

## PARENTING SUPPORT STRATEGY

	<p>This strategy symbolises the sincere commitment we have in Newcastle to valuing and supporting parents and carers because every child matters and being a parent is an extraordinary responsibility and gift. It is a relationship for life.</p> <p><b>Catherine Fitt    Executive Director: Children’s Services</b></p>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<p>For children, every parent matters. While we are all born with unique personalities and traits, how we live, think and behave is influenced by the way that we are brought up. We have all been affected by the expectations and aspirations of those who parented us, their capacity to communicate with and tune into our needs, the emotional, material and physical resources on which they were able to draw. Whatever the starting point, a vast range of possible outcomes stretch before all children at and even before their birth. Parents have to develop the skills to balance realistic expectations for these outcomes with hopes and dreams for possibilities that might reach far beyond their own achievements or those of other children in similar circumstances. The vast majority of parents in Newcastle do an excellent job in juggling these different factors. This Strategy is designed to inform the future commissioning and decommissioning of services to support those parents in the expectation that this will help them to address these challenges and become what they should be: confident parents with confident children.</p> <p>There is strong research evidence to support the view that all parents, from time to time, require support with parenting. Finding ‘answers’ to parenting challenges is a need shared by parents in any situation, not an indication of failure. It is to be expected that we would all find parenting challenging.</p> <p>The Strategy draws on intelligence gathered from a very wide range of stakeholders: mothers, fathers, carers, children and young people and practitioners. Their perspectives about what is currently helpful to parents and where we need to do better will inform the way that we build smarter and more integrated commissioning and organising of parenting support services in the future.</p> <p>Research shows that parents develop confidence and the ability to find their own positive solutions to issues they face when they have the benefit of support from a trusted individual-whether friend, family member or practitioner-who shows them respect and preferably has an ongoing relationship with them throughout their parenting career.</p> <p>We want to make the very best use of all this expertise and energy that exists in families, local communities, across all sectors of the Children’s Services workforce and in other providers of public services. We want to develop and sustain confidence in parents and in children. This Strategy sets out a number of steps that we need to take together to move closer to achieving this over the next five years in Newcastle.</p> <p><b>Sue Miller    Strategic Lead: Parenting Support</b></p>

<p><b>2. Underpinning Strategies</b></p>	<p>Parents play a key role in all aspects of a child or young person’s development and therefore all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes. We know that the ability to parent positively is significantly influenced by factors such as where you live, economic, physical and emotional well being and education. For this reason there are strong connections between this Strategy and each of Newcastle’s other strategies and plans and an expectation that reference to working with and supporting parents will appear as an element in them all.</p> <p>For details of related strategies see Background documents  <a href="http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/mcs_parent_strat#background">http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/mcs_parent_strat#background</a></p>
<p><b>3. Definition</b></p>	<p>The Government, in its 2006 Guidance for Parenting Support defines parenting support services as <i>‘any activity or facility aimed at providing information, advice and support to parents and carers to help them in bringing up their children.’</i></p> <p>‘Parenting support’ therefore means all those activities that enable anyone undertaking a parenting role either on their own or with others to develop the sorts of knowledge, skills and experiences that they need in order to carry out this role to the very best of their ability. The sorts of activities that could be described as parenting support are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping a parent to support their child’s learning</li> <li>• Supporting a parent to establish positive and safe routines with their children</li> <li>• Developing better approaches to understanding and engaging positively in children’s behaviour</li> <li>• Any activities that develop the ability of mothers, fathers and carers to bond more closely with their children</li> </ul> <p>This parenting support can be developed in a number of ways, through parenting programmes, 1:1 discussions, home visits, specially targeted services, general informal support, listening and giving information for parents. Traditional family support services very often offer this kind of input as part of a wider package of support. These activities relate to help that reflects different levels of need. These levels of need are described in the ‘windscreen model’ (see Background documents) and cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal services: available as an entitlement to all: Tier 1</li> <li>• Targeted services: when a single support agency is involved: Tier 2</li> <li>• Targeted services: where there is multi-agency involvement: Tier 3</li> <li>• Specialist services: where agencies are involved legally for issues such as child protection or disability: Tier 4</li> </ul>

This Strategy covers parenting support at all stages of the parenting career from pre birth through to adulthood and is intended to relate to support in any parenting circumstances including those known to bring particular risk to the achievement of positive outcomes for children or where parents are currently under represented in our early intervention and preventative services. These include parents who are:

- Young parents
- Fathers and male carers
- Homeless or living in temporary accommodation
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Black and minority ethnic community members
- Disabled
- Have a mental health problem
- Substance misusing drugs or alcohol
- Experiencing domestic violence
- Parenting a child with a disability or additional need
- Parenting at a key transition point in their child's life
- Corporate parents

In view of the wide range of circumstances in which parenting takes place, parenting support needs to be sufficiently flexible and sensitive to be accessible to any parent, regardless of their needs. This requires such services to be staffed by individuals able to engage readily with parents in non judgemental and respectful ways, especially those seeking to reach out to parents and carers that find services difficult to access either because of their lack of personal resources, chaotic or harmful lifestyles, language barriers, asylum or refugee status, physical or mental health problems.

**There are many very worthwhile activities traditionally referred to as 'family support' that can be shown to enable parents to fulfil their responsibilities as parents. Examples could be respite care for one child that allows a parent to spend time with their others or where services provide resources such as toys or advice with budgeting. Such activities however are outside the scope of this Strategy.**

	<p>Throughout the document the word 'parent' is used to cover mothers, fathers and carers including grandparents and other carers including foster parents.</p>
<p><b>4. Vision, Objectives, Principles</b></p>	<p>The Strategy is founded on an aspirational vision which might require us to deliver different services in different ways:</p> <p><b>All mothers, fathers and carers are enabled to access a choice of the appropriate types of formal and informal support at the appropriate times without feeling stigmatised so that they feel confident in their role as parents and can care positively for their children</b></p> <p>This Vision is clarified by the following shared beliefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting parents both physically and emotionally is the business of the whole community, not only those individuals that have 'parenting' in their job title</li> <li>• All parents, no matter what their situation, need support for their parenting at some point. The need for parenting support should be recognised as normal rather than an indication of failure.</li> <li>• Support should be embedded into local communities and families, identify and build on positives in individual parenting and be close enough and sufficiently well known about for parents to be able to turn readily to it</li> <li>• Parenting support comes as much from within communities and families as it does from professionals that support communities and the approach we adopt must recognise this and build resilience, reinforce and empower communities to support themselves</li> <li>• Although we know that there are unacceptable actions that can harm children, there is no one right way to parent. Parenting support needs to be respectful of cultural differences and beliefs about child rearing practices providing these are not harmful to a child's well being.</li> <li>• Recognition of the amount of work that can be needed to enable parents to build the trust to access a support service should be reflected in the resources and range of activities made available to build these relationships</li> <li>• A primary focus of this Strategy is early intervention to prevent issues becoming a problem by providing good quality, well coordinated parenting support.</li> <li>• Focusing support on preparation for parenthood for fathers as well as mothers, particularly amongst those individuals known to be at risk of finding parenting challenging, supports the prevention of later difficulties</li> </ul>

**Objectives (see Action Plan)**

As a result of this Strategy and with a specific emphasis throughout on prioritising those mothers, fathers and carers that we know find our services difficult to access, we will:

1. Establish appropriate parenting support training and development opportunities at each stage of their professional career for all staff working with parents and prospective parents
2. Ensure that the CYPIS Directory contains accurate, easy to access and regularly updated information on parenting support services available across Newcastle
3. Establish mechanisms whereby information about gaps and needs in parenting support at each Tier of need can be identified and fed into future commissioning processes
4. Align all available funding and staffing to those early intervention and prevention parenting support activities that can demonstrate greatest impact on the key priorities identified in the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People.
5. Ensure the views of mothers, fathers and carers, children and young people including those with disabilities and or additional needs inform the development of all parenting support services
6. Increase the uptake of parenting support services as part of coordinated and better targeted support packages at Tiers 1-3 for those parents that currently are underrepresented in those services and support the development of clarity about thresholds to Tier 4 specialist services
7. Establish a coordinated, well publicised and attended range of parenting support programmes with an appropriate infrastructure of childcare, transport and venue hire delivered by a well qualified virtual team of practitioners
8. Develop in parents the skills to support their children from a very early age to choose, access and organise healthy and positive pastimes, leisure activities and hobbies that they can continue to enjoy well into adolescence
9. Provide specific support for parents in black and minority ethnic families to enable them to explore and counteract the negative impact and tensions that can arise if their children and young people develop different values and beliefs from their elders
10. Promote well informed, balanced messages in a range of local and national media about the realities of parenting, challenges and achievements

This Strategy will be the subject of regular review over the next 3-5 years from March 2008.

	<p>All partners who become part of the commissioned parenting support services in Newcastle will be expected to work within the following guidelines and be able to evidence that they are doing so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that their work is based on the active participation of parents, carers, children, young people and those who provide services as described in the Parents and Carers Participation Strategy.</li> <li>• Increase and evidence the impact of early intervention and effective prevention by providing support to parents that ensures fewer need specialist or crisis services.</li> <li>• Work within the Safeguarding and Child Protection Framework and Standards as agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.</li> <li>• Actively work to raise the aspirations, attainment and achievements of parents including making them aware of the full range of opportunities open to them.</li> <li>• Include everyone who needs, receives and delivers services in Newcastle, respecting their dignity and diversity and utilising the leaders in faith communities to underpin this.</li> <li>• Engage more effectively with excluded, hard to reach and vulnerable individuals and groups, including foster parents to make sure that they are able to access parenting support services fully.</li> <li>• Promote effective joint working to raise the aspirations of parents in Newcastle.</li> <li>• Include continual review so that good practice can be shared, impact maximised and areas for improvement addressed.</li> <li>• Ensure that resources are used to support parents to improve outcomes for young people and are deployed to make sure that the best value for money is achieved.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Background/ Context</b></p>	<p>Local Authorities received Guidance in October 2006 from the then Department for Education and Skills now Department for Children, Schools and Families on Parenting Support. This included the following statement:</p> <p><i>'The Government believes that local authorities together with stakeholders should develop a parenting strategy which reflects their local context. The strategy should consider the varying needs and circumstances of parents living in their area and plan to put in place appropriate services.'</i></p>

*The strategy should also set out the different levels of support available to parents, from preventative and early intervention services through to compulsory engagement with the use of enforcement measures, where appropriate....The strategy need not necessarily be a published document, but should follow a rigorous process. This process should enable stakeholders to develop a shared agenda for what they intend to achieve.*

*As part of this process, consideration should be given to aligning the parenting strategy and behaviour strategy across children's services-because parenting and parenting interventions can have such an impact on the conduct of children. Local authorities that have adopted a parenting strategy have also stressed the importance of achieving a common emphasis on a parenting focus for schools and other services outside of the traditional children's services-including housing and libraries-in order that the effect of the strategy is maximised.*

*The parenting strategy should also be used to inform and be included in the Children and Young People's Plans. It should reflect and inform the development of other relevant planning documents including the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, Special Educational Needs Strategy, Youth Justice Plan, Joint Commissioning Strategy and Local Area Agreement.'*

The Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People identified Parenting Support as a specific theme in its first annual review:

*Parenting support focuses on enabling all mothers, fathers and carers to have access to a choice of the right types of support at the right times so that they feel confident in their role as parents and can care for their children effectively.*

*Parenting support forms an integral part of the shift to prevention and early intervention in Newcastle.*

*Significant work has already taken place through the Parent Education and Support Coordination Project (PESCO), a Parenting Fund project, to:*

- gather and collate information about the range of parenting education and support services available in areas of the city*
- share information about available parenting education and support across agencies in Newcastle*
- identify duplication and gaps in provision within areas*
- use the available information to advise strategic managers where there are gaps and duplication in services*
- help identify local need for parents and practitioners and support the planning for local opportunities*
- provide a channel for enquiries about what is available in areas*
- provide information for the Children and Young People's Directory of Services*

*In January 2007 we identified a Commissioner for Parenting Support. Under her direction, practitioners with a very wide range of experiences working with parents are taking part in a significant 'Turning the Curve' exercise in June and July 2007 to gather intelligence to inform the Parenting Support Strategy, which must be in place by March 2008. This strategy is about commissioning further support where it is needed and decommissioning where it is not.*

*It will therefore draw in all information about the very wide range of parenting support projects that exist within the City including Parent Support Advisors and any activities linked to Children's Centres or Extended Schools in localities. An event for mothers, fathers and carers to share their perspectives of needs in relation to parenting support is planned for the summer and in gathering this intelligence there are also close links with the work of both the Parents' and the Children and Young People's Participation strategies and coordinators.*

*A wide range of agencies and individuals provide support to parents at universal, targeted and specialist levels. The discussions around thresholds for such support and the role of the CAF in coordinating support for parents as well as their children will be crucial elements of this strategy. Parenting support forms a key element in the Respect Action Area agenda, which is led by the Home Office. A senior parenting practitioner has been recruited to oversee the parenting support elements of this agenda in Newcastle and through the Respect funding we are developing a virtual team of parenting practitioners drawn from a very wide range of agencies to deliver the parenting support elements of this agenda including the Family Intervention project. A cross directorate coordination group which brings together the Children and Young People's and the Safe Newcastle Partnerships has been established to oversee this work.*

As described above, the Commissioner or Strategic Lead: Parenting Support has and will continue to work closely with all those involved from a number of agencies that deliver Citywide and locality based parenting support for a wide range of parenting circumstances. She will act as the champion for parenting support and encourage all agencies, including schools, libraries, health visitors, midwives, GPs and adult services who offer support to parents as part of what they do rather than as their primary focus, to consider and review the parenting element of the work that they undertake and ensure that it addresses the priorities identified within the Strategy.

This work will form the basis at a strategic and operational level for developing and delivering coordinated parenting support services across Tiers 1-4. She is currently specifically supported in this by the following officers:

- Parent and Carer Participation officer who oversees the development and delivery of the Parent Participation Strategy which is intended to secure the engagement of parents and carers in all aspects of design, development and delivery of services for them and their children
- Senior Parenting Practitioner who oversees those elements of the Respect Agenda that relate to parenting support: and parenting programmes (funded till March 2011).
- Parenting Education and Support Coordination (PESCO) project that coordinates information and supports the development of networks in relation to parenting support across the City (funded till June 2008)

	<p>Close links are maintained with other strategic developments, particularly those that relate to commissioning arrangements within localities, Children’s Centres, Extended Schools and the Respect Agenda. Parenting support is part of the core offer of both Sure Start Children’s Centres and Extended Services through Schools and this Strategy builds on much of the excellent work that has already taken place and is still ongoing through those initiatives. It is important that this Strategy incorporates ways to integrate within localities any services developed through those and other initiatives, including Parent Support Advisors, to address gaps and priorities in parenting support and ensure that overall services complement rather than replicate each other.</p> <p><b>It is a requirement for each local authority to have a Parenting Support Strategy in place by March 2008. The Strategy must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit local needs including identification of ‘hard to reach’ and not yet reached families</li> <li>• Map current parenting support provision ranging from early intervention and prevention services through to the use of targeted intervention and enforcement measures</li> <li>• Develop and facilitate a cross authority parenting strategy group</li> <li>• Consult parents-fathers as well as mothers</li> <li>• Ensure ownership of the strategy by relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Be drafted and published</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. How was the strategy developed?</b></p>	<p>To identify the proposed outcome and indicators for this Strategy a ‘Turning the Curve’ exercise was conducted with a range of partners in May 2007 at the review of Newcastle’s Plan for Children and Young People.</p> <p>The Strategy was further developed through a number of focus group events which took place in June and July 2007 targeting practitioners, details of which are contained in the Background documents. These events also adopted a ‘Turning the Curve’ approach to identifying and discussing the story behind the current situation, examples of approaches that are working well, gaps, duplications and partners. These discussions were cross checked with information that had and continues currently to be collected by the PESCO team.</p> <p>In June 2007 an event ‘The Hundred Voices of Mothers, Fathers and Carers’ for parents to voice their perspectives on parenting support in Newcastle was held at St James’s Park. Following the event those who had been invited by parents to attend (strategic managers, service heads and politicians) were asked to make pledges describing the actions they would take as a result of hearing the parents’ comments.</p>

	<p>These actions have been incorporated into the Strategy and Action Plan. A DVD from the event will be used to share key messages from parents with services and inform the future development of parenting support.</p> <p>In the autumn of 2007 a stakeholder event for parents and practitioners from across all of Children's Services and related areas such as Regeneration and Safe Newcastle was held to share the draft Strategy and Action Plan. This event provided opportunities for further gathering of perspectives and the prioritising of the Action Plan in relation to specific locality needs. To date a very wide range of stakeholders have therefore made contributions to this Strategy.</p> <p>The Strategy came to the Children and Young People's Strategic Executive for endorsement in December 2007. The Strategy must be in place by March 2008 to fulfil statutory requirements.</p> <p>The Strategy's progress will be reviewed regularly by the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support and updates on progress fed into the Transformation Programme through traffic light reports to the Transformation Programme Board.</p> <p>At the beginning of this process we asked a number of stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want the Parenting Support Strategy to do?</li> <li>• How could we achieve this?</li> </ul> <p>Details of their responses are contained in the Background documents</p>
<p><b>7. What do CYP say? What do parents/ carers say?</b></p>	<p><b>How have children and young people, parents, carers and practitioners been engaged in developing this Strategy?</b></p> <p>There have been a number of activities specifically designed to consult in relation to this Strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Hundred Voices of Mothers, Fathers and Carers' event in June 2007</li> <li>• Series of focus groups for practitioners in June and July 2007 (see Background documents)</li> <li>• Collation of information gathered by the PESCO team</li> <li>• Formed part of the strategic review of Children and Young People's Plan in May 2007</li> <li>• Joint parent/practitioner event to review draft Action Plan in October 2007</li> </ul> <p>Close links have been established with those officers responsible for engaging the participation of children, young people, parents, carers and the general public in the development of services. All service providers consulted were able to describe ways in which they already seek feedback from users about how their services could be improved and feed this into future planning.</p>

A strong sense of parents being consulted regularly already about parenting support services emerged during the development of the Strategy.

A number of challenges remain in relation to participation of children, young people, parents and carers:

- Managing expectations around consultation to avoid the disappointment that can emerge if individuals perceive change not to be happening in the way they would like while still involving them in the agreed solution's development
- Developing the ability of staff to work effectively with parents, to have appropriate skills in engagement, to be respectful and non judgemental, to have knowledge about services available and be willing to work in new ways with them, to demonstrate real listening, to be consistent in their recommendations and to share information appropriately emerged as a key issue for parents. Where an individual has demonstrated such abilities parents value that relationship very highly indeed. Working with parents is a specialist skill not currently well developed or focused on in professional training and this is specifically addressed in the Action Plan to take forward this Strategy.
- Those parents that find services hard to access are often the very parents that would most benefit from earlier intervention. Such parents are therefore still largely invisible in terms of shaping service delivery and there is a significant need for them to have advocates who will do outreach work, speak on their behalf, interpret their needs and support services to develop in ways that will better enable them to access their resources.
- Establishing ways to capture the views of children and young people, particularly those with disabilities and additional needs around their perspectives about the knowledge and skills that their parents and carers need to be more effective in these roles. Taking these views and using them to develop the sorts of support that can be shown to help parents to form closer relationships with their children and be enabled to fulfil their parenting role more effectively is a significant challenge not just for this Strategy but for society as a whole.
- Talking to parents, children and young people where the parenting relationship has so broken down that care proceedings have been instigated, while highly sensitive, provides insights into where parenting support was needed, might have prevented or delayed the need for statutory intervention and highlights the importance of developing links between adult and children's services.
- A recurring theme in consultations is disappointment at what are perceived to be short term funding arrangements to develop projects and services that become valued in communities but then disappear once that funding has come to an end. A need for a more strategic approach to the development of such services was highlighted throughout the consultations to develop this Strategy.

	<p><b>How will we evidence the impact of participation on parenting support service development and how will this be monitored?</b></p> <p>The Parenting Education and Support Coordination Project (PESCO) is currently running parenting networks in each locality area in the City (LPNs). These groups for parents and practitioners have met at least 3 times a year (for dates and Agenda see Background documents). These groups are significant opportunities for stakeholders to share parenting support issues relevant to them and their localities. In many instances the LPN has acted as a forum to resolve these issues by facilitating better sharing of information about roles and responsibilities of providers of parenting support within communities. However it is also the case that issues have been raised that are outside the capacity of existing resources or that require a more strategic approach.</p> <p>It will be necessary to establish mechanisms whereby such issues will be directed to the Area Locality Partnerships, when established, communicated to the Strategic Lead who will act as the identified parenting champion with an objective overview independent of any service and used to inform the commissioning of parenting support services. Links between these discussions and other community and neighbourhood based consultations, such as the Face the People sessions required through the Respect Agenda, will be ensured through arrangements such as the existing Respect Coordination group which has representatives from a very wide range of agencies across the maintained, voluntary and statutory sectors.</p> <p>In addition, the PESCO team has logged all parenting support issues raised each month formally or informally on contact sheets (see Background documents). These are reviewed on a monthly basis by the team and are used for a quarterly report to the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support and will also feed into this commissioning process as it becomes established (see Background documents for example of quarterly report). Work to target better attendance from services across Tiers 1-4 at locality parenting networks (LPN) in order to bring a range of perspectives and resources to these discussions is being carried out. An independent evaluation of LPNs is being undertaken by the University of Northumbria and will be completed by June 2008.</p>
<p><b>8. Current situation/ performance</b></p>	<p><b>Needs analysis of universal, targeted and specialist parenting support services</b></p> <p>There are many organisations and services providing a wide range of support for parents in Newcastle. These services are being identified by the PESCO service and listed by the Children and Young People's Information Service within the Children and Young People's Directory. As part of this process they are using the CAF windscreen model and asking which Tier or Tiers of need each parenting support service addresses, what parenting situations they work with and whether they are focused in a particular locality or work Citywide.</p> <p>This data will then be able to be analysed alongside information we have about incidence of need in localities and help us to better prioritise staff and resource deployment through the commissioning and decommissioning process.</p>

Organisations providing parenting support that have contributed to this Strategy as part of the consultation process are listed in the Background documents where there is also a copy of the proforma that is being used to gather information for the CYP Directory. Services are being asked specifically to identify whether they work with parents in circumstances that we know can be problematic and cause stress and to give data about performance measures in relation to particular groups of parents by gender, ethnicity, whether the parents they work with have looked after children, children with learning difficulties or disabilities, are refugees or asylum seekers, are homeless or living in temporary accommodation, young parents, fathers, parents experiencing substance misuse or domestic violence, have a disability or mental health issue themselves. Once this data is accurately entered, maintained and publicised in the Directory it should be far easier for parents and practitioners to be able to find services that are local to them and are a good 'fit' for their needs. It should also help the commissioning of parenting support services to be based on sound knowledge of what is already in existence and where there are gaps.

The picture in relation to this area of work is complicated by the fact that many services include parenting support as part of the menu of activities that they provide although they do not necessarily view themselves as specialists in this field. There is also inconsistency in terms of language used to describe parenting and family support, the two terms often being used interchangeably (see Section 3 Definition). Currently there is no recognised or shared methodology for measuring the impact of any parenting support service and this Strategy is the first time that we have attempted to agree a shared vision and set of principles across all agencies for how we organise parenting support in Newcastle.

Parenting services have typically arisen in response either to an identified need within a particular area, as with parenting support offered as part of Children's Centres or Extended Schools, via work designed to promote more healthy schools such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), through primary or community based health services or following the injection of some specific grant funding that has enabled a service to be developed, as with the establishment of Parent Support Advisors. Private and voluntary sector providers have expressed particular concern at the prevalence of short term funding for parenting support and the time taken up in applying for this to develop and sustain projects.

In spite of this rather ad hoc approach to planning early intervention and prevention services for parents, there is some evidence of a fit between levels of need and service delivery. There are more parenting support services working into areas where there is a greater incidence of factors known to make parenting more challenging. However, there is little evidence of a consistent approach to monitoring the impact of the early intervention and engagement of parenting support services available at Tiers 1-3 on prevention. Although there is good evidence of effective work by highly committed individuals, parents have also commented on the number of times that they feel they are given different or conflicting advice and of not receiving coordinated, consistent, ongoing support until their issues pass across to a statutory intervention at Tier 4. There are, however numerous examples of where when this

coordination has happened and services have through a CAF identified a lead professional to coordinate a team round the child approach which includes an element of parenting support there are positive outcomes for children (see Background documents for CAF case study).

### **Current performance in relation to parenting support**

There is evidence, both circumstantial and in casework, that practitioners, including those working within adult services at Tiers 1-4 view parents as key partners in achieving outcomes for children but are often unaware of the full range of services that are available to support them within the locality at a pre-specialist level. There are significantly more referrals to Tier 4 services in Newcastle than comparable local authorities and many of these are deemed not to meet the thresholds for social care intervention and to be better served by a CAF and lead professional approach. From the consultations carried out to develop this Strategy, this pattern of behaviour is believed to reflect a number of issues:

- A risk averse culture in practitioners working at Tiers 1-3
- Lack of confidence in Tiers 1-3 practitioners in their ability to 'hold' situations where parental circumstances suggest that there are higher levels of risk to achieving successful outcomes for children and that a more coordinated response across a range of services at a pre specialist level is required.
- Lack of knowledge of what services are available in communities at a pre specialist level, how to access these and who the individuals are that would deliver them.
- Practitioners at Tiers 1-3, particularly those within universal services, viewing support for parents as peripheral to their day job or not within their remit and either failing to signpost parents to appropriate services, or adopting a 'handing over' approach and not maintaining sufficiently robust communication between themselves and the referred agencies
- Links between adult and children's services needing to be more robust. For example, an adult drug user will be treated by adult services for their habit. This addresses an element of their support needs, but they might also be well served by attending a parenting support group run by Children's Services because as a parent they may well have needs relating to that role

The pattern that emerges from the consultations that have taken place is of strong support for the development of a Citywide coordinated, strategic approach to parenting support services at the pre specialist level in Newcastle.

- There is a well rehearsed sense of the importance of identifying and prioritising early those parents whose circumstances place them at significant risk of achieving poor outcomes for children.
- There is recognition that it is all too easy for individuals not to respond to the early warning signs of an emerging parenting issue, particularly if everyone those individuals know is living in similar circumstances.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relevance of building open, trusting relationships between parents and practitioners and practitioners and practitioners has emerged as a key factor in enabling parents to access services early. A view expressed very frequently by stakeholders was <i>'It's as much about how people engage with parents as what they actually do'</i>. It has been identified therefore as very important to value and fund informal and flexible support as a bridge to more formal services.</li> <li>• The significance of ensuring that childcare is available as part of a package of parenting support in order to allow parents to access services was identified as key to parental engagement</li> <li>• The importance of training the Children's Services workforce in the necessary skills to engage effectively with parents was highlighted constantly. In terms of staff development and the requirements for staff skills and training, a consistent picture emerged. High value was placed on staff with good communication skills, who were non judgemental, had a strong awareness of who they were, their values and beliefs. An ability to <i>'get on with the job'</i> and <i>'think outside the box'</i> were valued alongside the capacity to be positive, motivated and energetic. Also stressed were the need for staff to be able to support parents over periods of time, remain engaged and maintain relationships and the value of staff having in depth knowledge of services available.</li> </ul> <p>See Background documents for Report cards completed by focus groups for different parenting situations showing Indicators to measure performance, description of current performance and the perceived causes and issues behind these.</p>
<p><b>9. What do we know works?</b></p>	<p>There is a significant body of research literature that outlines the key principles of effective parenting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authoritative (warm and firm), not harsh parenting from fathers and mothers</li> <li>• Attachment, initiated pre-birth and especially important in early months by fathers and mothers</li> <li>• Parental involvement, fathers and mothers, in the form of interest in the child and parent-child discussions: how both parents interact with their children is key to how that child develops</li> <li>• Positive expectations, beliefs and attitudes from fathers and mothers</li> <li>• Quality of parental supervision</li> <li>• Confidence and skills especially when parenting children with special educational needs and disabilities</li> <li>• Positive parenting experience</li> </ul>

In order to provide the type of support that enables mothers and fathers to fulfil their role we know that timing and accessibility are key as are staff with appropriate skills and approach ready to reach out to parents and draw them into packages of support, parenting programmes and individually tailored/targeted help. Measuring the progress we make in achieving this as part of our early intervention and prevention approach needs to be a key element of the performance monitoring which will be developed for the Strategy and should include activities such as following up parents after their attendance at a parenting support programme to review its longer term impact.

*Parents stress the crucial importance of getting the right help at the right time. This is usually much earlier than currently delivered, and covers a range of services across adult social care, health and housing, as well as children's services. 'Supporting Parents, Safeguarding', CSCI Special Study Report, February 2006.*

Considerable efforts have been made in developing this Strategy to collect views from a very wide range of stakeholders in Newcastle about what they perceive to 'work' in relation to parenting support. An approach could be said to work if:

- It contributes to the achievement of the agreed Parenting Support Outcome, Objectives and Newcastle's Plan for Children and Young People priorities (see Section 4)
- Is true to the agreed Parenting Support Principles (see Section 4).
- 

There are a large number of initiatives, activities, legislative powers and duties that are designed to give a range of strategies to services to enable them to support parents in their role. These include:

- Criminal Justice Act 2003
- Childcare Act 2006
- National Services Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services
- Sure Start Children's Centres
- Extended Schools
- Healthy Schools programme
- Targeted youth support
- Choosing Health 2004
- Respect Action Plan 2006
- Social Exclusion Action Plan 2006

	<p>All of these emphasise in different ways the importance of parents to children’s development, the need to provide earlier intervention and prevention, the value of having good quality information about what services are available, the importance of fostering relationships between parents and children, the need for services to be better coordinated and for parents to be engaged in their development and delivery..</p> <p>Having so many organisations that recognise the importance of parents has contributed to the fact that while there is a huge amount of parenting support happening, the work is often not coherent or integrated and is geographically patchy.</p> <p><b>Parenting Programmes</b></p> <p>One element of parenting support that has consistently been shown to be effective in terms of changing the behaviour of mothers, fathers and children is the delivery of well constructed parenting programmes by skilled facilitators. These programmes generally last between 8 and 12 weeks and have been offered either on a voluntary basis or through a Parenting order by a very wide range of agencies. Their impact is significantly enhanced if they form one part of a coordinated package of support for the parents, as through a CAF, and it is this approach that Newcastle is adopting in its delivery of all parenting programmes available through the Respect Agenda.</p> <p>Stakeholders in focus groups were asked to identify examples of good practice. In all cases the significance of the skills and abilities of the person delivering the service or parenting programme could not be over emphasised. This reinforces a key message: developing the workforce’s ability to work effectively with parents and enable them to find their own solutions to problems will enhance our ability to engage with parents early. Quality assuring and supporting the diverse range of trainers delivering parenting courses will need to be a priority of the parenting support work in Newcastle and will link with the emerging focus of the recently established National Academy for Parenting Practitioners</p>
<p><b>10. How and who will manage the strategy and action plan(s)</b></p>	<p>In Newcastle, the role of Single Commissioner and Parenting Champion that each local authority is required by central Government to have is fulfilled by the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support. She has responsibility for developing and overseeing the Strategy and for championing support for parents across the City. The guidance from Government for the role is contained in the Background documents.</p> <p>Parenting support is best commissioned on the basis of sound intelligence from stakeholders. There are managed partnership arrangements for Children’s Services within Newcastle and it is proposed that the commissioning of parenting support will fit within these.</p>

	<p>The work is embedded within other initiatives such as Children’s Centres and Extended Schools as well as the Respect Agenda and area locality work so it is important that synergy is achieved between these various activities through ongoing close communication between key partners to each of these developments as part of the City’s overarching approach to early intervention and prevention.</p> <p>Although the Strategic Lead takes the role of Parenting Champion for the City, the proposed role of ‘parenting champion’ in each locality partnership needs to be developed and agreed across all partners. This role is currently being fulfilled by the PESCO team which gathers ‘soft’ data: the views of a wide range of parents and partners that are engaged in parenting support within that locality and intelligence gathered from locality parenting networks and contacts. The PESCO service has now established processes for collecting such information and provides a quarterly report to the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support which summarises this information and identifies priorities. This information will inform the commissioning of parenting support, alongside the monitoring and evaluating of the impact of any interventions and the making of recommendations for long term planning both operational and financial. This intelligence will contribute to the emerging locality based commissioning processes. Establishing agreed processes for monitoring the quality and impact of parenting support is a key objective of the Strategy and a priority for the Strategic Lead.</p>
<p><b>11. Key contributors</b></p>	<p>A wide range of partner agencies have been involved in developing this Strategy across the maintained, private and voluntary sectors as well as parents, carers, children and young people. A list of contributors is included in the Background documents.</p>
<p><b>12. Staff development</b></p>	<p>There are a number of changes that will be required to embed the Strategy:</p> <p><b>Develop ability of all staff to work more effectively with parents, particularly those that may have additional needs</b></p> <p>The consultation on the Green Paper Every Child Matters, strongly supported the proposition that everyone working with children, young people and families should have a common set of skills and knowledge. The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) worked with a partnership of service user, employer and workers to develop this Common Core of skills and knowledge. This sets out the basic skills and knowledge needed by people (including volunteers) whose work brings them into regular contact with children, young people and families. It will enable multi-disciplinary teams to work together more effectively in the interests of the child or young person.</p>

The skills and knowledge are described under six main headings:

- Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers
- Child and young person development including those with special educational needs and disability
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child
- Supporting transitions
- Multi-agency working
- Sharing information

Over time the Government expects that everyone working with children, young people and families will be able to demonstrate a basic level of competence in the six areas of the Common Core. In future the Common Core will form part of all qualifications for working with children, young people and families and it will act as a foundation for training and development programmes run by employers and training organisations. Embedding Common Core skills and knowledge is an integral part of our Children's Services workforce strategy, and all training and development delivered or commissioned through the Parenting Support Strategy will be expected to support this. The Workforce Reform Strategy Board has an important role in bringing this to the attention of all partner agencies, helping them to recognise their responsibilities in this area and encouraging them to prioritise parenting support training within their staff development programmes.

National Occupational Standards have been developed for this aspect of professional development and specific training courses and qualifications produced. A programme to roll this training out across the workforce in Newcastle and provide opportunities to develop and support the improvement of these skills at each stage of professional development will need to be drawn up and embedded within the Workforce Reform Strategy and appraisal processes. An initial audit against the National Occupational Standards for working with parents of key practitioners and their current skills and confidence in this area is to take place between September 2007 and March 2008 as part of PESCO funded work. This will inform which roles and individuals will be prioritised for this training and how the programme to develop that will be organised and costed. Any training and development opportunities that are identified from this will need to have regard to roles and responsibilities (for example those for whom working with parents is the main part of their role, and others where this is not their core role) to take account of generalist and specialist skills and knowledge, and also the level of intervention (universal, targeted and specialist).

Those facilitating parenting programmes will themselves have learned a great deal from that process and will be continuing to learn from each other. Disseminating this knowledge across the workforce can be of real value for practitioners who are working with parents and serve to raise the general quality of this parenting support.

### **Establish robust and transparent locality based commissioning processes for parenting support**

Work being undertaken through the Commissioning work stream of the Transformation Programme will establish processes to ensure the effective commissioning of services within locality areas. Parenting support will be a key element of these services. Processes for feeding information from parenting support networks, through the Strategic Lead and parenting champions into this decision making will need to build on existing arrangements established by the PESCO team.

### **Building the ability of staff to work more effectively at Tiers 1-3**

As well as the activities around workforce reform, there is already significant work being undertaken in the City in relation to thresholds to social care, Information Sharing and CAF that similarly needs to have a parenting support dimension. The importance of sharing information, building a knowledge base of different services and how they operate, developing trust and openness between services, engaging earlier with individuals known to be parenting in especially challenging situations have all been shown to improve outcomes at Tiers 1-3. Building consensus and confidence around thresholds for service involvement across all Children's Services partners through further roll out of the CAF, engaging a wider range of practitioners to be lead professionals and use Contact Point, particularly for those working in universal and targeted services, will be key elements in improving the ability of staff to engage more effectively in early intervention and preventative work with parents.

In addition to CAF training we will be developing the role of the Lead Professional to provide coordination and ensure that parenting support is an integral part of these packages. A key indicator of the impact of this Strategy will be the incidence of a parenting support element in CAFs in the future. Where children have significant disabilities and complex needs we have established key workers for children aged 0-5 and their families who are:

- providing information
- identifying and addressing the needs of all family members
- providing emotional and practical support as required
- assisting families in their dealings with agencies and acting as an advocate as required

	<p>We know that parents with children with significant disabilities have particular and often very intense parenting support needs. We will therefore similarly need to monitor the degree to which these key workers incorporate an element of parenting support into their 'Team round the child' approach.</p>
<p><b>13. Resources</b></p>	<p>A number of budgets and initiatives include parenting support as part of their core offer and pay for different activities that fit our definition of parenting support work: Children's Centres, schools through their Extended services work and Parent Support Advisors, Teenage pregnancy, special educational needs and inclusion, behaviour support, Children's Fund, NRF, Respect, Family learning, libraries, PCT provider services, Youth Justice, Grant Aid, voluntary sector. Some of this funding is ring fenced specifically to parenting support such as PSA funding, in other cases it is part of a budget covering a number of elements within a core offer as with Children's Centres which is supplemented by work delivered by other partners. Investment in mothers and fathers in the ante natal period should also not be overlooked.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support will establish a small cross sector Parent Advisory Group</p> <p>Proposed membership to cover parenting support elements of the following areas of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Centres</li> <li>• Extended services/PSAs</li> <li>• School governor services</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Children's Fund</li> <li>• Working Neighbourhoods Fund (formerly NRF)</li> <li>• YOT</li> <li>• Family Learning</li> <li>• Inclusion services</li> <li>• PCT Provider services</li> <li>• Social care</li> <li>• Voluntary sector</li> </ul>

It is proposed that this group will meet initially twice yearly to improve the alignment of their funding to the direction of travel in current and future policy and service developments in relation to parenting support and ensure that we learn from, and build on, existing knowledge. It will also support funding that is ring fenced for parenting support within their different funding streams to be better coordinated and targeted within the City.

It will be crucial that those forming part of the Parent Advisory group, many of whom will be budget holders, develop a balance between having responsibility for their own funding but achieving better outcomes with this through alignment of the various budgets to the key identified priorities. Over time, this should develop a far more strategic, better coordinated and performance and outcome driven approach to funding and delivery of parenting support services that support but also challenge and engage parents, particularly those that research shows benefit from early engagement and better coordinated input. As part of the development of this Strategy, budget holding individuals and organisations have been identified as being likely members of the group (see Background documents) and further work to develop their understanding and commitment to this ongoing review and alignment of budgets will need to continue as the Strategy is taken forward over the next 3-5 years.

Much of the funding currently being spent on parenting support pays for services that are delivered directly to parents, others such as the Parenting Fund PESCO work pays for intelligence gathering and coordination. A great deal of this funding is short term and consideration needs to be given urgently to how key tasks it delivers can be made sustainable. As described earlier, the Parent Advisory group, chaired by the Strategic Lead Parenting Support will work to align the parenting support elements of these budgets to the identified priorities.

In addition there are a number of grants that fund parenting support work currently. Some are listed below and it will be important to identify any others that exist as part of the budget alignment and mainstreaming processes.

<b>Revenue funding</b>	<b>07/08</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>
Family Intervention Project: Respect	£150,000	Funded in principle	Funded in principle	Funded in principle
Parenting Support Strategy	£19,000	Nil	Nil	Nil
Parenting programmes: Respect	£125,000	Nil	Nil	Nil
Senior parenting practitioner: Respect	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Parent Support Advisors	£1,229,000	TBC	TBC	TBC
Parent as Partners in Early Learning	£150,000	Nil	Nil	Nil
PESCO service Parenting Fund	£95,000	Nil at time of writing	Nil at time of writing	Nil at time of writing
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,818,000</b>			

**14. Monitoring, review and evaluation**

**How will the Strategy's impact be measured and assessed?**

The responsible officer for this Strategy is the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support who takes the role of Single Commissioner for Parenting Support in Newcastle. She will require Children's Services to have a robust and transparent commissioning process that will enable appropriate services to be identified and funded to meet the parenting support elements of the identified priorities within the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People and the objectives for parenting support set out within this Strategy.

Commissioning mechanisms will involve the emerging locality partnerships and are currently under development and can be expected to be ratified by the Children and Young People's Executive by March 2008. Work to identify the indicators of success in order to establish a basis for performance monitoring for the Parenting Support Strategy was begun at the 2007 review of the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People and developing this will form part of the Action Plan for this Strategy.

The commissioning process for parenting support must be informed by stakeholder views and therefore will incorporate the intelligence gathered by the PESCO team at locality level as described earlier. The parenting champion within each locality (currently members of the PESCO team) will be expected to act as the conduit for this information to the Strategic Lead. Regular traffic light reports will allow the escalation of any issues to the Transformation Board Executive for resolution.

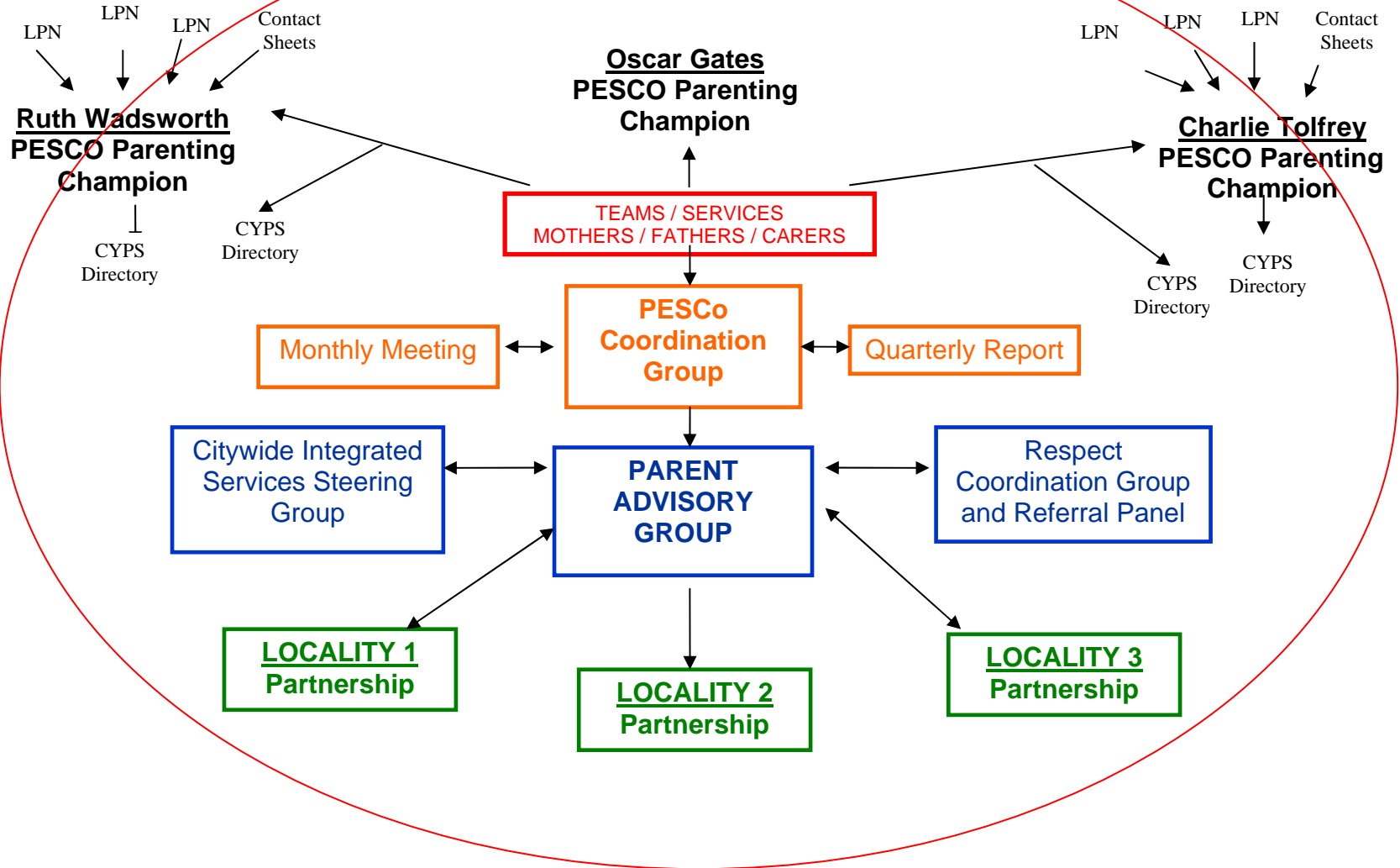
The wide range of services involved in parenting support will be invited to contribute to the ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating the impact of parenting support through the evolving Area locality partnerships linking to and firmly embedding the intelligence gathering work of the PESCO team.

The ability to measure the impact of the range of parenting support interventions that are currently available or could be available will be an important aspect of the future commissioning process. It is expected that the CYPSP Executive will receive an annual report on performance against agreed targets. These reports would adopt an Outcomes Accountability approach and consider in relation to agreed areas of work and target populations:

- How much is being done?
- How well is it being done?
- How many people are better off?
- What % of people are better off?

	<p>In developing the place for parenting support within the commissioning process in these locality partnerships consideration will need to be given to how key national policy issues such as those relating to the Respect Agenda, Children's Centres and Extended Schools, Parent Support Advisors, National Services Framework and parental participation in service development can feed into and create more integrated locality developments in relation to parenting support and reduce gaps and duplications.</p>
--	--

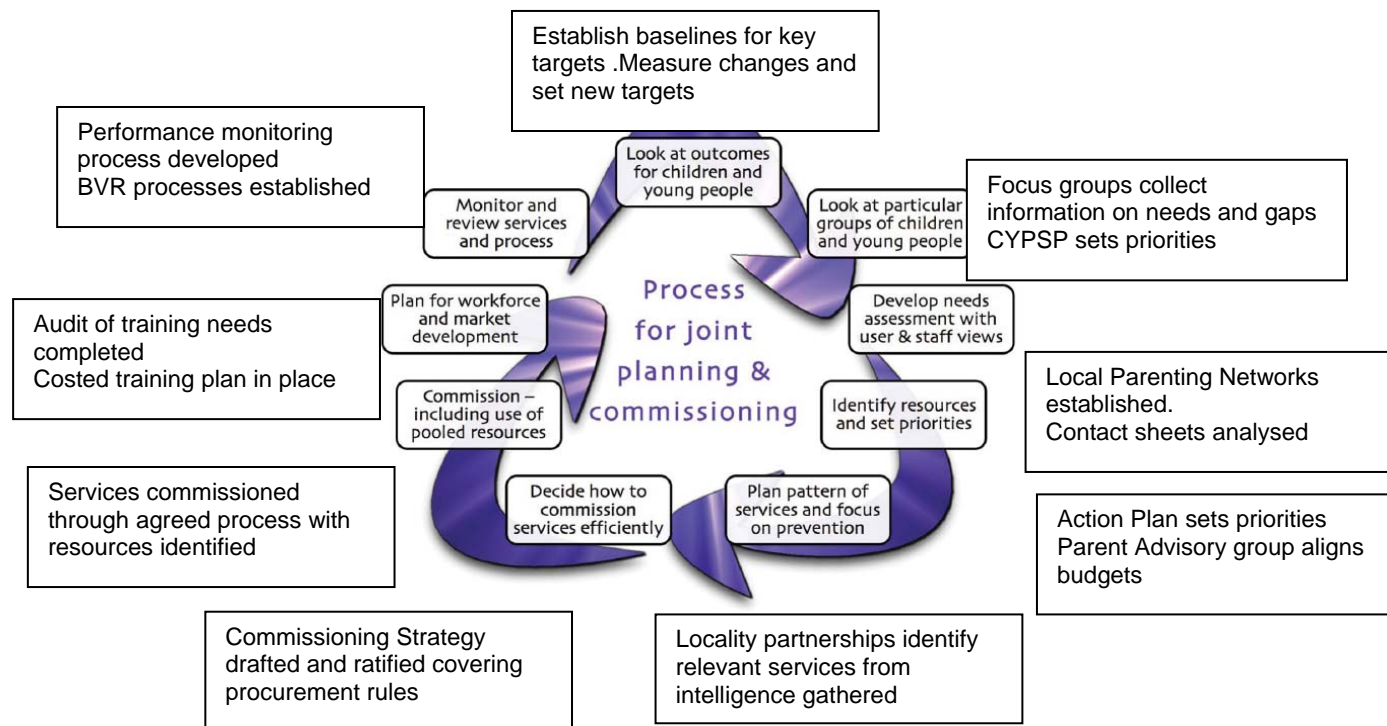
# CYPSP Executive



The Parent Advisory Group will have a direct but evolving relationship with the recently established Citywide Integrated Services Steering group, providing it with regular updates on its progress in identifying and aligning funding that is earmarked for parenting support. It will also be a forum where those with responsibility for parenting support funding can identify and resolve problems relating to putting the Citywide commissioning strategy into operation. The Parent Advisory group will also provide the Locality Partnerships through the Strategic Lead with such relevant budgetary and policy information as will assist them in being able to procure and finance parenting support services relevant for the needs of their localities.

It is expected that in addition to regular traffic light reports to the Transformation Programme the Strategic Lead: Parenting Support would present an Annual Report to the Children and Young People's Executive which would review progress against the agreed Action Plan.

The diagram below shows the stages in the commissioning process and examples of activities that have contributed to this to date or will in the future in relation to Parenting Support.



## 15. Targets

There are currently no specific separate arrangements for the inspection of parenting support services. However, the following recommendations emerged from the Newcastle JAR report 2007 and in each recommendation there are implicit parenting issues to be considered.

1. Agree and implement appropriate and consistent thresholds for referral to social care
2. Ensure that pupils permanently excluded from school are placed speedily in other schools or alternative provision
3. Develop and implement a strategic and coordinated approach to services for children with LDD, taking account of young people's views
4. Evaluate the impact of the strategies to reduce obesity levels in children and young people, reduce teenage conception rates and reduce levels of smoking among expectant mothers
5. Improve the vocational options for young people with LDD who are over the age of 18
6. Establish procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact of strategies to reduce antisocial behaviour and reduce offending
7. Develop links between priorities for improvement and the available resources to deliver the improvement
8. Implement fully the recommendations of the 14–19 area inspection through the harmonisation and integration of the plans for 11–19 year olds
9. Strengthen the corporate parenting arrangements through increasing the involvement of looked after children and young people in the decisions about and evaluation of services for them
10. Increase the number of foster care placements for children from ethnic minorities
11. Work with adult social services to meet the needs of young carers and their families so that their children and young people can lead as normal lives as possible
12. Ensure that the progress of all groups of pupils, including those with LDD, is reported appropriately,

It will be important that each element of the JAR Action Plan relating to these recommendations considers the role of parenting support in addressing these issues.

In addition, the identified priorities for the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People are:

- Reduce the high rate of teenage pregnancies
- Reduce obesity in children under 11
- To safely reduce the numbers of looked after children
- To raise educational attainment
- To develop a comprehensive Early Intervention and Prevention strategy to support parents, carers and children.

	<p>Parents have a key role to play in the achievement of each of these priorities by helping to build resilience in their children and better enabling them to cope with adversity. There is significant evidence to support, for example, the role of parental involvement in outcomes for children's attainment at school. The commissioning of any parenting support in the future must be mindful of all of these agreed priorities and be able to demonstrate how it is developing parenting support services that can contribute effectively to their achievement.</p> <p>Local and corporate reporting for these will be embedded within the existing Children and Young People's reporting structures. National reporting is evolving and close links have been already established with Government Office North east (GONE) to remain up to date with these.</p>
<b>16. Action plan</b>	See separate document

<b>17. Appendices</b>	<p>See Children's Services website <a href="http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/mcs_parent_strat#background">http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/mcs_parent_strat#background</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of contributors to focus groups and Parenting Support Strategy development</li> <li>• Report cards from focus groups</li> <li>• Dates of PESCO Local Parenting Networks 2007-8</li> <li>• Agenda for Locality parenting networks</li> <li>• PESCO contact sheet and example of Quarterly report</li> <li>• Parent Advisory group: suggested membership</li> <li>• Underpinning strategies</li> <li>• CAF windscreen and worked example</li> <li>• What do we want our Parenting Support Strategy to be and how do we achieve this?</li> <li>• Guidance for role of Single Commissioner and Parenting Champion: Newcastle's Strategic Lead: Parenting Support</li> </ul>
-----------------------	--