

Time to Talk

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 19
October 2007

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation please telephone the Department's national enquiry line on 0870 000 2288 or email info@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888
Fax: 01928 794 113
e-mail: consultation.unit@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Please select the category that best describes you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Work with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Work with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Other (please specify)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work with children and young people/Other (please specify)

Please Specify:
Parentline Plus is the operating name of FamilyLives. Registered charity number 1077722. Registered Company number 3817762

1 What have been your best experiences of support for children, young people and their families?

Comments:

When Every Child Matters was launched we felt very optimistic about the future for supporting families. We are also hopeful about the suggested shift in emphasis of the RESPECT agenda to demonstrate mutual respect towards families instead of exerting punitive measures against parents. Compulsory parenting orders risk alienating parents rather than bringing them on board and we are puzzled about how penalising parents for their children's behaviour can act in the best interests of the children.

2 What would you stop or improve about support for children, young people and families?

Comments:

Use the money that is being invested in ContactPoint to target the most vulnerable families. The current arrangements will not catch vulnerable children who are new to the country or vulnerable children within itinerate families. Parents should be treated with greater respect and their successes in raising happy, healthy and socially responsible children should be celebrated. It is unusual to hear or read a story about good parenting which could be used as a positive role model for others.

Effective services to support parents are

- responsive to local need
- engaging parents in the development stages
- non-judgemental and reassuring for parents
- arranged around parental convenience not staff convenience
- honest with parents, even when raising concerns

3 What needs to happen so that support is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and young people?

Comments:

See answer to question 2.

Successful services are holistic and engage parents as much as children because they recognise the significant influence a parent has on children's and young people's lifestyles and life choices.

4 What do you think your role is and what more could you do for children to be happy, healthy and safe?

Comments:

Parentline Plus is a national charity that works for, and with, parents. We are the largest independent provider of parenting support in the country. We encourage parents to see that asking for help is a sign of strength, and work with them to offer practical solutions and to suggest ways to manage their particular situations and difficulties. We deliver this support through an innovative range of free, flexible, responsive services - shaped by parents for parents. Our flagship service is our free, confidential telephone line for parents – Parentline. We also provide integrated face to face services are delivered in our thirteen area offices located across England. We also publish information leaflets to meet parents' concerns through each stage of their child's development; a website with downloadable information for parents, resources for professionals and active message boards and email support offering a confidential, personal response to specific issues.

Parentline Plus' programme of family support is built on our understanding of how and why parents struggle. Key to its effectiveness is our use of parent to parent support which enables us to deliver non-stigmatising and respectful services, reaching traditionally hard-to-reach groups – both mothers and fathers, and those from different socio-economic, ethnic and faith groups. Our services are whole family focused; we understand that parents want to stay in control of their family life. They want the building blocks which allow them to make decisions and choices for their children and for themselves and we work with them to look at solutions which will enable them to make such informed choices.

All of Parentline Plus' services play a role in supporting parents and ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. If Parentline Plus received more funding we could reach more parents who would have more confidence in their parenting which would help to achieve positive outcomes such as the five

which underpin Every Child Matters.

5 What is the role of parents – mums, dads, carers - and what more support do they need?

Comments:

When ECM was launched parents were seen as key to the delivery of the five outcomes but this has not been our experience when working with parents either via our remote or our face to face services. This has been a huge disappointment. Bringing parents on board by offering support as and when they need it and maintaining their engagement is crucial to the life chances of so many children and young people but the impact of parents appears to have been diluted in recent years. Of course parenting is far more complex than the ECM outcomes which are rather institutionally biased. Parents also have love and instinct to guide their decision making, neither of which are noted in ECM and subsequent guidance. Parents have told us that they want to stay in control and do not want to be made to feel ashamed if they ask for help with the constantly changing role of parenting. They want support but they want to be recognised as the experts in their own children's needs and for that expertise to be set in the context of a loving family who may seek skilled help from time to time.

6 What is the role of the local community and what more could they do?

Comments:

Provide better parenting support which is non-judgemental; flexible; customised to fit local need; will help to boost social capital; and will give parents transferable skills which they can use to help them improve their employment possibilities.

In the climate of commissioning and voluntary sector organisations having to pitch against each other to secure funding, this puts smaller, specialised organisations in jeopardy of being swallowed up or put out of business by the larger organisations who can demonstrate economy of scale but who will not be able to deliver the personalised service that so many users value.

7 What is the role of Government and what more could they do?

Comments:

- Honour pledges such as the reference to funding Parentline Plus made in the March 2007 Budget statement which is yet to materialise.
- Place less emphasis on institutions and greater emphasis on families
- Treat parents and children as human beings with less push on getting parents into employment and less factory farming of children through the education system to become the workers of the future.
- Re allocate ContactPoint funding to help those in greatest need

8 What more needs to happen to keep children and young people out of trouble?

Comments:

- The development of mutual respect by listening to children, young people and their families.
- Statutory provision of youth services in every community, possibly alongside the Surestart provision because all under fives will grow into teenagers.
- More understanding across society about the difficulties faced by families in transition times such as divorce, separation, bereavement and the formation of step families.

9 Do you have any further comments?

Comments:

Please remember the significance that parents have on their children's lives. Any measure that is targeted at children and young people must include a parental dimension. In the recent Comprehensive Spending Review statements, we were dismayed at the lack of explicit mention of parents. How can outcomes for children be achieved without the co-operation of their parents and carers? We would also like greater recognition of the majority of parents who cope well rather than bad news stories about those who are not. We want the stigma of asking for help to be minimised and are running our "Just Ask" campaign around that theme but this campaign will have to run until all parents can access appropriate support when they need it in order to achieve those positive outcomes for their children.

10 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand and complete etc.).

Comments:

No better nor worse than other consultations.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 19 October 2007

Send by post to:
Consultation Unit - Area 1A

Castle View House
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: Timetotalk.CONULTATION@dcsh.gov.uk