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Original Citation

Daniels, Ceri (2008) Approaches to supporting parenting : strategies and solutions. In: Children and Young People's Integrated Workforce : Professional Seminar Series , 25th April 2008, The University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

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Professional Seminar Series

Approaches to Supporting Parenting:

Strategies and Solutions

Ceri Daniels (University of Huddersfield)

25th April 2008

Aims of Today

- Identify some key 'drivers' of Parenting Support Intervention in UK
- Share our 'parenting support' experiences & identify main issues and benefits of different approaches
- Discuss findings of current research on 'what works'
- Consider some strategies for the most effective approaches
- Hopefully, challenge our thinking & have fun!



Parenting: *Private Vs State*

- Family life traditionally a very private sphere in UK
- Post-war emphasis on universal rights to support: health services, education & increasing welfare support
- Tension today between state's role, preservation of parental autonomy & child's well-being (reflected in policy & legislation)

The Children's Plan states:

“Parents bring up children, not Governments” (DCSF, 07)

Commentators from different perspectives agree that 'Parenting' has a very high priority on Government's agenda

Current Policy

- The physical and emotional *care* and *control* of children lies at the heart of Government's policies (e.g. ECM, Respect Agenda, Social Exclusion).
- Tension - where responsibility lies and contradictory messages? The Government clearly espouses parents as partners but brings in punitive control measures such as Parenting Orders. Parents 'encouraged' to work and expected to provide 'family home life'
- Financial Investment & expectation on practitioners to provide 'parenting support' significant:
 - Parenting Fund includes £34m 2007/10 LA's appoint 2 'expert parenting advisers'
 - National Parenting Academy
 - Compulsory Parenting Support Strategies

What do we mean by Parenting Support?

- What does 'parenting' mean to you?
- Discuss what type of 'parenting support' you are involved in?
- Identify some key characteristics of parenting support interventions you are involved in?



Definitions of Parenting

- The definition of 'parenting capacity' in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need:

'the provision of basic care, safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance, boundaries and stability'

- Definition provided by Parenting UK:

'parenting is both a continuous process starting before parenthood and continuing through birth and school to grandparenthood, and an interactive process concerned with the development of the whole person'

Parenting Support Programmes

- Parenting programmes defined broadly as:

‘any formal interventions designed to support the parent/child relationship’.

(Parenting UK)

- 147 different programmes on Govt. funded Database (but many, many more)!

Examples of Models

- Family Nurse Partnership (focuses first-time young Mums)
- Solution-Focused Parenting

(Webster-Stratton, positive parenting)

Delivery

- Group-based programmes
- Individual
- Specialised
- Neighbourhood programmes

Supporting or Controlling?

- Which aspects of parenting should be the parents responsibility and which should be the 'state's'?
- Be prepared to explain ...Why?



Realities of Practice

- Policy & Legislation directs your work
- Local work context level of influence
 Pressures of work
- Professional & personal values and judgement
- 'Good enough' parenting?



Major Research Study (2004) : What Works in Parenting Support?

- **What works?**

- Any (quality) intervention better than none but earliest most beneficial
- Interventions with strong, clear model
- Both universal & targeted programmes (more evaluation needed)
- Delivered by appropriate & well-trained staff
- Responsive (ecology of family) & culturally sensitive
- Longer term programmes with 'booster' sessions
- Both cognitive (belief, self-perception etc) & behavioural (skills & practical) models

Research Study Cont.....

- **What is yet to be proven or doesn't work?**
 - How effective (as opposed to promising) programmes really are
 - Translating international parenting programmes for UK use
 - What doesn't work - bias against reporting 'failures' or negative findings
 - Can positive change be sustained?
 - How children themselves see the effectiveness of these programmes
 - Effectiveness when used with fathers, parents from black and Asian families
 - Retaining and engaging families deemed 'high risk' and offering long-lasting positive impact

Informing Your Approach Some Final Thoughts...?

- Research suggests *Parenting Support* does benefit families: needs to be normalised – universal access (most PS policy target ‘disadvantaged’ individuals or communities)
- Policy developments in one area should not pull against policy in another - Consider this if you develop/input into policy or strategic plans locally
- Families facing multiple issues will struggle to benefit most (consider parallel interventions)
- Do enforcement and control sanctions like Parenting Orders really help by punishing people who ‘fail’? What else can we do? **Do *with* or, do *to*?**
- Staff need to be trained and properly supported. Also, remember own values etc.
- No single model proven as more effective - clear approach & consistency communicated across areas

Resources & References

- *What Works in Parenting Support?* Moran et al (2004) Policy Research Bureau
- *Enhancing the Well-being of Children and Families through Effective Interventions : International Evidence for Practice.* McAuley, C. (2005) Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- *Government and Parenting: Is there a case for a policy review and a parents' code?* Henricson, C. (2003) Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- *Family Support as Reflective Practice* Dolan, P. (2005) Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Database of Parenting Support Provision
<http://www.toolkit.parentinguk.org>