Key Elements of Effective Practice

Pa 14

Parenting

Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid

Contents

Background

What are the *Key Elements of Effective Practice?*

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has identified effective practice as a key element in developing and improving youth justice services. We are committed to identifying and promoting effective practice across the whole of the youth justice system to ensure that work with young people is as effective as possible, and based on research evidence and promising practice.

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* (the '*what to do*') describe the features of effective interventions, using the best evidence available. They are intended to be used as the primary tool by youth justice services for evidence-based self-assessment and quality assurance, providing the benchmark for effective practice.

These guidance notes are derived from the evidence presented in the corresponding source document available on the YJB website. The source documents have gathered the latest international evidence in accordance with the YJB's research standards and identify what is proven to be effective practice, or where robust evidence is not available, what is emerging as promising practice in the field. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are summaries condensing the evidence from the source documents into key messages for practice.

The following *Key Elements of Effective Practice* titles and the accompanying source documents are available from the YJB website (www.yjb.gov.uk):

- *Accommodation*
- *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision*
- *Education, Training and Employment*
- *Engaging Young People who Offend*
- *Mental Health*

- *Offending Behaviour Programmes*
- *Parenting*
- *Restorative Justice*
- *Substance Misuse*
- *Young People who Sexually Abuse*

Since the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* were originally published in 2002/03, two new titles have been added to take into account the most recent research evidence and policy or legislative developments in these areas of intervention. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* will continue to be updated in the future, in line with the YJB's effective practice strategy, as additional research becomes available.

These updated *Key Elements of Effective Practice* have been produced with the intention of them being complemented by the *Case Management Guidance* for youth offending teams (the '*how to*'), and the revised *National Standards for Youth Justice Services* (the '*must do*'), due for publication in 2009. Together, the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*, standards and guidance will provide holistic guidance for youth justice services.

Who are the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* for?

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are simple manuals that can be used by anyone working in the community and the secure estate with young people who offend. They describe the features of effective youth justice services and interventions, allowing delivery to be shaped by need and local context. They are intended to support consistent practice across youth justice services.

They do not provide specialists such as teachers, health care professionals or police officers in mainstream services with descriptions of how to work, nor do they detail the processes needed to deliver a service.

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* have been structured to provide guidance to three main audiences:

- **those involved in delivery, e.g. youth offending team (YOT) practitioners and prison officers**

- **those involved in operational and first-line management**

- **strategic managers in their role as service managers and partnership brokers.**

How should the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* be used?

The key indicators of quality have been identified from each of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* as particular elements to put in place to promote effective practice and the delivery of good quality services. Anyone working in the community and secure estate with young people who offend should note that these indicators are not a comprehensive list of quality issues and they are not an end in themselves. They are designed for use within a wider framework of evaluation of service practice and performance, and will enable a wider and continuous process of evaluation to take place.

It is important that the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are not used in isolation. The key messages for practitioners, operational managers, and strategic managers and their partners are derived from the corresponding source document; the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* should therefore be used in conjunction with their source document to ensure full understanding of the key elements of effective practice. This is not to say the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* on their own are not useful for the intended audience and purpose, but rather that the audience will have a better understanding of the evidence behind the guidance summaries if they are read and understood alongside the source documents.

Information is cross-referenced from the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* summaries to the source documents, and relevant page numbers of the corresponding source document are identified in brackets in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*.

Using the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in YOTs

Youth justice services are responsible for owning performance improvement and self-assessment and planning. Self-assessment against the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* has previously been a mandatory requirement of YOTs, however, from 2008/09, YOTs will be free to use the revised *Key Elements of Effective Practice* and accompanying self-assessment toolkit in line with their local priorities. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are intended to be used as evidence-based self-assessment tools to help identify improvement priorities and actions. The resulting action plan should enable YOT managers to monitor progress in the delivery of the priorities for the YOT.

Using the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in the secure estate

Managers and practitioners within the secure estate should consider the guidance contained within the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* summaries when developing and reviewing their practice and approaches to working with young people. The key messages will help to inform the development of effective practice and should be helpful in achieving their desired outcomes for young people. Establishments should also consider completing self-assessments against the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* to assist in identifying priority areas for development and improvement.

Key indicators of quality

Assessment

A standardised parenting assessment tool should be used, which will assist in recording and analysing the level of identified risks, protective factors and need, as well as establishing the level of support required to address them.

Assessments should serve as the initial basis for collaboratively determining with the family the scope, focus, and intensity of subsequent intervention activities, as well as the legislative context, e.g. voluntary agreement between the YOT and parents, Parenting Contract or Parenting Order.

Individual needs

Services should work collaboratively with parents/carers, using a strengths-based approach. Fathers as well as mothers should be involved and provided with opportunities to identify their own needs and to have an input into the selection of appropriate intervention content and type.

The programme materials and mode of delivery used by services should be flexible and address parents'/carers' needs in relation to literacy levels, language competencies, particular communication needs, transport and childcare, as well as differences in culture, ethnicity, gender and family structure.

Communication

Parents, young people and their families should be provided with relevant and understandable material. It should describe the intervention and what it entails, the relevant legislation and issues relating to confidentiality, data protection, case recording and information sharing.

Managers should ensure that parenting support is recognised as an integral part of their youth justice service by communicating across their organisation and to partner agencies the effectiveness of parenting support services in addressing offending behaviour, alongside other positive outcomes for young people, parents and their families.

Service delivery

The parents should be offered the most appropriate service for them depending on the risks, needs and circumstances identified in the assessment process. Relevant services may include one-to-one, group, or family-based work, and follow-on support.

Services should deliver 'manualised' interventions with a clearly articulated delivery plan, a clear theoretical base, and detailed aims and measurable objectives.

Transition

Parents should be supported to access relevant services provided by other agencies at the beginning, during, and at the end of a parenting intervention.

Managers should ensure that there are clear protocols and procedures for effective joined-up multi-agency working to facilitate smooth and speedy transitions between stages of the service delivery process.

Training

Managers should ensure that staff have the appropriate level of training, background qualifications and supervision required for the type and intensity of the intervention they are delivering.

Services should have comprehensive and clear written guidance documenting parenting policy and procedures, and managers should ensure that these are routinely and consistently implemented.

Management

Strategic managers and partners should ensure that clear and rigorous protocols for the delivery of parenting services exist, which are understood and shared by all relevant agencies.

Strategic partners should ensure that parenting services provided within the youth justice arena form a coherent part of a comprehensive parenting strategy that informs the Children and Young People's Plan. They should be linked in to the relevant commissioning processes for parenting services.

Service development

Key stakeholders, including parents, young people and partner agencies, should be involved in planning and developing new services.

The development of new services should be based on evidence of effectiveness, including the use of replicable programmes and interventions as well as evidence-based methods, practice approaches and implementation factors.

Monitoring and evaluation

Appropriately experienced staff should have designated responsibility for developing, implementing and maintaining systems to monitor and evaluate effective parenting interventions.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of parenting services should include identification of changes in attitude and behaviour, as well as client satisfaction.

Parenting

Research convincingly demonstrates that parenting support can provide an effective mechanism for achieving better outcomes for children and young people across a range of dimensions, including preventing and reducing youth offending and anti-social behaviour (**p.11**). Additionally, supporting parents has been shown to benefit parents in their own right, improving confidence and the ability to cope with parenting issues, affecting relationships over the longer term with younger children as well as older ones, improving and widening parents' social support networks, and improving overall quality of life for parents in difficult circumstances (**p.11**).

Working with parents is almost certainly a prerequisite for effective intervention with young people who are offending or at risk of it; working with young people alone is generally less effective than work that takes account of their family and home contexts (**p.11**). Parallel work, where support to parents or families is linked with support for young people, may contribute to better outcomes (**p.22**). Interventions can be effective at all stages – both early and later intervention have been found to have positive outcomes for families (**p.11**).

Most successful work in this field takes a strengths-based approach, building on families' own understanding of 'what works' and their existing skills and abilities, not focusing solely on problems, risk factors and deficits in parents' skills and circumstances (**p.12**).

Parenting Orders were introduced in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and implemented across England and Wales in June 2000. The introduction of Parenting Orders also stimulated voluntary work with parents within the youth justice context, delivered by YOTs or their partner agencies (**p.11**). Parenting Orders are designed to be used:

> *When parents are unwilling to engage with parenting support on a voluntary basis and a YOT assesses that a parent could be supported to improve the child's behaviour; YOTs can apply for a free-standing parenting order or recommend a parenting order linked to a child's conviction or another order. However before applying for an order, YOTs should normally have tried to engage with parents on a voluntary basis whether or not through a contract.*[1]

Two pieces of legislation, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which came into force at the end of February 2004, brought in a wider range of powers in relation to working with parents in both the youth justice and education systems. This legislation can be said to have created four contexts for parenting support (**pp.10–11**):

- **voluntary**

- **voluntary Parenting Contracts**

- **free standing Parenting Orders (not linked to a young person's order)**

- **the original Parenting Order (linked to a young person's order).**

1 Ministry of Justice, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Youth Justice Board (2007). *Parenting Contracts and Orders Guidance.*

Guidance on delivery

Assessment

Assessment should be an integrated, comprehensive, family-based process that includes parents[2] and young people, so that parenting support workers have access to assessments of other family members while building up their understanding of issues specifically related to parenting (**p.16**). Additionally, they should build on what is already known about the family, rather than duplicating previous assessments (**pp.16, 20**).

Assessments should involve fathers, mothers and other significant carers such as step-parents, grandparents, non-resident parents (where they are involved to any degree in a young person's life), etc (**p.19**).

Assessments should serve as the initial basis for collaboratively determining the scope, focus and intensity of subsequent intervention activities (**p.19**). The assessment process should also include an exploration with parents of their rights and responsibilities, including whether they will engage voluntarily, through a Parenting Contract or on a Parenting Order (along with the penalties for any non-compliance).

Any special needs or circumstances that characterise individual service users should be identified at the assessment stage, and consideration should be given to how the services offered are culturally appropriate and context sensitive (**p.21**).

Assessment should be used to build a positive working relationship with parents, starting from the first point of contact and developing from it. This will be aided by practitioners' use of good listening, empathy and communication skills, as this will help to facilitate enduring positive engagement and model an authoritative parenting style (**p.17**).

Stages of assessment

Two stages of assessment can be identified:

- **initial referral assessment to identify whether parenting support is required, triggered through the completion of** *Onset/Asset*

- **fuller assessment to create a plan to address parenting risk and protective factors and family stressors.**

However, assessment appears to be most effective when it is a continual process used to monitor the progress of young people and their families and plan the next stage of intervention, not just used at the outset of the relationship (**p.19**). At each stage of the process, more information may become available, which will necessitate updating the assessment and intervention plan.

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2 Parent is used here and throughout to encompass fathers, mothers and other significant carers in a parenting role, such as step-parents, non-resident parents and foster carers.

Initial assessments at *Onset/Asset* stage should identify whether referral to a parenting service (in-house or external) is appropriate (**p.16**)**,** and include a discussion of why services are being offered and what support parents and young people can expect to receive. It should also include a discussion about the level of commitment required for successful intervention. This not only gives the practitioner insight into how the family functions, but it also serves to communicate clearly to users what the service aims to do, which appears to be a vital element of building a productive relationship between service provider and user (**p.17**).

A fuller parenting assessment should follow when the need for a parenting service has been identified (**p.18**) and it should be carried out by trained staff either within the YOT/secure estate or in a partner agency (**p.45**). If the fuller parenting assessment is carried out by a partner agency, there must be clear protocols in place to ensure that the intervention plan and outcomes are fed back to the relevant YOT/secure estate staff (**p.18**).

The fuller parenting assessment should be multi-faceted and should seek to gather information pertaining to all aspects of the parents' and child/young person's environment, including family functioning, peer, educational and social support systems (**p.19**). It should identify the young person's, parent's and family's strengths, as well as difficulties, and enable practitioners to tailor interventions accordingly (**p.16**). It will assist with planning interventions that are relevant to the needs and characteristics of each family (**p.17**) and in developing an understanding of how the identified problem/s make sense in the context of the family and their environment (**p.16**). It should also be used to establish the severity of the difficulties experienced and priority areas to be addressed (**pp.18–19**).

At least one assessment should take place in the family home, providing that time and resources (and staff health and safety) allow (**p.19**).

A standardised parenting assessment tool should be used, which will assist in recording and analysing the level of identified risks, protective factors and need, as well as establishing the level of support required to address the risks and needs, and enhance protective factors. Methods can include questionnaires that can be completed by parents themselves, questionnaires that form the basis for semi-structured or less formal 'conversational' interviews, and observation methods (**p.20**). The information captured using a standardised assessment tool should then be used to contribute to the review and evaluation processes (**p.16**).

Once initial contact is made with a parent, there should be a speedy progression from initial to fuller assessment, and then to service delivery to maximise the chances of effective engagement of parents by building on a 'window of receptiveness' (**p.17**).

Individual needs

Services should work collaboratively with parents, using a strengths-based approach, providing them with opportunities to identify their own needs and to have an input into the selection of appropriate intervention content and type (**p.21**). This ethos should be applied in the delivery of Parenting Order interventions as well as voluntary interventions. The most effective interventions ensure that the content of sessions is personally meaningful for service users (**p.21**). Offering a degree of programme flexibility in this way has been shown to increase participants' motivation and engagement with the intervention (**pp.21–22**). It can also enhance the depth and quality of learning and significantly increase the positive results a service can achieve. This need not conflict with the important principle of adhering to 'programme fidelity', providing

core elements of the intervention are delivered in a standardised way (**p.30**).

Services should offer a range of delivery styles, including group, one-to-one and family-based work depending on case-by-case circumstances, in order to meet individual needs (**p.22**).

Addressing needs of parents

Services should ensure that content is personally meaningful, and focuses on circumstances and needs at both individual and family levels:

- **individual needs relating to the service user, e.g. sexuality, mental health problems**

- **individual needs in the context of family structure and characteristics, e.g. ethnicity, living circumstances, non-resident and extended family, family problems such as substance abuse or criminality (p.21).**

Effective engagement of parents is less likely to succeed with families that are preoccupied with immediate worries about housing, food, employment, or physical or mental health. For this reason, practitioners should consider how these wider needs can be addressed, particularly through referral on to specialist services, or through in-house support as appropriate (**p.21**).

More intensive, tailored services, such as one-to-one or family-based services, should be offered to parents with complex needs or who are in crisis. These may then lead on to subsequent participation in a group programme. People with multiple personal life stresses (as described above) may also need one-to-one support before and during a group work programme, utilising the full range of services available in the locality (**p.22**).

Services should be responsive to changes in service users' needs, taking a casework approach that allows continuous reassessment of changing needs (**p.22**).

Services should identify and address the parenting roles of fathers and mothers as well as other adults in a significant parenting role. Fathers and mothers may want different things from services, and there is little robust evidence on what specific approaches work best with fathers. However, fathers and families can, and do, benefit from parenting support (**p.24**), and services should work to engage fathers routinely in parenting support interventions.

Services should be culturally sensitive, aware of and respecting of what constitutes 'good parenting' within different cultures. Services should also be able to identify and address counter-productive parenting practices across cultures, and be ready to challenge them (**pp.23–24**).

Intervention materials

Intervention material should reflect the varying backgrounds and experiences of parents, for example cultural, ethnic, language, literacy, communication, family structures and gender differences (**p.25**). Some topic areas, for instance drug and alcohol use, sexual relationships and mental health problems, may be particularly sensitive to some groups of parents. Services should ensure that their programme materials address these issues in a sensitive, respectful and culturally-sensitive manner (**p.25**).

The mode of delivery used by services should be flexible and address parents' needs in relation to literacy levels, language competencies and particular communication needs (e.g. disabilities such as sight or hearing impairments). Levels of parental literacy and cognitive ability should dictate the type of programme materials that are used (**p.25**).

A range of methods should be employed to suit different learning styles, e.g. role play, videos/DVDs, audio and interactive computer learning. Too much technical information may cause parents to disengage (**p.25**).

Services should address how individual needs (of fathers as well as mothers) are catered for in relation to the location and timing of services, as well as the environment in which services are provided. Childcare should be available as required (**p.25**).

Communication

Parents, young people and their families should be provided with relevant and understandable material describing the intervention and what it entails (**p.26**). This should include the legislative base for interventions and any consequences for non-compliance.

Parenting services should use clear referral criteria and ensure that these are communicated to the range of agencies and their staff who may refer parents and families to the service. This should help to reduce inappropriate referrals and increase the chances of engaging parents, and help to ensure that parents are provided with services that address the risks and needs identified in the assessment process (**p.18**).

Frequent and clear communication between staff, parents and young people using the service should underpin service delivery. It is important that intervention staff convey to participants the purpose of the intervention, clear goals and expectations and the criteria being used to measure success. This can help service users to fully engage with the intervention and maintain their commitment (**p.26**). Additionally, all programme participants (whether receiving one-to-one work or group-based services) should receive regular individual feedback on their progress (**p.22**).

Services should clearly communicate their protocols regarding confidentiality and data protection (**p.26**), including what information will be recorded, how, where and who will have access to it (**p.28**). They should also be provided with information about the complaints/ compliments procedures and how to use them.

It is important to ensure that services for parents and young people (whether located in-house or in partner agencies) have mechanisms for joint working to maximise effectiveness for families, to encourage partnership working and the sharing of expertise (**p.27**).

Communicating with families

Staff will need to clarify and agree with parents and young people (and other relevant family members) how they will share information and the type of information to be shared. This may be particularly significant when different family members are involved in separate interventions, and confidentiality (and its limits) will need to be discussed routinely and revisited when necessary.

Communication with the family's wider networks should also take place as the input of extended family members and significant family supporters can influence the success of the intervention, especially at the assessment and evaluation stages (**p.27**).

Staff should pay particular regard to the diverse family structures that exist and ensure that the parenting and family arrangements of all families are taken into account when they communicate with families (**p.27**).

Multi-agency working

Effective communication through regular telephone and face-to-face contact is integral to building multi-agency working. This can have a positive impact in relation to referrals, service user assessments and information sharing, gaining verbal and practical support from existing services and for collecting ongoing data for evaluation purposes. This regular communication should take place between staff involved in work with parents and staff working with young people, whether they work in-house, in a contracted-out service or in partner agencies (**p.27**).

Wherever appropriate, relevant intervention staff should seek to be included in, or informed of, the outcome of meetings held by outside agencies pertaining to parents and young people in their programme. Weekly or monthly feedback from other agencies already working with parents and/or young people can be incorporated into the monitoring of participants' progress (**p.27**).

Service delivery

Parenting services should be delivered by skilled professionals (**p.32**). Additionally, a degree of peer-led work (peer co-leading) has been successfully incorporated into some interventions (**p.32**).

Parents should be offered the most appropriate service for them depending on the risks, needs and circumstances identified in the assessment process, including one-to-one, group or family-based work (**pp.32–33**).

One-to-one work appears to be essential for parents whose difficulties prohibit their participation in group work, e.g. they are experiencing multiple stresses (as described in the 'Individual needs' chapter of the source document) or are agoraphobic, for example, although one-to-one work can also be a stepping stone into later participation in groups (**p.22**).

Group work has the benefits of helping parents to feel less isolated through meeting parents in similar situations and sharing their strategies together (**p.30**).

Family-based work with the whole family, which engages with family functioning and relationships, should be used for families with multiple, complex and entrenched issues. Because it is resource intensive, it is appropriately reserved for families with the highest levels of risk and need (**pp.32–33**).

Multi-modal or multi-dimensional services are amongst the most effective in achieving change for users. They employ a range of different modes and styles of delivery, and work with the family group, with parents in groups with other parents, and with individual users on a one-to-one basis (**p.30**).

The length and intensity of service provision should relate to the needs of the parents and their family. In general, parents with more extensive and severe needs will require longer and more intensive intervention (**p.32**).

It is important to ensure that parents have follow-on support in the longer term, after their participation in a particular parenting support service has ended. Multi-agency working should play a key role here (**p.36**).

Purpose of interventions

Interventions should be based on a clearly articulated 'theory of change'. That is, they should state why offering a given service or intervention is expected to produce the desired change in parent, child or family functioning. They should also specify the expected 'mechanism of change' – that is, how changes will be achieved and how they will be recognised.

'Manualised' interventions should be used, documenting clearly the 'curriculum' or content to be delivered. They should be delivered using the guidance provided to preserve programme 'fidelity' (ensuring that the intervention is delivered in a way that is faithful to its original design and intention). There is no compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of purely ad hoc or responsive/flexible interventions. However, this does not preclude maintaining a degree of flexibility to respond to parents' individual needs within the structure of the programme. 'Flexibility without loss of fidelity' is a core principle for effective work in this area (**p.30**).

Effective interventions should be at least partly behaviourally-focused (i.e. understanding behaviour, learning and practising successful strategies to modify own and child's behaviour) and not focus solely on cognitive approaches (i.e. focusing on attitudes, beliefs and thinking) (**p.31**).

Content of interventions

A range of topics should be incorporated in 'manualised' parenting support interventions. These sessions cover parenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience. Topics commonly included in parenting support interventions to address parenting risk, and protective factors and related needs are (**pp.31–32**):

- **understanding child and adolescent development**

- **understanding peer influences**

- **understanding substance misuse**

- **goal-setting and decision-making**

- **supporting young people's learning**

- **problem-solving**

- **boundaries and discipline**

- **supervision and monitoring**

- **strategies for positive re-enforcement**

- **communication and negotiation**

- **managing problem behaviours**

- **managing stress**

- **countering over-reaction**

- **family conflict**

- **family relationships, including couples relationships**

- **mental and emotional health**

- **social support and accessing services**

- **gender, cultural and family values and roles.**

A wide range of methods should be used in interventions to address parents' different learning styles, to add interest and to deliver different components of interventions, including discussion, video scenarios, modelling, role play, take-home tips and exercises to practice at home (**p.32**).

Examples include:

- **group discussions and interactive workshops**

- **CD-ROMs for use at home or on-site**

- **video-modelling (video tapes/DVDs on topics of interest or modelling 'positive parenting' techniques)**

- **newsletters and printed materials to read/take home**

- **skills-building**

- **role play**

- **homework assignments**

- **one-to-one counselling and support**

- **telephone support**

- **music, art, drama, outward-bound activities.**

The examples given above are among the range of methods used within the delivery of programmes proven to be effective.

Engaging parents

The implementation factors known to play a critical role in motivating parents to attend the service initially ('getting'), in persuading them to maintain their engagement and attend sessions regularly ('keeping') and in engaging them to participate meaningfully in the service ('engaging'), are (**pp.33–34**):

Getting

- minimising the delay between first referral and first contact with new users

- initiating personal contact between a service worker and new users, by home visit, or else by telephone

- offering an initial visit for the parent to the service site to meet staff, see set-up, get acclimatised, etc.

Keeping

- ensuring a welcoming and non-threatening environment, e.g. comfortably furnished and homely

- offering suitable and convenient times to use service, in easy-to-reach locations

- provide transport out of home

- provide childcare

- provide meals and refreshments

- provide other useful facilities, such as washing machines and driers.

Engaging

- provide some degree of choice or menu of options in service offer

- encourage 'social' element – opportunity to meet other parents, form new relationships, etc.

- provide ongoing telephone support and feedback

- seek (and incorporate) user feedback

- culturally-aware staff (see also the 'Individual needs' chapter of the source document)

- suitably trained, skilled and supervised staff (see also the 'Training and management' chapter of the source document).

Parenting interventions can be provided in the secure estate although services provided in this setting are inevitably restricted in the extent to which they can meet some of these engagement factors. However, establishments should consider what they can achieve, for example, by choosing a particular room to work in that meets the engagement factors described above, e.g. welcoming, comfortable, etc.

A range of home, office and community venues can be used for parenting interventions (taking into account the factors above). However, for some parents YOT offices have not been felt to be appropriate as they did not want to be publicly identified as the parent of a young person involved in the youth justice system (**p.33**).

The most intensive family-based interventions all include a substantial element of home-based support. At least one home visit may increase the engagement of parents in groups (**p.33**).

Transition

Parents should be supported to access relevant services provided by other agencies at the beginning, during and at the end of a parenting intervention (**pp.16, 17, 38–39**). Effective multi-agency working will be a key factor in ensuring parents are able to access additional services within the locality (**p.36**).

Parenting support should be offered swiftly and in a sensitive manner as soon as possible after initial contact is made with the parent to increase the chances of positive engagement and therefore increase the prospect of successful intervention and outcomes. For example, it should be offered when young people or parents appear before the courts, and also when young people enter secure settings (**p.35**). Providing a point of contact for parenting services in the court setting can facilitate parents' access, as can providing parenting support early on in resettlement planning.

Family-based interventions that operate whilst a young person is in an 'out-of-home' placement should provide preparatory visits home and after-care support for parents to maximise the chances of an effective transition home. Attempts should be made to maximise the similarities between the 'out of home' placement and the home environment, e.g. day-to-day activities (**p.35**).

Monitoring and evaluation

Practitioners should contribute to monitoring and evaluation processes to determine effectiveness for individual parents and families and of the service as a whole (**pp.42–43**). For individual parents and families, this should include the collection of referral data, aims and objectives identified through the assessment process and used to construct an intervention plan, ongoing case recording, mid and end intervention reviews, the use of an end evaluation tool, and a record of feedback from parents and other relevant parties (**p.52**).

When services are delivered by an external agency there should be ongoing contact to ensure that any changes in risk and need are identified and result in appropriate changes to the intervention plan (**pp.27–28**). Attendance should also be monitored for both voluntary and statutory participants so that any difficulties in participation can be addressed.

Guidance on operational management

Assessment

A standardised parenting assessment tool should be selected for consistent use across the service which will assist in recording and analysing the level of identified risks, protective factors and need, as well as establishing the level of support required to address the risks and needs, and enhance protective factors. There are a range of tools that have been tested in a number of settings and interventions that can be used (**p.20**).

Practitioners should be supported to carry out consistent assessments and create intervention plans based on the parents' risk factors, protective factors and needs identified (**p.16**).

Individual needs

A range of resources should be available to ensure that services are able to support parents' participation in services and to meet their individual needs. For example, the provision of practical resources such as transport, childcare, resources to meet communication needs (e.g. use of a signer or interpreter), and programme delivery resources such as TV/DVD player (**p.25**).

Services should be reviewed to ensure that they are culturally sensitive, meet the needs of fathers as well as mothers and other significant carers, and address the diversity of family structures (**p.24**).

It is important for services to recognise that they are unlikely to be able to meet the particular needs of all individual service users. Therefore where issues are beyond the scope of the youth justice service there should be clear referral-on mechanisms in place. Other services may need to be developed, or accessed, internally or externally as appropriate, as additional service needs are highlighted (**p.21**).

There is general evidence that the skills and personal qualities of the service staff matter more than their attributes in terms of sex, ethnicity, religion and so on. It may be helpful that at least some staff reflect the ethnic or gender makeup of the population or group being served, particularly in relation to engaging parents in services. However, further research is needed to determine this (**p.24**).

Communication

Managers should ensure that parenting support is recognised as an integral part of their youth justice service by communicating across their organisation and to partner agencies the

effectiveness of parenting support services in addressing offending behaviour, alongside other positive outcomes for young people, parents and their families (**p.27**).

Services should ensure that they are on the 'map' of local services through a range of processes, including the use of service publicity material (**p.18**). This has the benefit of increasing awareness of, and participation in, parenting services, including by recruiting service users from a range of existing local agencies/teams (depending on local service arrangements) e.g. anti-social behaviour teams, Youth Inclusion Programmes and Youth Inclusion Support Panels (**p.26**). Information sharing within a multi-agency network of service providers will help facilitate this process, but only if information is shared on a regularly updated, ongoing basis (**p.18**), e.g. through participation in a multi-agency parenting forum.

It is vital that services communicate effectively and gain the support of key agencies that have any involvement or legal mandate with the parents or young people in their service, e.g. social services, mental health services, schools, youth courts, employers. Lack of support by any one agency that is actively working with service users can sometimes limit the viability and effectiveness of the intervention (**p.27**).

Services should publicise the outcomes and effectiveness of their intervention using a range of methods to suit different stakeholder audiences such as magistrates, parents and partner agencies. This helps agencies to understand the value and worth of their involvement and support for the intervention and can increase users' engagement and participation (**p.26**).

A staff member should be designated to take responsibility for proactively contacting a range of relevant agencies/teams to create interest in the service and to 'bring them on board', and to regularly re-publicise the intervention (**p.27**). They can also act as a conduit for information to flow between the service, service users and external agencies including feedback on outcomes (**p.27**). This can be done, for instance, by attending court user groups meetings to share intervention aims and outcomes and by establishing a base in a partner agency.

All agencies involved in the delivery of services to parents within the youth justice arena should have agreed and clearly communicated expectations. Roles and responsibilities should be delineated, communicated and understood by all parties, as this can have benefits for programme effectiveness and the efficient use of resources (**p.28**).

Clear agreements should be established between agencies in relation to the sharing of information and protocols regarding confidentiality and data protection, as the effectiveness of multi-agency working can be hampered by lack of clarity around joint working arrangements (**p.28**).

Service delivery

A 'menu' of services should be available through the YOT and/or partner agencies (**p.32**) and the YOT should establish protocols for referral on for specialist services which are beyond the scope of the YOT, e.g. services for severe mental health issues, parental substance misuse etc (**p.21**).

Parents and families with more entrenched and severe difficulties should be matched with more intensive interventions (**p.32**) such as family-based work, or multi-modal or multi-dimensional services (**p.30**).

Services should deliver manualised interventions with a clearly set out written delivery plan that includes specific guidance on how, when and in what order to tackle topics, and which articulates the theoretical basis of the service and the expected mechanisms by which positive change will be achieved for service users (**pp.29–30, 32**).

Transition

Managers should ensure that there are clear principles and procedures for effective joined-up multi-agency working to facilitate smooth and speedy transitions between stages of service delivery processes, e.g. from assessment to service delivery and then to follow-on support. This is also critical to ensure consistent and smooth transition from one point of the youth justice system to another, e.g. in providing parenting support for parents of a young person before, during and after a young person's custodial sentence, and/or providing parenting support for a young parent in custody and building follow-on support into their resettlement plan (**p.36**).

Services must ensure that they have adequate links with other specialist service providers that they can refer parents onto when their needs cannot be addressed in-house (**p.21**).

Training

Staff who are appointed to deliver parenting services should be suitably trained, skilled and culturally competent. These are factors, coupled with staff supervision, that contribute to the delivery of effective interventions and successful ongoing engagement of parents with services (**pp.37–38**).

Managers should ensure that staff have the appropriate level of training, background qualifications and supervision required for the type and intensity of the intervention they are delivering. This includes staff from partner agencies, where this should be written into tendering and contract documents alongside other expectations such as information-sharing, monitoring and evaluation processes, etc (**pp.37–39**).

Training should cover work with parents and families within the youth justice context, as well as specific issues such as child protection, domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health, for example. The National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents 2005, accredited by Lifelong Learning UK, provide the framework for the content of training for parenting practitioners (**pp.37–39**).

Some programme developers require staff to attend specific training courses (initial and 'booster' sessions) in order to deliver their programme (**p.38**).

Guidance

Alongside training, practitioners delivering the intervention should be provided with comprehensive written guidance in the form of manuals documenting the background, theoretical underpinnings, procedures and protocols for the parenting intervention, and managers should ensure that staff read and regularly refer to these. These generally set out the curriculum of the programme or service, including topics to be covered, order in which to

cover them, FAQs, extent to which staff can adapt the programme to individual need or their own tastes, etc (**p.32**). Where it has been measured, studies have shown that greater 'treatment adherence' by delivery staff is associated with more positive outcomes (**p.39**) and ongoing training and supervision should assist in this.

Carefully selected, thoroughly trained and supervised volunteers (including parents who have participated in programmes previously) can work successfully alongside professionals in effective programme delivery (**p.37**).

Involving support staff in training, as well as staff from other agencies, may also be appropriate to ensure they are familiar with the goals and procedures of the intervention/s delivered (**p.37**).

Management

Managers should ensure that staff read and regularly refer to the intervention guidance manual, and to the YOT's underpinning policies and procedures for the delivery of parenting services, and the role and responsibilities for staff within them (**pp.29, 37–38**).

The consistent implementation of 'manualised' parenting intervention guidance, policies and procedures should form part of the supervision process.

The frequency and style of supervision, and the background and skills of the supervisor, should match the intensity and type of intervention (**p.38**).

Managers should establish a lower caseload for practitioners involved in service delivery of specialist intensive interventions (**p.25**).

It may be that managers contribute to effective interventions by their active approach, being in regular communication with staff and having lower numbers of staff to manage (**p.39**).

Service development

The development of new services should be based on evidence of effectiveness, including the use of replicable programmes and interventions as well as evidence-based methods, practice approaches and implementation factors (as described here) (**p.40**).

Managers should consider setting up a working or advisory group enabling parents and young people, as well as partner agencies, to have input into the design of the intervention, as this may help to increase community ownership of the service and participation in it (**p.26**). Services should, additionally, draw on the expertise and knowledge of key local community stakeholders to ensure that the intervention meets the needs, values and social norms of the local target population. Evidence suggests that this increases the acceptability and sustainability of the intervention (**pp.27–28**). However, the 'core' intervention that is delivered should be evidence-based (as outlined above).

Mechanisms such as practice development sessions, programme development meetings or parenting forums should be established with staff from other voluntary or statutory agencies

involved in the delivery of the intervention/parenting services to encourage partnership working and the sharing of expertise (**p.27**).

The following systems can be used to create the circumstances for ongoing service development and improvement (**pp.40–41**):

- **regular meetings at various levels (strategic, management and first-line) to discuss service development and encourage reflective practice amongst staff**

- **allow practitioners to share their observations and feed their evaluation findings into future working practices**

- **involvement in a wider network of service practitioners, both locally and nationally**

- **working groups**

- **regular and ongoing service user feedback (which is not only sought but demonstrably noted, even if not acted upon)**

- **using data and findings from monitoring and evaluation processes.**

Monitoring and evaluation

Parenting services should have a clear theoretical base, detailed aims and measurable objectives (**p.43**).

Appropriately experienced staff should be designated to be responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining, monitoring and evaluation systems. These may be in-house staff, though independent researchers are generally required for more robust and objective evaluation work (**p.42**).

Mechanisms and procedures should be in place for the consistent and systematic gathering and analysis of throughput, process, output and outcome data, whether services are delivered in-house or in partnership with external agencies (**p.43**).

Mechanisms should be in place to analyse the findings from monitoring and evaluation, both of in-house services and those provided by external agencies, and to feed these back to the parenting service providers (**p.42**).

An evaluation of the effectiveness of parenting services should include identification of changes in attitude and behaviour, as well as client satisfaction. There are a range of child, parent and family outcomes that can be assessed through the use of standardised 'before' and 'after' measures (**p.44**).

The quality of service delivery and adherence to programme/intervention guidance and to effective practice should be monitored on a regular basis and the findings fed back into service improvement, whether services are delivered in-house or in partnership with external agencies (**p.46**). A range of monitoring tools can be used for this purpose including direct observation, videoing sessions, questionnaires for staff and parents, structured progress notes written by staff at the end of each parent/family contact, etc (**p.42**).

Guidance on strategic management and partnership working

Communication

Services should learn from the expertise and knowledge of key local community stakeholders to ensure that the intervention meets the needs, values and social norms of the local target population. Evidence suggests that this increases the validity and sustainability of interventions (**pp.27–28**).

All agencies involved in the delivery of parenting services in the youth justice arena should have shared and clearly communicated expectations, e.g. through protocols or Service Level Agreements, with providers. In addition it is vital that delineated roles and responsibilities are recorded in written agreements, communicated and understood by all parties in order to improve programme effectiveness and efficient use of resources (**p.28**).

Service development

Parenting services should be commissioned or developed that deliver 'manualised' parenting interventions which fit the evidence base for effective practice.

Management

Strategic managers and partners should ensure that clear and rigorous protocols exist, which are understood and shared by all agencies, as these constitute a key element for the success of parenting services. For example, clear inward and outward referral routes and established referral 'inclusion' criteria for each service (**p.18**).

Service development

Strategic partners should ensure that parenting services provided within the youth justice arena form a coherent part of a comprehensive parenting strategy that informs the Children and Young People's Plan. They should be linked into the relevant commissioning processes for parenting services, to ensure that services are commissioned to meet the needs of the local population.

Monitoring and evaluation

The effectiveness of parenting services in meeting the aims and objectives of youth justice services should be regularly monitored and reviewed, and learning fed back into the parenting strategy. This should include services provided through partnerships as well as in-house.

The full report on which this summary is based
is available on the Youth Justice Board website.

Further copies of this summary can be obtained from:
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