the Department's priority for supporting parent relationships.

Recommendation 8: To consider expanding the use of warm transfers and similar methods to facilitate parents' easy transfer between channels.

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[132] See Section 4.2.1.1 regarding the provision of ad hoc email services for dads.

7.2.2 Recommendations around building capacity and collaboration

Recommendation 9: For the Department to consider incentivising joint working between helplines and innovation services, perhaps via ring-fenced funding for collaborative projects that emerge during the year. This could be a valuable performance management tool, which recognises that collaborative work can be at odds with achievement of core targets. Key priorities for collaboration might be:

- Joint content development - some providers have developed content for other sites however there has been limited joint development and innovation. In some cases providers have uploaded existing, trusted content to websites rather than responding directly to demand or optimising the interactive opportunities that the internet offers; and,

- Joint training and staff appointments - for example to support both helpline advice, Live Chat and Second Life advisers.

Recommendation 10: For the Department to provide support capacity building. For helplines this would be beneficial in areas of capacity building, staff recruitment, training and retention and for innovation providers this would be helpful regarding managing private sector partners and technology suppliers. This would move the programme to a stage where the technology is driving the content and leading to joint innovation and also bring opportunities to explore ways of levering-in private sector investment to the services.

Recommendation 11: To devote a future round table session to sharing learning between the providers on all aspects of service delivery in order that learning is captured between all providers and capitalised upon for the future.

Recommendation 12: For the Department to open up a conversation among providers about alternative funding approaches including more sustainable models of self-funding, for example exploring the potential role of advertising.

7.2.3 Recommendations on content and quality

Recommendation 13: For the Department to consider commissioning further evaluation of Parent Know How content to assess quality and identify any gaps[133], perhaps via qualitative testing with customer segments and/or consultation with experts and stakeholders.

Recommendation 14: For the Department to encourage wider use of user testing and increased parent involvement in user-generated content in response to emerging needs and particularly with priority parent segments (since it would be wrong to assume that the needs analysis at the original procurement stage still provided a complete picture of demand).

Recommendation 15: To scope the potential for content for parents and children to access and work through, or discuss together. This type of approach is beneficial to families in terms of addressing the 'digital divide' between parents and their children and supports the agenda of expanding the range of available internet-based resources to support intergenerational learning.

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[133] Which was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

7.2.4 Recommendations for programme delivery

Recommendation 16: For the Department to make the following practical changes to various aspects of programme monitoring and delivery:

- common targets for satisfaction at COI benchmark levels to be agreed in all provider contracts from July 2009 onwards;

- targets for 'parents reached' and 'parents helped' to be more clearly defined and greater consistency in their usage;

- consistency in contracts around setting monthly or cumulative reach targets;

- definitions of 'direct' and 'implicit' help to be clarified and greater consistency in their usage.

Recommendation 17: For a review of monitoring data to take place to establish common methods of data collection among all providers with regards to monitoring of gender, ethnicity and caring roles, to facilitate direct comparisons. Specifically improved definitions of caring roles within the helpline monitoring template is needed to be able to disaggregate gender statistics more accurately and provide additional information regarding participation of male carers.[134] To achieve smarter monitoring of information flows and cross-referrals to combat the lack of data about issues such as cross-channel migration and the impact on reach (for instance website tracking of visitor movement).

Recommendation 18: For the Department to continue to ensure that ISPP developments are joined up with helplines and innovation fund services to ensure national information is closely linked to local information. For example by ensuring Parent Know How funded websites link to the ISPP to ensure access to information on local services; and that helpline staff are briefed and trained to use the ISPP to refer parents to local services.

7.2.5 Recommendations for marketing

Recommendation 19: For the Department to provide support and guidance on best practices for marketing. This might include support on:

- developing partnerships with national press;

- exploring relationship-based marketing with 'gatekeepers' to reach priority customer segments (for example ACE noted that targeting admissions officers directly to raise awareness would be beneficial);

- providing guidelines on what proportion of budget and resourcing might be allocated to marketing in future rounds of funding; and

- specific marketing tactics for particular parent segments, including dads and BME parents.

Recommendation 20: For the Department to explore programme level marketing opportunities including a the possibility of a central PR post: to offer support on a provider-by-provider basis and lead on brokering relationships with the national press; and a large

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[134] Research shows that dad's participation increases significantly when their children reach secondary stage, so it would be beneficial to isolate statistics for fathers of teenagers, to benchmark how all the providers are doing.

scale press campaign to boost reach. Any such campaign must be carefully managed to support services that have capacity available to reach more parents and ensure that services already facing high levels of demand are not adversely affected. Functional routes for referring parents to more specialist services (via phone, web links and warm transfers) must be properly established beforehand to support a 'no wrong door' policy.

Annex One - Detailed description of Parent Know How funded services

Detailed description of Parent Know How funded services

This annex contains further details about the funded services: helplines, text message service and web and social media services[1].

Table 1 - Description of helplines

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Parentline Plus helpline rentlineplus.org.uk 0 2222	Parentline gives immediate help via a helpline to parents from a volunteer parent support worker 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They offer support on a wide range of issues, from problems coping with babies and toddlers, to teenage issues such as anti-social or risky behaviour, as well as bullying, discipline and the impact of divorce. They offer support and tips and strategies.	Anyone who parents, including relatives, friends and foster carers	123,500 calls answered and 80,100 unique callers responded to	£1,926,337[2]	£16.76 per call taken, with an average cost of £25.84 per unique caller	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents. • To provide print and downloadable information for Parentline • To raise awareness and promotion of Parentline
Contact a Family helpline 0808 808 3555 www.cafamily.org .uk	The Contact a Family freephone helpline offers advice and information on any aspect of caring for a disabled child. It covers all disabilities, including the rarest conditions. They provide a very wide range of general and specialist information, covering medical conditions, services and rights. The	Parents of all disabled parents	10,000 calls answered by a call taker and 7,500 unique callers responded to	£283,956[3]	£31.06 per call taken, with an average cost of £41.41 per unique caller	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents. • To Support a publicity project in the Evelina

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[1] A number of providers have also received additional funding for activities such as new content development.
[2] Parentline Plus helpline also received £120,101 funding for awareness and promotion in 2008/09
[3] Contact a Family Helpline also received an additional grant of £13,683 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	helpline provides a comprehensive call back service for parents with complex enquiries and for those needing an interpreter.					Children's Hospital • Extending Contact a Family's family linking project • Providing specialist in house training
Advisory Centre for Education helpline Advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327 www.ace-ed.org.uk	Provides free, independent and legally accurate advice on education via an advice line, helping parents to support their children's education. ACE gives advice across the whole range of education issues: school exclusions, special educational needs, school admission and choice, bullying, attendance issues and disputes or discrimination. Covers children in state funded education aged 5-16.	Anyone wanting specialist education advice or guidance on funded education in England and Wales. Specialist advice is also provided for parents or carers of children excluded from; at risk of exclusion and; children experience bullying at school	Law and guidance on education advice line: 7,126 calls answered by a call taker and 6, 947 unique callers responded to Exclusion advice line: 3,667 calls answered by a call taker and 3,575 unique callers responded to Bullying advice	£562,774[1]	£43.84 per call taken, with an average cost of £46.15 per unique caller	• Providing a specialist advice line for parents and carers of children excluded from school or at risk of exclusion • Provision of helpline advice on bullying at school • Free advice booklets for callers • Implement call logging and reporting database • staff training • New Snr Policy and Law Adviser • extend helpline opening hours • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality

[1] ACE also received an additional grant of £26,770 for 2008/09 for their helpline service

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
			line: 1,052 calls answered by a call taker and 1,026 unique callers responded to Free advice booklets: 52,300 sent out			Standard
Young Minds helpline 0800 018 2138 www.youngminds.org.uk	The helpline provides help to anyone who has concerns about a child or young person's mental health or emotional wellbeing. This can cover: challenging behaviour, bereavement, depression, eating disorders, self-harming and serious diagnosable mental health difficulties. Where appropriate, callers are offered a more extensive telephone consultation callback with a qualified mental health practitioner.	Anyone who has a concern about a child or young person's mental health or emotional wellbeing	6,000 unique calls answered by the Helpline Service 2,000 unique calls answered by the Call Back service	Total: £390,557[1] £303,957 for the Helpline service and £86,600 for the Callback service	Helpline: £64.67 per call taken, with an average cost of £64.71 per unique caller Call Back: £43.30 per unique caller	• Developing a new 'Share Your Story' section on Young Minds' website • Developing Young Minds' Parents Information Email Service • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents.
Family Rights	This confidential telephone advice	Parents, carers	5,400 calls	£258,670[2]	£48.00 per	• An email advice

[1] Young Minds also received an additional grant of £14,550 for 2008/09 for their Helpline service

[2] The Family Rights Group also received an additional grant of £13,000 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Group helpline 0800 731 1696 www.frg.org.uk	service supports vulnerable parents and other family members requiring advice and support on child welfare needs or concerns. Our service is a source of specialist information about families' legal rights and what they can expect of the social care system. Advisers are experts in the fields of child law.	and other family members whose children are involved with, or need, social care services.	answered by a call taker and 5,000 unique callers responded to		call taken, with an average cost of £52.00 per unique caller	service for families requiring advice and support on child welfare needs or concerns • To extend the opening hours of the helplines • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents.
Children's Legal Centre helpline 0845 120 2948 www.childrenslegalcentre.com	The Child Law Advice Line provides free legal advice and information on all aspects of law and policy affecting children and families. Expert advisers ensure parents and carers can get accurate information on child law and access the support and services to which they are entitled. Urgent cases are referred to an in-house child lawyer.	Parents, carers and professionals, with particular care to target vulnerable children and families, for example children with special educational needs, who are being bullied or with mental health problems and families	6,000 calls answered by a call taker/ unique calls taken	£187,000[1]	£35.30	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents. • Ensure the frequently asked questions posted on the Children's Legal Centre's website are relevant and kept up to date

[1] The Children's Legal Centre also received an additional grant of £9,350 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
		involved in the care system.				
Gingerbread Single Parent helpline 0800 018 5026 www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk	The Lone Parent Helpline is a dedicated freephone confidential service, offering help and advice to lone parents on a wide range of issues: benefits and tax credits, education and training, returning to work, childcare, and more. It aims to offer information and help that lone parents can trust and to provide follow up support and advice to those who need it.	Single parents and any person bringing up children on their own	3,000 calls answered by a call taker/ unique calls taken	£154,999[1]	£51.67	• To enhance the Single Parent Helpdesk through the production and publication of a topical information section • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents.

Note: All helplines were awarded grants for a three year contract period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011.

[1] Gingerbread also received an additional grant of £7,729 for 2008/09

Table 2 - Description of text message services

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Ask ACE www.ace-ed.org.uk Text Keyword ASKACE to 68808	ACE is providing a free text based service called Ask ACE to parents with queries about educational issues for their child. It provides free accurate legal advice by text on issues such as exclusions or bullying. Texts provide a simple first response and an opportunity to expand the query or links to the ACE website or a booklet for more details.	All parents but particularly for parents of teenagers and those who do not have web access or prefer not to use the web.	62,326 new individual users and at least 323,000 SMS exchanges (128,702 incoming and 194,456 outgoing texts)- achieving an average of 5.24 texts per parent helped	£566,175	Average cost of £1.73 per individual contact and £9.08 per user	• To comply with the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark (General Help) and the Telephone Helplines Association – Parenting Quality Standard
Relate for Parents text service www.relateforparents.org.uk Text 60616	Three new services for parents, offering therapeutically based advice and support. A text messaging service offers individualised text responses on any relationship counselling topics, emotional or factual. Relate are also offering a website and Live Chat facilities (see web and social media below).	Parents in distress, particularly fathers and reaching both couples and lone parents.	8719 individual parents helped from a total of 14,560 contacts.	£190,328	£21.83 per parent helped	• A complimentary website will be attached to the Relate website

Note: All text message services were commissioned for an initial contract period from late January 2008 to end of June 2009.

[1] This is the total budget from February 08 to June 09 exclusive of VAT

Table 3 - Description of web and social media services

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Parentline Plus - www.Gotateenager.com	A new social networking site which is aimed at parents of teenagers who do not have access to the social networks available to parents of primary school age children. Content includes e-learning tools (modules that parents can complete online), web TV shows, email support, message boards and a jargon buster. The service will take parents through the journey of bringing up teenagers, providing a social network, e-learning and extended support for parents.	Parents, extended family and carers of teenagers, including: fathers of teenagers; black and minority ethnic parents of teenagers; and parents with disabled teenagers.	85,500 parents	£571,428	£6.68 per parent helped	• Enable access of multimedia content via computer, mobile phone and Web TV shows. • Extended support through facilitated support services including online and email support and 'ask the experts' for those parents who identify that they need extra support. • Providing parents attending programmes with the opportunity of Open College Network Accreditation.

[1] This is the total budget from February 08 to June 09 exclusive of VAT

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
NetMums Parent Supporters and the Relationship Course www.netmums.co.uk	NetMums is an existing social network, and is the biggest source of support and advice for mums in the UK. This project provides an extra layer of support to mums using the coffee house support boards. Mums with serious problems can have access to a professional directly online and receive information and support and access to local services. A team of parent supporters provides expert advice on specific topics, this includes Health Visitors and experts from Contact a Family, Women's Aid, ACE and One Plus One. NetMums are also providing online self help programmes and courses, including a Relationship Course with One Plus One. Technology is managed and delivered in-house	Parent Supporters: Mothers with especially severe needs which can leave them vulnerable to suicide; mothers of disabled or special needs children; mothers of teenagers. Relationship course: All parents but specifically mothers and fathers seeking to strengthen their relationship with each other and with their children.	51,845 parents reached	£484,015	Average cost of £9.34 per parent helped	• Providing a service that joins up third sector services, DCSF, Department of Health and locally Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities – by bringing in professionals from these services on to the NetMums forum.
One Plus One - CoupleConnection	A new website where parents can find out how to manage their relationship effectively. The site	All parents but particularly fathers and	67,356 parents reached	£472,493	£7.01 per parent helped	• Raise awareness of: the importance of getting on with

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
www.thecoupleconnection.net	is designed to help couples work through changes in their relationship together through the use of self-assessment tools, blogs and forums. The site aims to build a community of parents all helping each other with experts acting as moderators. The website also includes goal setting resources and review and encouragement tools. The couple space part of the site is a private interactive area for couples to work together and keep interactive diaries.	parents of disabled children.				partner for better parenting; parent child relationships; father involvement • Develop Experiential information and 'information with feeling' – multi-media, real life accounts offering mums' and dads' perspectives to heighten empathy;
Family Matters Institute - DadTalk www.dadtalk.co.uk	DadTalk is a social networking site fathers that aims to champion fatherhood via the web and raise dads' confidence and aspirations. It includes a forum where trained moderators offer reflective discussion, thoughts and signposting to 'professionals' and where dads can share experiences. The website also includes videos, podcasts, articles and a 'legal eagle' section providing information on legal issues affecting fathers and their	All fathers but in particular fathers from African and Caribbean communities & dual heritage groups and fathers of teenagers	13,846 fathers	£189, 600	£13.69 per parent helped	• To achieve PQASSO Level 1 accreditation for Quality Assurance • Off-line fathers' focus groups in Luton, London, Bedford, Birmingham and Leeds.

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	children. Technology is provided by an external provider (Visual Solutions)					
SPAN - One Space www.onespace.org.uk	One Space is a new social networking website for single parents. The website includes online groups that are led by facilitators experienced in parenting support where parents can exchange views and experiences. The website is rich is multimedia content including videos, blogs, podcasts and other 'interactive' resources. Technology is provided by an IT partner (Cosmic)	Single-parent families, particularly those who are more isolated and vulnerable, and mothers who are in more severe need who are currently not accessing professional help	20,000 parents reached through total of 240,000 contacts	£275,072	£13.75 per parent helped	• A UK Advice Finder resource to enable parents to locate support in their local area as well as national family support services
Attic Media with Respect - Dad's Space and Dad's Team www.dads-space.com	Three new media services have been developed: Dads Space Public; Dads Space 'one to one' and Dads Team. Dads Space 'public' is an online community space where dads can access information and engage in various multimedia content, including videos and podcasts. Dads Space 'one to one' is a secure site where non-	All father's but particularly those that don't live with their children	57,000 parents reached through Dad's Space Public and 6,100 through Dad's Space 'One to One'. 147,700 parents reached through Dad's Team	Dad's Space: £516,861 Dad's Team: £490,515	Dad's Space: £5.99 per parent helped Dad's Team: £2.85 per parent helped	• Supportive materials and resources to assist fathers in enhancing their relationship with their child

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	resident fathers can keep in touch with their children. An online space is provided where fathers and their children can chat, share files, pictures and messages in a safe and fun environment. Dad's Team is a syndicated content approach which targets sites where dads already go to deliver father friendly content such as videos and games. Technology is managed and delivered in-house		syndicated content			
Contact a Family - social networking services and Second Life www.cafamily.org.uk	A series of new Contact a Family spaces in existing social networking sites including Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and YouTube which offer information for parents to download (video and written materials) and ways to get in touch with parents in similar situations. A virtual advice centre in Second Life offers one to one sessions with a worker in real time, as well as general advice to users. Technology will managed and delivered in-house	Parents of disabled children, particularly those who struggle to use conventional channels such as advice centres because of access issues.	29,515 new users reached through contracted services Further breakdown: 16,075 viewing videos, podcasts, blogs and signing up for RSS feeds; 6,750 using social networking; 6,500 information booklets	£128,004	£4.34 per parent helped	• 'Ask the expert' sessions • Friendly 'how to' guides to encourage parents to use new communication channels • Promotion of existing helpline and website services

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[1]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
			distributed ; 190 parents given advice in Second Life;			
Relate - Live Talk and Relate for Parents website www.relateforparents.org.uk	Three new services for parents, offering therapeutically based advice and support. A Live Chat service offers real time instant messaging sessions for parents with a trained adviser. The new Relate for Parents website provides information about the services and resources on a range of related topics including divorce, stress and eating disorders. Also a text messaging service is available (see above). The technology for these services are being managed and delivered in house	Parents in distress, particularly fathers.	16,380 parents helped through 24,570 contacts (average of 1.5 contacts per parent).

195,000 unique users reached through the Relate for Parents website | Live Talk: £181,775 Web support: £66,001 | Live Talk: £11.10 per parent helped Web Support: £0.34 per parent helped. | • A complimentary website attached to the Relate website
• Achieve an average of 15 minutes for each Live Chat contact |

Note: All web and social media services were commissioned for an initial contract period from late January 2008 to end of June 2009.

Technical Annex

Contents   Page

Glossary and abbreviations

The report includes a number of key terms relating to certain aspects of the Parent Know How programme. For clarity and consistency, the following terms apply throughout.

ACE	Advisory Centre for Education.
Bebo	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
BME	Black Minority Ethnic.
Blog	Contraction of the term 'web log' - is usually one person's views, diary, and thoughts for the day, published on the internet and regularly maintained.
CAF	Contact a Family.
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service.
Callback	Following an initial call to a helpline, some helplines offer a callback service where a specialist call taker or worker makes targeted callbacks to calls to discuss things or offer advice in more detail.
Chat room	A web based discussion area where users can chat to each other through type written responses in real time.
CLC	Children's Legal Centre.
Click through's	Website visitors can often access a list of links to other websites in the 'links' section of a website. When they click on one of those hyperlinks they are 'clicking through' to another website.
COI	Central Office of Information.
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families.
Email	Electronic means of sending messages over the internet. Emails can include text, pictures, and audio files.
Facebook	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
FMI	Family Matters Institute.
FRG	Family Rights Group.
Forum	Web based discussion forum. Similar to a chat room but does not happen in real time. Messages are posted under common topics or 'threads'. Moderators usually moderate forums dealing with enquiries and checking content.
Google Adwords	A pay per click advertising service offered by Google search engine where key words are used from search terms to display relevant adverts / web links.
IAG	Information, advice and guidance.
IM	Instant messaging (see full entry).

Information, support and advice	The differences between informational services, advice giving services and supportive services should be noted throughout this report.
Instant messaging	A form of real-time communication over the internet between two or more users (people) based on typing text. Different from email in that it is in real time.
ISPP	Information Service for Parents and Practitioners.
MMR	Monthly Monitoring Report. All innovation funded projects completed statistical monthly monitoring reports providing updates on their service in terms of reach, priority parent segments, satisfaction and outcomes.
MySpace	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
GB	Gingerbread (formerly known as One Parent Families-Gingerbread).
OPO	One Plus One
Parents helped	'Parents helped' refers to the total number of parents reached through the Parent Know how funded services. This is defined differently according to the type of service. In the case of a helpline reach is defined as the number of unique calls taken by the helpline. In the case of an SMS service, it is the number of unique users sending text messages to the service. In the case of web and social media this also includes numbers of downloads of videos (as in the case of YouTube content) or number of visitors to a service or website (for example total number of visits to the website or profile page in Facebook). In all cases the greatest figure is taken to refer to 'reach'.
PDF	Portable Document Format is a file format created by Adobe Systems in 1993 for document exchange.
Podcasts	Short downloadable video / music clips from the internet.
Post, posts, postings	Written messages posted on websites in web forums or discussion areas.
PLP	Parentline Plus.
PR	Press and public relations.
QMR	Quarterly Monitoring Report. All helplines completed statistical quarterly monitoring reports providing updates on their service in terms of reach, priority parent segments, satisfaction and outcomes.
Registered users	Websites or social networking sites often have a registration facility. Registered users become members of the site and are then allowed privileges, for example being able to post messages in the discussion forum or access further content.
RSS	Really Simple Syndication (a type of web feed that provides users with frequently updated content. Users can subscribe to RSS feeds).
SEN	Special Educational Needs.

SMS	Simple Message Service (text message).
Social networking	A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as email and instant messaging services. (Source: Wikipedia).
SPAN	Single Parent Action Network.
Syndication	The process by which content is made available to other published resources (such as in print media or on the web).
Twitter	A social networking website. Users have to sign up to become members to use the free service.
YouTube	A video and content download site. Users can post video content to the site to share with other users.
YM	Young Minds.

1.0   Introduction

ECOTEC Research & Consulting was commissioned in January 2008 to evaluate the Parent Know How services on behalf of the Department of Children, Schools and Families. This document provides a technical annex to support the final report of the findings. A full final report is provided under separate cover.

1.1   Overview of Parent Know How

Parent Know How is a new programme designed to deliver better outcomes for children and parents by driving greater efficiency, innovation and reach in the parenting information and support services funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. It draws together existing and new channels including the use of new technologies/media, such as text messaging and the internet, as well as print media, such as magazines, with the aim of improving the range and choice of services and information channels for parents.

The provision of information and support to parents was raised as a key issue for development by the Government in March 2007. Departmental backing for the programme was further strengthened by the release of the Children's Plan[1] in December 2007, which reiterated the commitment for improved information and support provision through to 2010/11. Parent Know How is providing in the region of £65 million worth of funding from 2008 to 2011.

The **objectives** of Parent Know How are to achieve:

- an increase in the **capacity** of parenting support funded by DCSF from approximately 100,000 parents helped in 07-08 to 760,000 parents helped each year from 10-11;

- improved support to particular **parent segments** which are currently underserved or for whom the technologies would provide significant benefits - such as the parents of disabled children, parents of teenagers and fathers;

- greater parental **satisfaction** with the range of ways in which they can seek and access support; and

- greater innovation from **collaboration** between the private and third sectors in delivering across multiple channels.

Parent Know How is designed to improve provision to all parents, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of parents who are not as well served by current sources of help as they could be. They include; parents of disabled children, fathers from all backgrounds and parents of teenage children. Working with key third sector organisations to deliver services, Parent Know How enables support for all those in parenting roles through four main strands:

Telephone helplines - consisting of continued and increased support to existing helplines; enabling expanded capacity so lines can open longer and be staffed by more call takers;

Innovation projects - including support to third sector organisation developing and providing text messaging services, and web and internet based services which include instant messaging, social networking tools and discussion forums;

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[1] See http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/childrensplan/

A 'Virtual Magazine' - printed content that reaches parents who would prefer not to use telephone helplines or internet technologies to access information, advice and support through embedded articles or 'syndicated' content; and

Internet based information for parents and practitioners - through a web based searchable directory of family and parenting information.

This evaluation deals exclusively with the first two strands of Parent Know How, namely the helplines and the innovation projects. Evaluations of the other strands are also taking place and are published under separate cover.

1.2   Data reporting and rounding

Throughout this report percentages are rounded to the nearest full percent. Any figure of more than zero but less than half a per cent is indicated by an asterisk (*).

1.3   Structure of this document

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Annexes One details our methodological approach to the evaluation

- Annexes Two to Four contain copies of the topline survey results by type of service (Helplines, SMS services and web and social media services);

- Annex Five contains the topic guides used within the evaluation; and

- Annex Six provides a more detailed overview of the services funded through Parent Know How and their targets.

For any further information on this technical annex please contact Nicola Hall at ECOTEC Research & Consulting on nicola.hall@ecotec.com

Annex One - Methodological Approach

Methodological Annex

The evaluation of the Telephone Helplines and Innovation Fund strands of Parent Know How commenced in January 2008 and was completed in February 2009. The same core methods were used to evaluate both strands:

- **quantitative methods** including monthly and quarterly monitoring of providers' activities, outputs and deliverables, a telephone and web survey of parents using the Parent Know How Services; and analysis of cost effectiveness; and

- **qualitative methods** including initial in-depth telephone interviews with parents using the funded services, follow up interviews with a small sample of these initial interviewees, half evaluation day workshops for parents not accessing the services and policy stakeholder interviews.

This combined approach was designed to allow a comprehensive assessment of whether the services delivered under both strands fulfilled their expected benefits. The following sections detail the specific methods for the evaluation in more depth.

Quantitative evaluation

There were three elements to the quantitative evaluation:

i.   monthly and quarterly monitoring of providers' activities, outputs and deliverables;

ii.   a telephone and web survey of parents using the Parent Know How Services; and,

iii.   cost effectiveness analysis.

Monthly and quarterly monitoring of providers' activities, outputs and deliverables

The collection and analysis of high-quality monitoring data was of central importance to the evaluation to ensure regular and consistent tracking of programme performance. Monthly and quarterly monitoring of providers' activities, outputs and deliverables was, therefore, undertaken. Specifically, quarterly monitoring data collection was undertaken in three periods, across all seven helplines from 1st April 2008, to 31st December 2008. A need for more regular monitoring of the innovation fund providers was identified, given the more recent launch of these projects, so monthly monitoring of these providers occurred from service launch (dates for individual providers varied from March to September 2008) until 31st December 2008.

The quarterly monitoring reports for helpline providers had been designed by DCSF and agreed with the seven helplines prior to the start of the evaluation so the evaluators used the same report format. The monthly reports for innovation fund providers were designed by ECOTEC during the initial research design phase of the evaluation. The evaluation team recognised the need to not over-burden the providers with requests for data. An electronic monitoring report in excel format was, therefore, used for providers across both strands to gather information on reach figures and parent segments targeted. Specifically, the monitoring reports collected data on:

- ►   numbers of unique service users (new and repeat);

- ►   service user profile (gender, ethnicity, disability, age of child, area / region);

- ►   frequency of service use;

- ►   service feedback; and

- ►   contract management issues such as progress against milestones and updates to the risk monitor.

Definitions of unique users and targets for reach were agreed between the Department and all the providers. For the helplines unique callers were defined as the number of 'unique callers' who are contacting the helpline regarding a specific enquiry, as measured by the helpline's caller identifier software[1]. This definition did not include any follow-up calls regarding the same enquiry (or subject) but a previous caller with a different issue counts as a new unique caller. Call length was also monitored. For text message services, the used software also provided incoming figures for unique mobile phone numbers. For web based services, software packages (such as Google Analytics) provided data on unique visits or visitors.

The reports were piloted in month one and any necessary revisions made. From then on, email reminders were sent to providers, by ECOTEC researchers, on a monthly basis to request the latest monitoring data. The DCSF was responsible for collecting quarterly monitoring data from the seven helplines. Once returned the data for each provider was collated into a central excel spreadsheet which was used to monitor ongoing performance for each provider.

In addition to the collection of monthly and quarterly monitoring data, bi-annually, in depth monitoring interviews were conducted with all providers, across both strands, to give qualitative feedback on performance, including barriers, successes and issues arising. These in depth interviews lasted between 1-2 hours and were conducted with project managers and operational staff.

Telephone and web survey of parents using the Parent Know How Services

A survey of parents using Parent Know How services was conducted between 2nd June 2008 and 15th January 2009 as the second strand of the quantitative evaluation. Two different approaches were used for administration of the survey to match the different services being accessed by parents and their preferred route for responding. Specifically, telephone interviews were used where appropriate (i.e. for parents accessing helplines as well as for those using text message services) and web surveys for parents utilising relevant web and social media services. The surveys were designed to provide data on user demographics (e.g. household background, ethnicity and age of children, issues contacted about), satisfaction and outcomes. The full questionnaires used for the surveys are supplied in section two of this Technical Annex.

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[1] Please note, not all the helplines used the same caller identifier software.

The sample for the survey was constructed in a number of ways. The helplines and text message providers asked parents using their services to participate in the telephone survey and the contact details and segmentation details of those who agreed were passed securely to ECOTEC. Those agreeing to take part were then contacted by ECOTEC's survey team within two to three weeks to complete the survey. Parents using the various web and social media services were recruited online to complete a shortened version of the survey. Web surveys were linked from providers' web and social media services and hosted securely by ECOTEC.

A total sample of 3500 respondents was sought across the telephone and web surveys. The balance of telephone (2500 respondents) and web respondents (1000) was agreed in conjunction with the DCSF to reflect the intended volumes of users across the different types of services. ECOTEC also set quotas for the achievement of interviews for each provider to ensure a representative reflection of service usage. These were calculated as a proportion of the anticipated volumes for each provider, as detailed in their contract management plan (that was agreed with the Department). Although additionally, a minimum of 100 responses was sought for each provider to provide a basis for sub-set analysis by provider. However, for some services, this minimum quota was not achieved due to the smaller than expected reach of some of the services[1]. In total, therefore, across the two strands and both types of survey, a total sample of **2,351 parents** were interviewed. This gives an overall response rate of 0.6% based on all users of parent know how funded services (375,768 parents) and of 67% against the target response rates. A full breakdown of target versus achieved response rates by provider is given below.

Table 1 - Survey response rates

Services	Response rates (target)	Response rates (achieved, in *n*)	Response rates (achieved in %)
Helplines total	*950*	*980*	*103%*
Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	100	104	104%
Contact a Family (CAF)	100	100	100%
Children's legal centre (CLC)	100	125	125%
Family Rights Group (FRG)	100	101	101%
Gingerbread (GB)	100	100	100%
Parentline Plus (PLP)	350	350	100%
Young Minds (YM)	100	100	100%
Innovation services	*2,500*	*1,371*	*55%*
Ask Ace (SMS)	300	59	17%
Parentline's Got a teenager SMS	0	1	-
Couple Connection (CC)	350	48	14%
Contact a Family CAF WEB	200	27	14%
DAD SPACE	500	648	130%
DAD TALK	150	67	45%
NetMums (NMUM)	200	250	125%
Got a Teenager (GAT)	350	101	29%
Relate (REL)	350	104	30%
SPAN	150	66	44%
Overall response rate	**3,500**	**2,351**	**67%**

[1] For instance survey data is only available for one of the three text services since reach figures were too low for other services to create adequate sample for a survey.

The survey data was analysed using SPSS. Sample tolerance tests were applied to the percentage results of the survey and when comparing subgroups differences are only reported on if they are significant at the 95% confidence level. It is not possible to infer from survey results the extent to which the responses given are representative of the wider population of service users since the majority of services did not collect demographic information and thus there was very limited information about the wider population[1]. Instead, where possible, throughout the analysis results have been compared with national data[2] to obtain a comparison. Likewise, it was not possible to undertake any non-response analysis since there was no way of knowing who accessed the web based or text services but did not respond to the option to complete an evaluation survey due to the anonymity afforded users by new technologies (such as test messaging).

Cost effectiveness

A separate cost-effectiveness analysis was undertaken as the final element of the quantitative evaluation. This served to ascertain the value for money of the services delivered under each strand and to calculate costs per parent for each of the services. Our approach to this was the development of unit costs for different services, based on financial data provided by the Department. Additionally costs were re-calculated with set up costs shared over three years to provide an overview of project costs over the mid-term.

Qualitative primary research

A range of qualitative research methods were completed as a second strand of the evaluation. This included:

in-depth telephone interviews with parents;
follow up interviews with parents;
half day evaluation workshops; and
policy stakeholder interviews.

All the topic guides for this aspect of the evaluation are provided in annex five.

In-depth telephone interviews with parents

In-depth telephone interviews with parents were undertaken to provide a detailed understanding of the views of different parent segments targeted and reactions to specific services. Interviews were undertaken between 1st July 2008 and 15 January 2009. Fieldwork was timed to begin at least a month after service launch to allow for bedding down of new services before users were consulted.

The sample of parents was constructed on an ongoing basis through the quantitative survey, with parents asked at the end of the survey whether they would be interested in participating in the additional qualitative research. Additionally some of the innovation services recruited participants via email or on web forums. In total 75 in depth telephone interviews were completed with parents using the funded services, with a minimum of four interviews achieved per service, see table 2 below.

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[1] Due to the 'anonymous' nature of many innovation services, for example the software used by providers did not collect demographic data about users of a text service or visitors to a website.
[2] For example Census data or nationally representative household or panel surveys.

Table 2 - Qualitative interview response rates

Services	In depth interviews (achieved)
Helplines total	*32*
Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	5 (inc 1 follow up)
Contact a Family (CAF)	6 (inc 1 follow up)
Children's legal centre (CLC)	5 (inc 1 follow up)
Family Rights Group (FRG)	4 (inc 1 follow up)
Gingerbread (GB)	4 (inc 1 follow up)
Parentline Plus (PLP)	5 (inc 1 follow up)
Young Minds (YM)	3
Innovation services	*43*
ACE SMS	5 (inc 1 follow up)
Couple Connection (CC)	2
Contact a Family CAF WEB	5
DAD SPACE	5 (inc 1 follow up)
DAD TALK	6 (inc 1 follow up)
Got a Teenager (GAT)	3
NetMums (NMUM)	6 (inc 1 follow up)
Relate (REL)	7
One Space (SPAN)	4
Overall response rate	**75**

The interviews with parents were weighted towards the specific parent segments targeted by the Department and included interviews with 18 dads, 15 parents of disabled children, 27 parents of teenagers, and 15 parents from a black or minority ethnic background. This was so that the experiences of particular parent segments could be explored in more detail.

Follow up interviews with parents

A smaller number of follow up in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with parents who were previously interviewed to explore whether outcomes had been sustained in the longer term. These interviews were timed to occur three months after the previous interview, therefore, taking place between October 2008 and February 2009. A total of 10 follow up interviews were completed overall.

Half day evaluation workshops

Primary research was also undertaken with parents from target parent segments not using the Parent Know How services. This served to provide independent feedback on the appropriateness and scope of the Parent Know How services, and helped identify any gaps within provision or unmet needs. This strand of qualitative research took the form of four half day workshops, involving 77 parents from specific parent segments. Parents were recruited purposively through on-street recruitment. These events took place in November and December 2008 in four regions of England, namely, the Midlands, North East, South West and London. The workshops were interactive with parents being able to access demonstration versions of the Parent Know How services.

Policy stakeholder interviews

The final element of qualitative research was stakeholder interviews with seven policy representatives from the Department. These interviews were undertaken in November 2008 and were completed to explore the level of collaboration and learning between partners and independent views on the effectiveness of the services being provided.

Qualitative analysis

For the qualitative data, an analysis framework was designed to grid the key findings from each type of interview or workshop. This allowed data to be sorted so that it is stored in a common order. All grids were then thematically analysed, drawing out evidence to support arguments and to triangulate the findings from the quantitative data analysis. Grids were analysed by parent segment (e.g. dads, parents of disabled children) as well as according to the evaluation questions in the evaluation framework. Verbatim comments were extracted from the data for use in the reporting.

Lessons learned about the methodology

A number of lessons were learned when implementing the methodologies to evaluate the helpline and innovation strands of Parent Know How, as follows:

►   Response rates to surveys of web users and text message users are highly dependent on service uptake and generally very low (less than 1% as a proportion of all website or text service users). Telephone surveys generally achieved a much higher response rate.

►   Web survey response rates are highly dependent on prominent placement of the survey within a website and regular promotion of the survey via email or in user forums.

►   An incentive is beneficial in improving response rates, for example offering MP3 players or mobile phones as prizes was beneficial.

►   Defining and agreeing precise reach figures was complex for a number of reasons. The providers used a variety of technological packages which did not offer complete comparability. For instance some packages offered data on visits and others on visitors. Definitions around how to monitor downloads of a podcasts or a video had to be agreed. Furthermore for some services DCSF was funding only part of the service (for example an extension to an existing website) whereas for other providers the whole service was funded. This meant complex methods for determining reach figures were required.

►   Providing each provider with a dedicated researcher who handled all aspects of the evaluation methodology in relation to collecting monitoring data, collecting sample for surveys and undertaking qualitative interviews proved beneficial in mediating access to the relevant information and building a rapport with providers.

For more details on any aspect of the method please contact Nicola Hall at ECOTEC
nicola.hall@ecotec.com

Annex Two - Topic guides

2.1 Parent topic guide

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

Finding out about the innovation/helpline service

I understand you used [insert name] recently, we just want to find out what your thoughts were about it.

1. Please can you describe how you first became aware of or found out about [insert name]?
Probes - If used it before, ask how they originally found out about it.
If came across it accidentally, ask how it happened e.g. which website or search engine or link?
if heard in yellow pages, ask how originally found out about it to know to look it up?
If referred from elsewhere, what kind of support and advice have you received from [insert name] or the referral agency?

2. What were your first impressions before you used the service? Were you interested straight away, or did you need some persuading to use it/get involved?
Probe - What first interested you, or persuaded you to find out more? What convinced you to contact them?

Purpose of contacting

3. Who and what did you contact [insert name] about?
Probe - for yourself, for your partner, for your child/teenager? What were the broad issue(s) you wanted to find out about, or was it for other purposes (e.g. social networking)?
Probe - general interest, specific question, seeking support on a specific issue, etc

4. How did you chose/decide the way you did to use/contact [insert name]?
Probe - which other ways were they aware of, why they did it that way, was it a more familiar technology / approach to use, easier to use, less time-consuming, do they prefer the 'human voice' etc.
Collect views about the other methods of contacting (i.e. why choose SMS or web or helpline or chatroom or second life or course or e-learning etc).

Customer experience

5. What were your initial expectations? What did you hope to get out of [insert name], when you started using / contacting them?

6. For you, how easy or difficult was it to use this method of contacting/ using [insert name]?
Probe - Why? Any suggested improvements?

7. Could you have got this info/advice/support elsewhere?
Probe - If so where and why go to [insert name] to get it? Why did you use/prefer this route?

8. How long did it take from making initial contact to accessing what you were seeking? What are your views on how long it took?
Probe - was it too long, or fairly quick? Did it meet your expectations?

9. How many times (approximately) have you used [insert name] since you first became aware of it? (i.e. in total) And how many times do you use it an average month?
Probe - why do you keep using it, what brings you back?
Probe - If infrequent use, why?
Probe - any difficulties on previous occasions? Any aspects easier to use than others? Continuity, ease, access, barriers?

10. Have you used any other similar / other parenting type sources of information or help before?
Probe - which ones and very brief views on those.

Satisfaction

11. Overall, how would you describe your experience of [insert name] and how did you feel about it? How satisfied were you with it?
Probe - For you, what worked well about the way things worked? What did not work so well? How did it compare with any other services you have used recently?

12. How relevant and useful did you think [insert name] was to you?
How relevant and useful did you find the topics/issues that [insert name] covered?
Probe - Why? Which parts were most / least useful and why? How well did they meet your needs / wants?

13. Did you have any needs that [insert name] could not meet (unmet needs)?
Probe - If so, what?

14. How could [insert name] be improved?
Probe - on things around how service was delivered, e.g. usefulness, friendliness, length, level of detail, usability etc.

15. Would you consider using [insert name] again in the future?
Probe - Why / not?

Short term outcomes

We'd like to find out a bit about any effect that using [insert name] has had on you and your family.

16. What do you feel the impact of using/contacting [insert name] on you personally has been? What do you feel you have gained as a result?

17. What do you feel the impact of using/contacting [insert name] on your child/family has been? What do you feel they have gained as a result?

18. (If relevant) What do you feel the impacts of using/contacting [insert name] on you and your partner have been? What do you feel you have both gained as a result?

Q17-19 Probe around soft outcomes and w.r.t. any evidence around DCSF PSA targets (ref the interviewer briefing note):
Resolving the issue / problem, tactics or means of dealing with the issues, better able to cope etc.
Wellbeing, feelings and softer outcomes (e.g. feel less alone or feel more confident in parenting or better couple/family relationships)

19.   How would you describe the impact (or expected impact) of your use of [insert name] on your:
a)   understanding / awareness / knowledge
b)   confidence in yourself, and in parenting
c)   your plans / the way you approach things
d)   skills
e)   feelings
Probe - on expected impact if a recent user

20.   Did using [insert name] help you in any other ways that you *didn't expect*? If so, what were they?

21.   Did you, or do you plan to, take any actions / make any changes as a result of using/ contacting [insert name]?
Probe - what has changed? What led to this change? What effect it has had?
E.g. did they contact a GP or other professional, seek further advice/counselling, apply for a benefit, change approach with child etc.
Probe - any barriers, what might encourage you to do this?

22.   Have you tried out or used any of the ideas or information you were given? What were your experiences of this? Did you adapt the information / advice at all, to suit your own home situation?
Probe - How well did this work? How well equipped / prepared did you feel to do this?
Probe - Were there any barriers stopping you doing this? Family, level of co-operation, perceptions, to hard to do, did not fully understand etc.

23.   Did you discuss the ideas or information you were given with anyone else? And has there been any knock-on effect for other people in the family?
Probe - If so, please describe.

24.   Have you or others noticed any differences in your parenting style since being in touch with [insert name]?
Probe - *If so, what. For example, more understanding, calmer in tense situations, able to deal with anger etc.*

25.   Overall, thinking about your original purpose for using [insert name] to what extent were your expectations or needs met?
Probe - refresh their mind about what they expected (at Q5) information, support, skills, subject interest.

26.   What could have been changed regarding [insert name] so that it had more of a positive impact on you/your family?

27.   Has involvement with [insert name] made you more or less likely to seek support in the future?
Probe - Why and in what ways?

Summary

28.   Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Demographics - ALL

We would now like to ask you a few questions about yourself. This is to help us understand who has been using [insert name]. All your responses will remain anonymous. (Note to interviewer, only ask those questions which have not been covered / established during the interview so far. Read out options according to appropriate gender.)

a)   Who used [insert name] in your family? *(Do not ask if already covered)*
☐ Myself ☐ My partner ☐ My child / young person
☐ Another family member – please specify
☐ Other (please specify)_____

b)   What is your role within the family, are you a: (Select one) Do not ask if this has already been established during the conversation
☐ Mother   ☐ Father
☐ Step-mother   ☐ Step-father
☐ Non-resident mother (living away from the family home)
☐ Non-resident father (living away from the family home)
☐ Grandparent caring for child
☐ Grandparent without care of child
☐ Other relative   ☐ Friend / friend of family
☐ Partner of non-resident parent
☐ Professional / practitioner
☐ Pregnant mum to be   ☐ Father to be
☐ Carer or guardian
☐ Other (please specify_____)
☐ Not applicable

c)   What is the make-up of your family? (Select one) Do not ask if this has already been established during the conversation
☐ Married with our own children   ☐ Cohabiting with our own children
☐ Lone mother household   ☐ Lone father household
☐ Married with step-children   ☐ Cohabiting with step-children
☐ Married with our own children and step-children
☐ Cohabiting with our own children and step-children
☐ Gay/lesbian family
☐ Children in care   ☐ Foster family   ☐ Adoptive family
☐ Grandparents
☐ Married and expecting children   ☐ Cohabiting and expecting children
☐ Living away from the child(ren)
☐ Do not have children
☐ Other (please specify_____)
☐ Not applicable

d)   Can I take your postcode? We won't be writing to you! It's just so we can see what region the users of [insert name] have come from (the first 3/4 digits are enough e.g. BG28 or EC4).

e)   What is your age?

f)   What are the ages of the children you got in touch with [insert name] about ? What are the ages of any other children you have?

g)   How would you describe your ethnic background? (Select one)

h)   How would you describe the ethnic background of the child/person you contacted [insert name] about? (Select one)

☐ White British   ☐ White Irish   ☐ White Other
☐ Mixed - white and Black Caribbean
☐ Mixed - white and Black African
☐ Mixed - white and Asian   ☐ Mixed – any other
☐ Indian   ☐ Pakistani   ☐ Bangladeshi
☐ Asian - Other
☐ Black Caribbean   ☐ Black African
☐ Black - Other
☐ Chinese
☐ Other (please specify_____)
☐ Prefer not to say

i)   Do you have a disability? (Do not ask if this has already been established during the conversation - include details about type of disability if possible / appropriate)

j)   Does the child / young person you contacted [insert name] about, have a disability? (Do not ask if this has already been established during the conversation - include details about type of disability if possible / appropriate)

k)   Approximately how much money does your household receive each year (including all income sources and any benefits you receive before tax)? I will read out some bands to make it easier to select one:

☐ Under £5,000   ☐ £5,001 to £15,000
☐ £15,001 to £25,000 ☐ £25,001 to £35,000
☐ £35,001 to £50,000 ☐ Over £50,001
☐ Prefer not to say   ☐ Not applicable

After the initial interview, ask if they will agree to be re-contacted by telephone in 3 months:

l)   Would you be willing to be re-contacted by phone in three months time? At that time we'd like to ask you a few short questions about how things have been going and see if your experience and views of [insert name] have changed at all. It would only take about 10-15 minutes and we'd call you back at that time.

☐ If yes, check numbers and collect additional number (e.g. mobile) if possible.

Thank and close.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS (+ 3 Months)

Longer term outcomes

We'd like to find out a bit about any longer term and ongoing effect that using / contacting [insert name] has had on you, your family and your situation.

Q1-13 Probe around soft outcomes and w.r.t. any evidence around DCSF PSA targets (ref the interviewer briefing note).

NB if they have contacted the service regularly over the past 3 months it may not be possible to distinguish the exact contact which initiated the initial interview. In that case, use the topic guide to explore the ongoing impact that ongoing contact with the service has had.

1. Have you used/contacted [insert name] since we last spoke? If so, who and what did you contact [insert name] about?
Probe - same issue / different issue? How many times? If not, why not?

2. Have you used/contacted any other similar parenting support services since we last spoke? If so, who and what did you contact [insert name] about?
Probe - same issue / different issue? How many times? If not, why not?

3. (Ask all) Thinking back to the time you contacted/used [insert name] when we spoke 3 months ago…/ Thinking about the contact you have had with [insert name] over the past three months]…
What do you feel has been the longer term impact of using/contacting [insert name]?
(Ask where relevant :-)
a) What do you feel has changed for you personally?
b) What do you feel has changed for your child / family?
c) What do you feel has changed for you and your partner?
Probe - longer term resolution of issue, happier, safer, less arguments, better dealing with the issues, feel less alone, more confident in parenting, less violence, safer, better educational outcomes, reduced disadvantage etc?

4. What has changed since we last spoke in relation to the reasons/situation you contacted/used [insert name] about?
Probe - Was the situation / problem resolved?

5. Did using [insert name] three months ago/over the past 3 months help you in any other ways that you *didn't expect*? If so, what were they?

6. What was the result of any action(s) you took / practical changes you made after contacting/using [insert name]? What has happened since?
Probe - how, what effect? E.g. did they get a diagnosis or other professional advice, take further advice / counselling, awarded a benefit, got a decision appealed etc.

7. Were there any barriers that prevented you from taking action?
Probe - how, what effect did they have?

8. Have you or others noticed any longer term differences in your parenting style since being in touch with [insert name]?
Probe - *If so, what.*

9. What could have changed/been improved regarding [insert name] so that it had more of a longer term/lasting impact on you/your family?

10. Has the impact of contacting/using [insert name] made you more or less likely to seek support in the future?
Probe - Why and in what ways?

11. Do you have any remaining needs or issues that [insert name] has not been able to help you with?

12. Overall have your views about [insert name] changed in any way since we last spoke?

Summary

13. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank and close.

2.2   Topic guide for bi-annual qualitative monitoring (health check) visits with providers of Parent Know How funded services (helplines and innovations)

> Note to interviewers: This topic guide is to be used with all providers of Parent Know How funded services at the bi-annual monitoring stage. Interviews should last approx 1 to 1½ hours face-to-face or by telephone. The guide can be sent in advance of required. Explain the purpose of the meeting - it is to get providers' feedback on their helpline or innovation service, to gain useful context and to help understand any patterns in the monitoring statistics and gather any contextual feedback. Request permission to tape record (if recording). Take written notes. Tailor all questions to suit the name of the service being covered. All probes are given in *italics*. Providers may submit a written response if they prefer.
>
> The meeting will also be an opportunity to:
> - review MMR data with providers
> - collect any additional materials/data/feedback
> - review evaluation arrangements (including reviewing survey response rates and getting names in for our in-depth interview quotas)
> - answer any queries on the evaluation itself.
>
> If a provide provides two services, ensure differences between services are recorded (e.g. differences between SMS and website). Where they provide a helpline and an innovation project the meeting will need to be slightly longer to ensure all questions are covered for both services. It is useful to spend the first half on one then the second half on the other.

Overall feedback on innovation/helpline service

1.   Overall, how has the innovation project/helpline been developing or progressing?

2.   What have been the major changes/developments/milestones you have achieved?

3.   Please identify three 'lessons learned' from this experience to date

4.   In your estimation, has this project enabled you to built capacity or capability in your organisation? *Probe - If so, how and by how much?*

5.   Have you made any significant changes to your original plans? *Probe - if so what and why?*

6.   What's worked well so far? Just a brief overview at this stage, then we can pick up on some specifics later on. *Probe - Overall, technical side, project management side, timings, content, reaching the right people, volumes/take up, marketing etc.*

7.   What's worked less well so far? Just a brief overview at this stage, then we can pick up on some specifics later on. *Probe - Overall, technical side, project management side, timings, content, reaching the right people, volumes/take up, marketing etc.*

8. Can you provide a brief overview of your technical set-up, for example have you made any technical changes? Are you doing technology in house or with a partner?

MMR data feedback on reach

9. Looking at your MMR returns, would you say the 'reach' of your service/helpline is broadly on / above / below target? *Probe - why above / below? Reasons for delays?*

10. How easy or difficult has it been for you to reach the target volumes you originally anticipated? *Probe - Why easy / hard to meet targets? Overall, technical side, project management side, reaching the right target groups / users, volumes / take up etc. Explore each issue.*

11. Are there any other patterns in the monthly statistics you'd like to comment on, explain, highlight or contextualise?

12. Is there any additional data you have been collecting which you think would be of interest in the evaluation?
Probe - collect any additional data available (e.g. on some Helplines we can collect data sets from them which cover income, postcode etc - e.g. PLP and CLC) plus some web services may have data from registrations to their sites.

Target groups / users/ parent segments reached

13. So far, do you have an idea of who the users of your helpline/site are in terms of their profile/demographics?
Probe - are they all parents? What ages of parents, ages of children / young people, which regions, BME breakdown, disability etc?

14. What target groups / users do you feel you have been attracting? How do you know this?
Probe - from what sort of feedback?

15. How easy or difficult have you found it to reach and attract the intended target groups for your service / site / helpline?
Probe - has any marketing you tried worked? Are you reaching the 'right' people? Is it easier to reach some groups than others?

16. What are the key issues that have been coming up on your service / site / helpline? Any patterns in the issues?

17. Do you feel there is any unmet need(s) that you would like to be able to meet or see a demand for? Or are there any gaps in what you're able to offer where you feel there is still a need? *Probe - If so what?*

Satisfaction

18. Have you received any feedback so far, from parents/users of your services/helpline regarding their satisfaction with the service, aside from that being collected in the survey?
Probe - Positive or negative? How do you know / what evidence do you have of that?

User experience of service provision

19.   Have you received any feedback so far, from parents / users of your services / helpline regarding their experience of accessing or using the service, aside from that being collected in the survey/interviews? By that we mean things such as how easy it was to use the service, how easy it was to make contact, how helpful, friendly or useful the service was, the aesthetics of the service/website etc?
Probe - Positive or negative? How do you know/what evidence do you have of that?

20.   Do you feel certain services or type of service suit certain parent groups better or less well? (e.g. helpline versus SMS, versus website etc)

Outcomes

21.   What have been the outcomes so far, for parents / users of your services / helpline?
Probe - Positive or negative? How do you know/what evidence do you have of that?

22.   Do you have any examples of case studies or life stories that could be included in the evaluation? *Probe - possible interviewees for in-depth interviews? Collect details.*

23.   Have you had any feedback from parents/users so far that has not already been submitted on monitoring returns?

Collaboration and working together

24.   Please explain how you feel you have collaborated, shared experiences or jointly innovated with other Parent Know How services?

25.   Are you aware of the extent to which users are moving between services? By that we mean through formal processes such as referral mechanisms (for helplines mainly) or informally through web surfing or from friend/family recommendations etc?
Probe - what is the feedback on this, how well is it working? What are the patterns of movement?

26.   How well 'linked up' do you feel the Parent Know How services are with each other and with other relevant services for parents? How easy or difficult is it for parents to find what they need, or negotiate their way between the services?

27.   How effectively have relationships and working together worked within your project team and with any project partners (e.g. technology suppliers, other partners)?

28.   Have you had any challenges or difficulties so far?

29.   What are your views on the level of collaboration and working together between the various Parent Know How funded services themselves?
Probe - where has this worked well, not so well?

30.   What are your views on the level of collaboration and working together between the various Parent Know How funded services and the DCSF?
Probe - where has this worked well, not so well?

31.   Have you got any learning from this experience so far about collaborating with partners that you can share?

Resourcing

We will be undertaking a cost benefit analysis in January/ February 2009. We'd welcome any comments you'd like to make at this stage about resourcing.

32. Would you like to make any comments or give any feedback around the resourcing of your project? *How have you chosen to apply for/invest the additional funding made available by DCSF? (NB an additional 20-25k is being made available as a contract amendment in Sept 08)*
Also probe as to whether organisations have invested any additional organisational resources (volunteers or match funding) or pulled in any added value to the project?

33. Do you have any early feedback on whether your initial estimates of cost per parent will prove to be as per your original contract?
Probe - Is there any context we need to understand around those estimates?

Evaluation

34. Have you done any self-evaluation of either your processes or of the results you have had? If so is there anything you can share with us from that?

35. Provide brief overview of evaluation progress with reference to survey response rates for their service, in-depth interviews achieved so far for their service, any further feedback on MMR forms, and update on reporting. Remind them we can provide set of data from their survey responses, if desired.

Summary

36. What are your plans for your innovation/helpline going forwards?

37. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Any other comments/ questions?

Thank and close

Annex Three - Detailed description of Parent Know How funded services

3.1   Detailed description of Parent Know How funded services

This annex contains further details about the funded services: helplines, text message service and web and social media services[150].

Table 1 - Description of helplines

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Parentline Plus helpline www.parentlineplus.org.uk 0808 800 2222	Parentline gives immediate help via a helpline to parents from a volunteer parent support worker 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.They offer support on a wide range of issues, from problems coping with babies and toddlers, to teenage issues such as anti-social or risky behaviour, as well as bullying, discipline and the impact of divorce. They offer support and tips and strategies.	Anyone who parents, including relatives, friends and foster carers	123,500 calls answered and 80,100 unique callers responded to	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.	£1,926,337[151]	£16.76 per call taken, with an average cost of £25.84 per unique caller	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents. • To provide print and downloadable information for Parentline • To raise awareness and promotion of Parentline
Contact a Family helpline 0808 808 3555 www.cafamily.org.uk	The Contact a Family free phone helpline offers advice and information on any aspect of caring for a disabled child. It covers all	Parents of all disabled parents	10,000 calls answered by a call taker and 7,500 unique callers	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and	£283,956[152]	£31.06 per call taken, with an average cost of £41.41 per	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality

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[150] A number of providers have also received additional funding for activities such as new content development.
[151] Parentline Plus helpline also received £120,101 funding for awareness and promotion in 2008/09
[152] Contact a Family Helpline also received an additional grant of £13,683 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	disabilities, including the rarest conditions. They provide a very wide range of general and specialist information, covering medical conditions, services and rights. The helpline provides a comprehensive call back service for parents with complex enquiries and for those needing an interpreter.		responded to	no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied		unique caller	Standard for work with parents. • To Support a publicity project in the Evelina Children's Hospital • Extending Contact a Family's family linking project • Providing specialist in house training
Advisory Centre for Education helpline Advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327 www.ace-ed.org.uk	Provides free, independent and legally accurate advice on education via an advice line, helping parents to support their children's education. ACE gives advice across the whole range of education issues: school exclusions, special educational needs, school admission and choice, bullying, attendance issues and disputes or	Anyone wanting specialist education advice or guidance on funded education in England and Wales. Specialist advice is also provided for	Law and guidance on education advice line: 7,126 calls answered by a call taker and 6, 947 unique callers responded to Exclusion advice line:	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	£562,774[153]	£43.84 per call taken, with an average cost of £46.15 per unique caller	• Providing a specialist advice line for parents and carers of children excluded from school or at risk of exclusion • Provision of helpline advice on bullying at

[153] ACE also received an additional grant of £26,770 for 2008/09 for their helpline service

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	discrimination. Covers children in state funded education aged 5-16.	parents or carers of children excluded from; at risk of exclusion and; children experience bullying at school	3,667 calls answered by a call taker and 3,575 unique callers responded to Bullying advice line: 1,052 calls answered by a call taker and 1,026 unique callers responded to Free advice booklets: 52,300 sent out				school • Free advice booklets for callers • Implement call logging and reporting database • staff training • New Snr Policy and Law Adviser • extend helpline opening hours • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard
Young Minds helpline 0800 018 2138 www.youngminds.org.uk	The helpline provides help to anyone who has concerns about a child or young person's mental health or emotional wellbeing. This can cover: challenging behaviour,	Anyone who has a concern about a child or young person's mental health or emotional	6,000 unique calls answered by the Helpline Service 2,000 unique calls	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and no more then 3% of	Total: £390,557[154] £303,957 for the Helpline service and £86,600 for	Helpline: £64.67 per call taken, with an average cost of £64.71 per unique caller	• Developing a new 'Share Your Story' section on Young Minds' website • Developing

[154] Young Minds also received an additional grant of £14,550 for 2008/09 for their Helpline service

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	bereavement, depression, eating disorders, self-harming and serious diagnosable mental health difficulties. Where appropriate, callers are offered a more extensive telephone consultation callback with a qualified mental health practitioner.	wellbeing	answered by the Call Back service	customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	the Callback service	Call Back: £43.30 per unique caller	Young Minds' Parents Information Email Service • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents.
Family Rights Group helpline 0800 731 1696 www.frg.org.uk	This confidential telephone advice service supports vulnerable parents and other family members requiring advice and support on child welfare needs or concerns. Our service is a source of specialist information about families' legal rights and what they can expect of the social care system. Advisers are experts in the fields of child law.	Parents, carers and other family members whose children are involved with, or need, social care services.	5,400 calls answered by a call taker and 5,000 unique callers responded to	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	£258,670[155]	£48.00 per call taken, with an average cost of £52.00 per unique caller	• An email advice service for families requiring advice and support on child welfare needs or concerns • To extend the opening hours of the helplines • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality

[155] The Family Rights Group also received an additional grant of £13,000 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
							Standard for work with parents.
Children's Legal Centre helpline 0845 120 2948 www.childrenslegalcentre.com	The Child Law Advice Line provides free legal advice and information on all aspects of law and policy affecting children and families. Expert advisers ensure parents and carers can get accurate information on child law and access the support and services to which they are entitled. Urgent cases are referred to an in-house child lawyer.	Parents, carers and professionals, with particular care to target vulnerable children and families, for example children with special educational needs, who are being bullied or with mental health problems and families involved in the care system.	6,000 calls answered by a call taker/ unique calls taken	80% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied and no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	£187,000[156]	£35.30	• To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents. • Ensure the frequently asked questions posted on the Children's Legal Centre's website are relevant and kept up to date
Gingerbread Single Parent helpline 0800 018 5026	The Lone Parent Helpline is a dedicated free phone confidential service, offering help and advice to	Single parents and any person bringing up	3,000 calls answered by a call taker/ unique calls	80% of customers are satisfied or very	£154,999[157]	£51.67	• To enhance the Single Parent Helpdesk

[156] The Children's Legal Centre also received an additional grant of £9,350 for 2008/09
[157] Gingerbread also received an additional grant of £7,729 for 2008/09

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk	lone parents on a wide range of issues: benefits and tax credits, education and training, returning to work, childcare, and more. It aims to offer information and help that lone parents can trust and to provide follow up support and advice to those who need it.	children on their own	taken	satisfied and no more then 3% of customers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied			through the production and publication of a topical information section • To achieve the Parent Know How Helpline Quality Standard for work with parents.

Note: All helplines were awarded grants for a three year contract period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011.

Table 2 - Description of text message services

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[158]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Ask ACE www.ace-ed.org.uk Text Keyword ASKACE to 68808	ACE is providing a free text based service called Ask ACE to parents with queries about educational issues for their child. It provides free accurate legal advice by text on issues such as exclusions or bullying. Texts provide a simple first response and an opportunity to expand the query or links to the ACE website or a booklet for more details.	All parents but particularly for parents of teenagers and those who do not have web access or prefer not to use the web.	62,326 new individual users and at least 323,000 SMS exchanges (128,702 incoming and 194,456 outgoing texts)- achieving an average of 5.24 texts per parent helped	80% of users satisfied and less than 3% not satisfied	£566,175	Average cost of £1.73 per individual contact and £9.08 per user	• To comply with the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark (General Help) and the Telephone Helplines Association – Parenting Quality Standard
Relate for Parents text service www.relateforparents.org.uk Text 60616	Three new services for parents, offering therapeutically based advice and support. A text messaging service offers individualised text responses on any relationship counselling topics, emotional or factual. Relate are also offering a website and Live Chat facilities (see web and social media below).	Parents in distress, particularly fathers and reaching both couples and lone parents.	8719 individual parents helped from a total of 14,560 contacts.	To achieve a recommendation target of 95% by people; 90% of this group to be either 'very happy' or 'happy' with the quality of support received.	£190,328	£21.83 per parent helped	• A complimentary website will be attached to the Relate website

[158] This is the total budget from February 08 to June 09 exclusive of VAT

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[158]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Parentline Plus text service This service is being piloted in two areas	A new text service which forms part of the Gotateenager.com and us aimed at parents of teenagers who do not have access to the social networks available to parents of primary school age children. The text messaging service is being piloted in Nottinghamshire and Hampshire and consists of ten key words relating to common teen issues such as alcohol, drugs, bullying and sex.	Parents, extended family and carers of teenagers, including: fathers of teenagers; black and minority ethnic parents of teenagers; and parents with disabled teenagers.	130 SMS received by June 2009	No targets set.	£5,000	None agreed.	None.

Note: All text message services were commissioned for an initial contract period from late January 2008 to end of June 2009.

Table 3 - Description of web and social media services

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Parentline Plus - www.Gotateenager.com	A new social networking site which is aimed at parents of teenagers who do not have access to the social networks available to parents of primary school age children. Content includes e-learning tools (modules that parents can complete online), web TV shows, email support, message boards and a jargon buster. The service will take parents through the journey of bringing up teenagers, providing a social network, e-learning and extended support for parents.	Parents, extended family and carers of teenagers, including: fathers of teenagers; black and minority ethnic parents of teenagers; and parents with disabled teenagers.	85,500 parents	Not known	£571,428	£6.68 per parent helped	• Enable access of multimedia content via computer, mobile phone and Web TV shows. • Extended support through facilitated support services including online and email support and 'ask the experts' for those parents who identify that they need extra support. • Providing parents attending programmes with the

[159] This is the total budget from February 08 to June 09 exclusive of VAT

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Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
							opportunity of Open College Network Accreditation.
NetMums Parent Supporters and the Relationship Course www.netmums.co.uk	NetMums is an existing social network, and is the biggest source of support and advice for mums in the UK. This project provides an extra layer of support to mums using the coffee house support boards. Mums with serious problems can have access to a professional directly online and receive information and support and access to local services. A team of parent supporters provides expert advice on specific topics, this includes Health Visitors and experts from Contact a Family, Women's Aid, ACE and One Plus One. NetMums are also providing online self help programmes and courses, including a Relationship Course. Technology is managed	Parent Supporters: Mothers with especially severe needs which can leave them vulnerable to suicide; mothers of disabled or special needs children; mothers of teenagers. Relationship course: All parents but specifically mothers and fathers seeking to strengthen their relationship with each other and	51,845 parents reached	Not known	£484,015	Average cost of £9.34 per parent helped	• Providing a service that joins up third sector services, DCSF, Department of Health and locally Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities – by bringing in professionals from these services on to the NetMums forum.

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	and delivered in-house	with their children.					
One Plus One - CoupleConnection

www.thecoupleconnection.net | A new website where parents can find out how to manage their relationship effectively. The site is designed to help couples work through changes in their relationship together through the use of self-assessment tools, blogs and forums. The site aims to build a community of parents all helping each other with experts acting as moderators. The website also includes goal setting resources and review and encouragement tools. The couple space part of the site is a private interactive area for couples to work together and keep interactive diaries. | All parents but particularly fathers and parents of disabled children. | 67,356 parents reached | To achieve a target of 60% of users to be 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the following aspects of the site and their use of it: Content; Site usage; Site impact | £472,493 | £7.01 per parent helped | •Raise awareness of: the importance of getting on with partner for better parenting; parent child relationships; father involvement
• Develop Experiential information and 'information with feeling' – multi-media, real life accounts offering mums' and dads' perspectives to heighten empathy; |

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
Family Matters Institute - DadTalk www.dadtalk.co.uk	DadTalk is a social networking site fathers that aims to champion fatherhood via the web and raise dads' confidence and aspirations. It includes a forum where trained moderators offer reflective discussion, thoughts and signposting to 'professionals' and where dads can share experiences. The website also includes videos, podcasts, articles and a 'legal eagle' section providing information on legal issues affecting fathers and their children. Technology is provided by an external provider (Visual Solutions)	All fathers but in particular fathers from African and Caribbean communities & dual heritage groups and fathers of teenagers	13,846 fathers	Not known	£189, 600	£13.69 per parent helped	•To achieve PQASSO Level 1 accreditation for Quality Assurance • Off-line fathers' focus groups in Luton, London, Bedford, Birmingham and Leeds.
SPAN - One Space www.onespace.org.uk	One Space is a new social networking website for single parents. The website includes online groups that are led by facilitators experienced in parenting support where parents can exchange views and experiences. The website is rich is	Single-parent families, particularly those who are more isolated and vulnerable, and mothers who are in more severe	20,000 parents reached through total of 240,000 contacts	Not Known	£275,072	£13.75 per parent helped	• A UK Advice Finder resource to enable parents to locate support in their local area as well as national family support

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	multimedia content including videos, blogs, podcasts and other 'interactive' resources. Technology is provided by an IT partner (Cosmic)	need who are currently not accessing professional help					services
Attic Media with Respect - Dad's Space and Dad's Team www.dads-space.com	Three new media services have been developed: Dads Space Public; Dads Space 'one to one' and Dads Team. Dads Space 'public' is an online community space where dads can access information and engage in various multimedia content, including videos and podcasts. Dads Space 'one to one' is a secure site where non-resident fathers can keep in touch with their children. An online space is provided where fathers and their children can chat, share files, pictures and messages in a safe and fun environment. Dad's Team is a syndicated content approach which targets sites where dads already go to deliver father friendly	All father's but particularly those that don't live with their children	57,000 parents reached through Dad's Space Public and 6,100 through Dad's Space 'One to One'.

147,700 parents reached through Dad's Team syndicated content | Not known | Dad's Space: £516,861 Dad's Team: £490,515 | Dad's Space: £5.99 per parent helped Dad's Team: £2.85 per parent helped | • Supportive materials and resources to assist fathers in enhancing their relationship with their child |

Service name and service provider	Description	Priority parent segments (target groups)	Target parents reached for 2008-09 period	Targets for satisfaction	Total funding received for 2008-09 period[159]	Cost per parent target	Other service expectations
	content such as videos and games. Technology is managed and delivered in-house						
Contact a Family - social networking services and Second Life www.cafamily.org.uk	A series of new Contact a Family spaces in existing social networking sites including Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and YouTube which offer information for parents to download (video and written materials) and ways to get in touch with parents in similar situations. A virtual advice centre in Second Life offers one to one sessions with a worker in real time, as well as general advice to users. Technology will managed and delivered in-house	Parents of disabled children, particularly those who struggle to use conventional channels such as advice centres because of access issues.	29,515 new users reached through contracted services Further breakdown: 16,075 viewing videos, podcasts, blogs and signing up for RSS feeds; 6,750 using social networking; 6,500 information booklets distributed ; 190 parents given advice in Second Life;	90% of parents saying that they are satisfied with the access to information on the CAF website and have benefited from it; 80% of parents satisfied with the social networking opportunities; 80% of parents finding the information materials helpful and informative	£128,004	£4.34 per parent helped	• 'Ask the expert' sessions • Friendly 'how to' guides to encourage parents to use new communication channels • Promotion of existing helpline and website services

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Relate - Live Talk and Relate for Parents website www.relateforparents.org.uk	Three new services for parents, offering therapeutically based advice and support. A Live Chat service offers real time instant messaging sessions for parents with a trained adviser. The new Relate for Parents website provides information about the services and resources on a range of related topics including divorce, stress and eating disorders. Also a text messaging service is available (see above). The technology for these services are being managed and delivered in house	Parents in distress, particularly fathers.	16,380 parents helped through 24,570 contacts (average of 1.5 contacts per parent).

195,000 unique users reached through the Relate for Parents website | To achieve a recommendation target of 95% by people 90% of this group to be either 'very happy' or 'happy' with the quality of support received. | Live Talk: £181,775 Web support: £66,001 | Live Talk: £11.10 per parent helped Web Support: £0.34 per parent helped. | • A complimentary website attached to the Relate website • Achieve an average of 15 minutes for each Live Chat contact |

Note: All web and social media services were commissioned for an initial contract period from late January 2008 to end of June 2009.