

Parentline Plus Annual Review

2006-2007



Contents

- 3** Letter from the chair
- 5** Report from the chief executive
- 8** Parentline Plus – our vision
- 9** Update on services
- 13** Focus on our website
- 26** Thank you to our supporters
- 27** Looking forward



Letter from the Chair

This year has been one of consolidation and strategic planning as we prepare for what promises to continue as a highly volatile and fragmented funding climate. Along with other voluntary organisations we have experienced some difficulties at local level as a result of the massive changes resulting from the implementation of Every Child Matters.

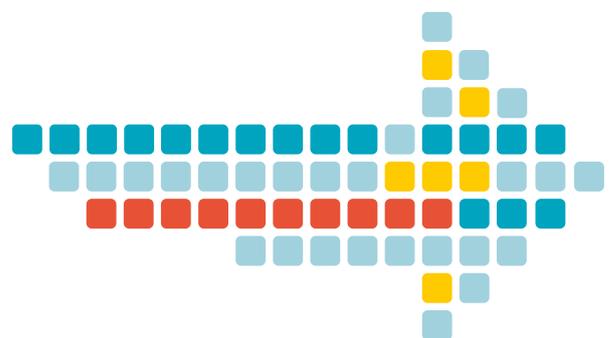
The establishment of children, schools and family departments at local authority level has meant significant changes of personnel, resulting in the requirement to establish new working relationships.

We have also explored the challenge to us from government promotion of the use of overseas parenting support programmes which have an evidence base from randomised control trials (RCTs). This government guidance is already making it difficult to secure funding for our own UK developed parenting support packages, despite the excellent independent evaluations for all our services. Along with other UK organisations who have developed parenting support packages and programmes, we have not had RCTs of our interventions simply because that level of research funding has not been available in the UK.

We are exploring other ways to explain the basis for our work, and its value. We published a joint document with One Plus One and the Centre for Parent and Child Support (South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, Guys Hospital) called 'How Helping Works' which provides a conceptual framework of the helping process – this process cannot be explored via RCTs because these measure change but do not measure how or why things change.

The overseas parenting programmes promoted by government have developed from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. We appreciate and understand this direction of travel, because in many areas it has been proven to be effective and it is relatively straightforward to develop into programmes which can be widely disseminated. Interventions such as our own are based on adult learning and social care models and involve building relationships, development of trust, emphasising strengths, re-framing difficulties and working at the pace of the parent. This approach relies on the skills and the support of the practitioner, and therefore is much more difficult to describe and package so appears to be more complex to roll out.

With these changes at the forefront, the Board, advised by the Chief Executive and her team, agreed that our priorities would include promoting the charity via re-branding and advertising campaigns, reviewing and re-positioning our local work and seeking funding to develop new methods of supporting parents and carers using the latest information and communication technologies.



We have worked long and hard to influence the Department for Children Schools and Families (previously the Department for Education and Skills) with their plans to expand support for parents by introducing a new telephony based service. Our own helpline, Parentline, already offers a superb, confidential, tried, tested and evaluated parent to parent service. It was imperative for us to campaign for Parentline to be at the forefront of the government thinking and to secure long-term funding to further develop our capacity. It was in the context of our campaign that we were delighted to be mentioned in Gordon Brown's last budget as Chancellor. To quote:

“And we will match financial support for children with more help for parents to do the best by their children. I have set aside today funds for expanding ChildLine, Parentline Plus and the services parents and children use and rely upon”.

We look forward to receiving this new financial support as it will enable us to develop our service to support far more parents.

During the year the Board was delighted to welcome Warwick Jones, Finance Director for the Bank of England, as our new Treasurer. I also want to register our deep appreciation for the expertise and guidance of Stuart Bayliss who although standing down as Treasurer, will remain on the Board.

As part of our annual review of the Board we undertook a skills audit and agreed any areas of expertise for recruitment to ensure a continued broad range of experience amongst trustees.

The Board was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Jacqui Durling. Jacqui made a huge contribution to the organisation and in particular to Parentline, latterly as Director of National Services. Her guidance and commitment to the provision of support to parents and families was invaluable and could not be easily measured in words. It was so fortunate that Jacqui had known before she died that we had reached the milestone of our 100,000th Parentline call of the year in February. As Director of National Services Jacqui's vision and operational expertise has done so much to make Parentline the high quality and well respected service it is today. Our deepest sympathy to her family and I would like to dedicate this Annual Review to Jacqui.

On behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank all those who have funded our work during 2006 and 2007. Also thank you, and our appreciation, to the staff and volunteers who have done so much during the year to ensure our offer to parents and carers is of the highest quality and that new developments and ways of offering that support are planned with parents, and delivered by parents.

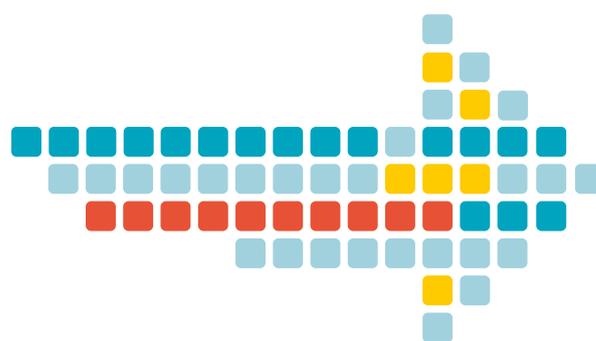
Michael Leadbetter

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Report from the Chief Executive

The external environment in which Parentline Plus is working is both hugely exciting and very challenging. The interest in and commitment to expanding parenting support is something we have been debating for many years. At the same time, this necessitates considerable strategic reviewing by all statutory agencies, local and national, which causes a climate of financial instability. This year, our focus has been to try to make sure that we are in the best possible shape to face these challenges, and rise to the opportunities.

As part of this, we have re-branded Parentline Plus – creating an image that reflects our previous logo but is more easily identifiable and memorable. We wanted to be sure to highlight our flagship service, Parentline, and our website, so that the logo could be a way of raising awareness of the 24 hour, 365 day nature of these services. The new logo has been well received, and this creative concept was also used in our first ever advertising awareness raising campaign using high circulation magazines.



We have introduced a number of developments geared to enhancing the service offered by Parentline to any parent or carer at any time. For instance, we have introduced and piloted a case management system which involves directing callers ringing with very high frequency to dedicated lines where they receive special and case managed support.

Our website continues to grow in popularity and this year we launched online communities which proved hugely popular with parents from the outset. We have profiled our website in this review which will give more details of how the site is developing.

The new logo has been well received, and this creative concept was also used in our first ever advertising awareness raising campaign using high circulation magazines.

We have reviewed our local face-to-face services and have expanded our offer by launching a pilot of Individual Support sessions – a coaching based face-to-face service reflecting our established model available via the telephone. With the Board's approval we have decided that over and above our own parenting programmes, our practitioners can be trained locally to deliver other evidence-based programmes such as Triple P and Incredible Years.

We have rolled out a new and sophisticated ICT system. One very significant development was the launch of our first intranet, OCEAN, which is designed to enable and support anyone who works at Parentline Plus in any of our offices.

We have continued to develop our quality assurance systems, and enhanced our accredited training for volunteers and staff to ensure that the services we offer parents are always of the highest quality. During the year the Thomas Coram Research Unit has been evaluating the service offered by Parentline and looking at progress since the last external evaluation they carried out in 2003/4. We are delighted at this continuing endorsement of our service, demonstrating our effective and expert track record.

I would like to thank all the volunteers and staff who work so hard, with so much passion and commitment, and make it all possible.

And this brings me to Jacqui Durling. Jacqui died of bowel cancer in June 2007 aged only forty seven. She was the first paid staff member at Parentline's Stamford office and worked for the newly formed Parentline Plus since its inception in 2000. Her vision, determination and skills shaped Parentline's expansion and ensured that the service offered to parents is of the highest standard. We do miss Jacqui. We

received so many calls and emails and letters from those who worked with her, and knew her, and passed these appreciations on to her family. I was very honoured to be asked by her family to speak at her funeral service, and very privileged to have met her family on that sad but important occasion. We dedicated the June issue of our internal newsletter to her, and shared our memories and stories and we will hold an annual event in May, her birthday, so that we can remember her – with humour and challenge, as she would have wished.

Dr. Dorit Braun OBE

Chief Executive



Extract from Dorit Braun's personal letter to Jacqui Durling:

"You have been such a pleasure to work with. I love your quick mind, your determination, your great humour, your clarity, your assertiveness and your passion. I love the fact that I know I can absolutely depend on you and on your judgements and on your honour. Your challenges have not always been comfortable, but they have always been necessary. I know that no-one is irreplaceable in theory, but actually you are. The only way to replace you is to think very differently about the tasks because you are a real one off.

You need to know that you are one of those very special people who changes the lives and perceptions of people around them. You have made an enormous impact on thousands of parents' lives through your determination and sometimes heroic efforts to develop Parentline – not to mention all the other things that you have done. You have also made a real difference to me personally – just by being you and just through working together.

I hope that you are able to feel proud of who you are as well as of what you have achieved. The former matters more I think – ultimately it is the force of your personality that we have all relished and loved, and it is that personality that enabled your many achievements."

Dorit Braun
Chief Executive

"I really loved working with Jacqui. She was fun, clever, very thoughtful and clear. Although I was her manager it never really felt like that. We would spark ideas off each other. I learnt a great deal from her which I hope was reciprocated. Because of the distances much of our contact was by telephone and we had marathon telephone calls! We tried to ration ourselves but always ended with 'just another thing...' we needed to say to each other. The last call I had was when she rang me from the hospital. She sounded so in control and I told her it sounded as though she was running the ward!

Jacqui said to me, 'With me what you see is what you get', and this was true. What I saw was clarity, honesty, a real commitment to social justice and to improving services for parents combined with an ability to think laterally and to problem solve, always coming up with very creative solutions.

I felt very pleased and privileged to spend time with Jacqui and say good bye to her the day before she died.

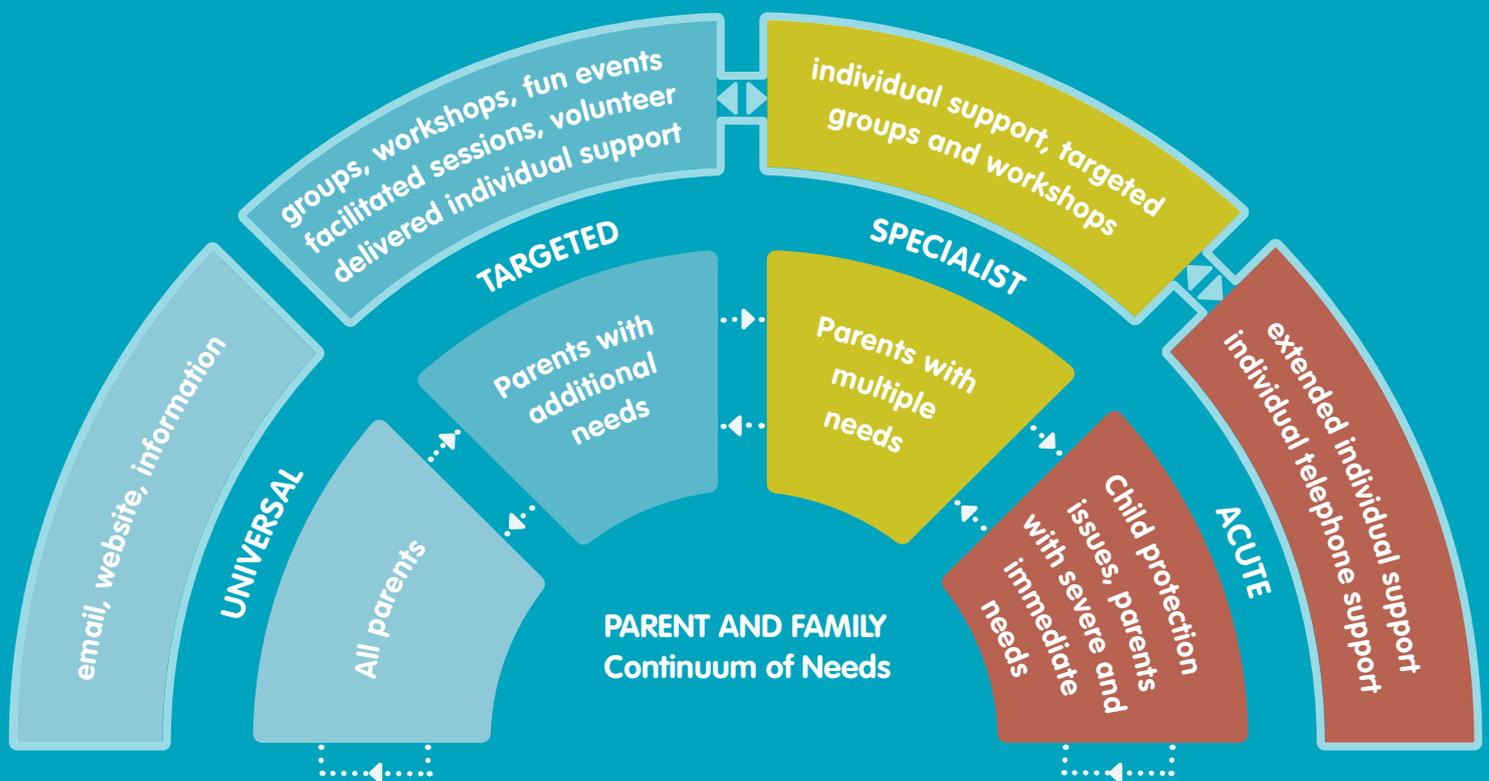
It seems so wrong that a woman so gifted and strong has been taken from us so soon. She leaves a great hole at Parentline Plus and I miss her very much."

Gill Loughran
Deputy Chief Executive

Parentline Plus – our vision

Parentline Plus is a national independent charity providing national and local responsive parent to parent support services. These services help parents to meet their own, and their children's needs in order to secure good outcomes for children. Parents gain reassurance, insight, information, knowledge and skills, about themselves and their relationships and their children. All our services are evidence-based, have been independently evaluated, and are proven to work.

We offer parent to parent support which enables us to deliver non-stigmatising and respectful services. This approach reflects the information and support given through informal social and family networks which are often the first place that parents turn to for support. We fill the gap for families who are isolated and excluded, with no peer support to help them. In this way, Parentline Plus is there for parents to turn to when they need us.



Update on services

OVERVIEW

During this year we have concentrated on consolidating and enhancing our existing services for parents, whilst investigating new and innovative ways to reach out to those who are isolated or wary of using statutory services. Parents have a continuum of needs which vary considerably from family to family and often relate to the age and number of children.

“Don’t think you’re not a good parent if you need to ask for help. Everyone needs some sort of help at some time in their lives. Thank you Parentline Plus you have helped me out when I’ve felt so alone as a parent... so close to just walking away. Thank you!”

At Parentline Plus we position our services primarily at levels 1-3*, offering support for universal, additional and specialist needs. We are in a unique position because Parentline enables us to bid for local and national service commissions with the certain knowledge that Parentline underpins our offer – any parent at any time can find information, advice and support through ringing us.

*Definitions of level of parent needs: Level 1: universal services for all parents ; Level 2: targeted and preventive support for parents with additional needs ; Level 3: intensive support and interventions for parents with multiple needs; Level 4: specialist interventions for parents with severe and immediate needs, where there are child protection issues or where mandatory measures are enforced e.g. an Antisocial Behaviour Order.



PARENTLINE PLUS UNIVERSAL SERVICES

PARENTLINE

“Dear Parentline, I will always be most grateful to you, for the help and support you have offered on many occasions. I have a daughter who causes me great unhappiness and whenever I ring there is somebody reassuring and comforting. I spoke to somebody this evening who was most helpful and a few days ago, when I was very upset, a kind lady made me feel life was worth living.”

We are delighted to report that once again we have exceeded our annual target and have answered 113,126 calls from parents. We introduced a new case management system which has enabled us to filter regular callers to another system, thereby better meeting their needs, as well as freeing up call taking time to take more calls. Almost 20% of additional call taking capacity was released due to this system which also resulted in over 85% of callers now getting through when they call us, with almost 75% answered first time. The system has also impacted on our call takers, who tell us that their motivation and morale is far higher now that repeat and persistent callers have a tailored management system. This year also marked a first for Parentline: on Friday 23rd February we answered our 100,000th call of the year.

The quality of our service was demonstrated in a new evaluation of Parentline undertaken by the Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London. The report reviewed the line’s progress since the evaluation the Unit undertook for the Home Office in 2003/4 and details new findings resulting from in-depth interviews with callers.

Key findings from the evaluation demonstrate that:

- Almost nine out of ten rated the call's helpfulness as good or very good.
- Over 85% thought the call helped improve their feelings or mood.
- Eight out of ten reported that their situation had improved as a result of the call.
- Almost all callers (97%) praised call takers' listening skills.
- Almost nine out of ten rated the service as good or very good.

The researchers commented:

“Almost all the callers interviewed were highly satisfied with the service. They described a helpful source of advice and information, and an opportunity to talk, and almost all said they would recommend the service to others and would use the helpline again if necessary.”

EMAIL SUPPORT

parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk

“This has been INVALUABLE and although my kids don't know you, you have helped them so much indirectly. It has been so helpful and I am so, so grateful!”

As the number of users of the website grows, so does the number using our email support service which is directly linked to the site. The service is particularly helpful for those parents who prefer to write about their problems rather than ring us. Over the year we have responded to 6,537 parents and the complexities and anxieties of parents' problems reflect those parents raise when they call Parentline.

This similarity means that our determination to offer a holistic, universal service is enhanced by being able to offer an email based helpline. Supporting parents with multiple problems via the written word is a complex skill and the intensive training and supervision offered to our email helpline workers reflects this.

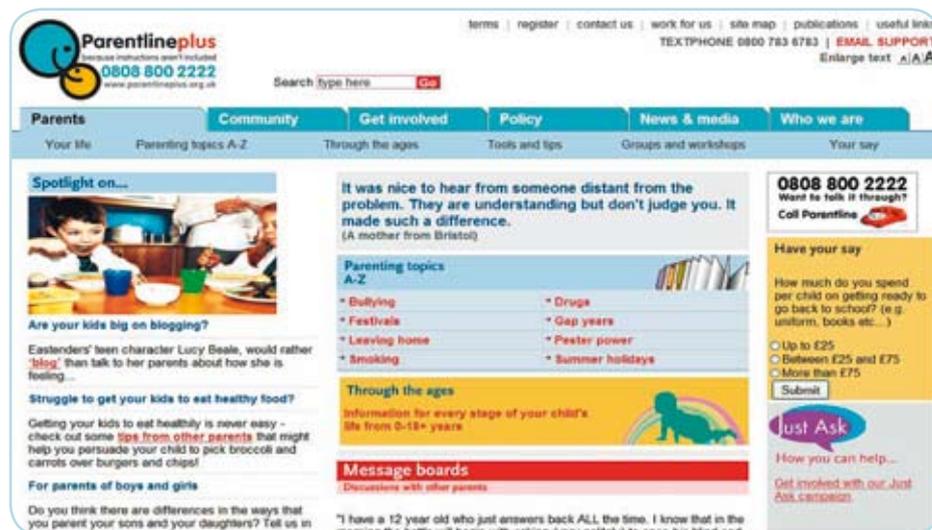
How the service works: a contribution from an email support supervisor:

“Email support is a very busy and varied service. It is clear that some parents find it helpful to put their thoughts and feelings down in the written word, the process acting as a therapeutic exercise. This appears to be particularly true of those that write their emails in the early hours of the morning. These can sometimes make especially sad reading and often seem to indicate that the parent or carer is at a terribly low ebb. Judging by the statistics, it appears that a high proportion of our emails come in around this time.

It is always rewarding to receive thanks from grateful parents and carers. For some, the options offered are ones that have not been thought of before. In some cases, they simply act as a reassurance that they are on the right tracks with the things they have been doing. For others, the reply lets them know that there is someone out there who can offer support without judgement.”

WEBSITE

www.parentlineplus.org.uk



“By the way, the website is great. Having a difficult teen, I only wish I’d found it much sooner. I’ve informed a few friends who will surely benefit from its wealth of information.”

The number of parents using our website has expanded hugely this year, aided by the launch of our online communities in May 2006 and a re-design of our home page – both of which have been much appreciated by those who use the site. We registered 327,620 visitors this year, an increase of 36% on the year before.

In 2006–2007 the website had:

- 327,620 visitors
- 353,572 visits
- 2,324,746 page views
- 63,448 PDF views
- 17% returning users rate
- Visitors spending an average of 7 minutes on the site
- Visitors having an average of 7 page views per visit

This increase is largely due to the interactive community element which offers message boards, Questions and Answers (Q&As) and Parent Tips. Enabling parents to communicate and help each other has ensured that we have built upon our user base and created a lively, successful online community with over 1500 members. From its launch at the end of May 2006, 200 posts have been recorded, with 490 Q&As received via the website over the past 11 months.

We have expanded the amount and type of content on the site, using shorter articles with more links signposting users to other relevant parts of our site. We are limiting the use of external web links within articles unless specialist assistance is required, to keep users on our site for longer.

Content is updated weekly, the home page is kept new and fresh and we use current issues in the media and within TV soap storylines to highlight new content and draw in users from a new angle.

INFORMATION

“I am new to Parentline Plus but I must confess that this organisation’s publications have really inspired me and help me to cope with a lot of problems as a single parent. Sometimes it’s nice to get non-judgemental opinions from an experienced third party.”

Our information and materials offer parents tips and strategies on a range of issues that parents have themselves identified. All the materials are tested with parents through parent consultations, focus groups and feedback. The website is also used to ascertain new subjects of interest to parents in order to develop appropriate materials. In addition, via a new section on the website, we gather tips that parents themselves have submitted because they worked for them. These tips are utilised for both our web content and information materials. This enables us to say with confidence that our information delivers a truly parent to parent service.

The branding review and the new look for the organisation have been absorbed into the materials we have produced this year, or have had reprinted. All materials are now organised into clear, colour-coded series and have been expanded to include a variety of new publications. These include: materials for stepparents; parents of a bereaved child; a revamped ‘Youth Offending’ series; a new ‘Risky Behaviour’ series; posters for our special ‘Just Ask’ campaign; a new version of our most popular leaflet ‘Got a Teenager; Be Someone to Tell’ – a leaflet for parents worried about bullying; and an expansion of materials around school issues.

Parentline Plus’ Information Packs for parents and professionals have also been revamped. Information Packs for parents can now be tailored to include relevant information according to the age of the child and includes a materials’ list, so they can order further information directly. A new version of our publications brochure organises our publications by series and into packs. The packs are designed to help organisations order groups of leaflets together, to cover subjects and issues parents might be facing at specific ages or times in their child’s life.



Focus on our website:

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

“After discovering your website (in the nick of time) I felt an immense sense of relief – support without judgement, what bliss – and so much helpful advice. Even when you are getting things right it is so hard to tell sometimes and it’s the feeling of helplessness and ignorance that starts to engulf you. Thanks again for your help. If anything deteriorates, I’ll definitely be e-mailing again – your site and facilities are fantastic.”

Parentline Plus has run a website for parents for many years and feedback from parents has always been positive. However during 2006, recognising that web-based communication was the key future pathway in delivery of information, advice and support for parents, we launched our online community and put in train an ambitious development strategy for the site. This included enabling parents to download our materials which in turn enabled us to monitor the current concerns of parents.

What is unique to the site is our ability to point parents to our email support service parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk and to ensure that all the answers given to questions posed by community users are answered by our highly trained email support workers. This means that we can offer a service which echoes the support given by ringing Parentline. This has proved invaluable as the complexity and multiplicity of the issues raised by our community users reflect the distress shown by callers to our line.

All the online tools have been tested with parents and we have also developed direct ways of talking to our site users via polls, surveys and requests for stories and tips to share with other parents. Together with ongoing analysis of the issues raised on our message boards and Questions and Answers (Q&As), function tools have enabled us to build a picture of our site users and to involve them further in how our site develops.

WHO USES THE SITE?

An online survey was conducted on our website in the spring which received 181 responses. The survey revealed that parents who visit our website prefer to look for parenting help online rather than through their GP, school or community centre. Most of our visitors use the internet everyday and use it mainly for information.

The survey revealed that our typical website user lives in a rural county of England, is a mother in her late 30s to early 40s and has two children between the ages of 4 and 12 years of age. Further information on who uses our site is gathered via the polls we have conducted throughout the year.

RESULTS OF PARENTLINE PLUS WEB-BASED SURVEY

Where do you look for help with parenting and family life?

Websites: 64%
GPs/Hospitals: 7%
Schools: 13%
Community centres: 16%

What do you use the internet for?

Information: 74%
Chatting: 8%
New people: 1%
Booking/shopping: 17%

Male: Female ratio

Female: 97%
Male: 3%

How many children do you have?

One: 32%
Two: 40%
Three: 19%
Four or more: 8%
Did not answer question: 1%

How often do you go online?

Everyday: 62%
Few times a week: 29%
Fortnightly: 3%
Less often: 6%

Where in the UK?

England: 96%
N. Ireland: 2%
Scotland: 1%
Wales: 2%

What is your age group?

16-24 years: 3%
25-35 years: 26%
36-45 years: 52%
46+ years: 19%

How old are your children?

Up to 4: 17%
4-8 years: 24%
9-12 years: 26%
13-15 years: 18%
16+: 15%

PARENTLINE PLUS COMMUNITY

“I am very impressed with your website and the work that you do to help people with the difficult task of parenting.”

Over the past twelve months, the Parentline Plus website has grown into a lively and active resource with a real community feel. Fundamental to this development are the key community tools that have been implemented with a view of increasing user interaction, as well as reactive web content. These characteristics have aided the maturation of the website, which currently boasts a thriving community of over 1500 members. These elements now form a basis upon which this community can grow further.

The emphasis of www.parentlineplus.org.uk is focused on the user: message boards are provided for members to interact with the rest of the community, polls and surveys let parents share their experiences and opinions and Q&As allow them to ask for advice whilst simultaneously providing invaluable editorial copy. The design of the pages is crucial to conveying the Parentline Plus message too, which is why the web pages are uncluttered with all information presented in short, punchy sections.

Everything that is presented on the website is done with the intention of enhancing the user experience, increasing the chances of a repeat visit and building the community.

“Hi – I want to let you know that since I’ve found this website I know I can discuss my worries and never feel judged. My daughter and youngest is 8 and I hope it is a long time till I’m in this position but there are professional advisors and confidential phone lines where you can talk to someone, all I can say is take the help on hand and wish you all the support you need.”

Current community tools

- Nine message boards.
- Q&A section.
- Monthly online surveys.
- Bi-weekly web polls.
- Tips from parents via web form.
- Bi-monthly e-newsletter.

WHAT ISSUES DO PARENTS RAISE?

Most posted on message boards over the past 12 months

1. Living with teenagers
2. Coping on your own
3. Your fears
4. Schools
5. Bullying

Most popular Q&A sections over the past 12 months

1. Behaviour
2. Teen/pre-teen
3. Divorce and separation
4. Sex
5. Parents' fears

The following quote is from a question posed by one of our users. It reflects the complexity of the problems our users are experiencing and indicates how important it is that we can offer experienced parent to parent support delivered by our trained and supervised email support workers.

“My 15 years old daughter is terrible. For the last 18 months, she has dropped a group of her decent friends and started to hang around with smokers and a foul mouthed group. She has no respect for anyone, that includes teachers, myself and any grown up. She hardly does any home work. Her dad and I are separated. She plays us against each other. She used to be a lovely girl, getting on well with all ages, but now I feel so ashamed of her attitude. What have I done wrong? What do I have to do to get my old daughter back? I am worried sick – what if she becomes a drug addict, a prostitute or criminal? I know this is part of growing up. I try to think back when I was a teenager – I had a few arguments with my mother, but by comparison she is a thousand times worse. If anyone out there can give me some advice on this I would be grateful.”

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Over the next 12 months www.parentlineplus.org.uk will continue to develop and grow increasingly parent-focused. In January 2008 we will formally launch a new satellite site for professionals working with parents, policy makers and commissioners which will be integral to the main site. The content of the current site will therefore be free to concentrate fully on its main target audience – parents. New community tools will be introduced, and content added, including a section specifically aimed at fathers, and the site will increasingly reflect current affairs and events that effect parents on a day-to-day basis.

Parentline Plus network of area offices

Each of our 13 area offices delivers a mix of services for parents in their local areas. This year we have concentrated on enhancing how we work with parents to identify their needs and point them to services that will meet their needs. We have produced a range of user-friendly leaflets to identify needs to assess what difference the services have made to their parenting skills.

To ensure clarity of purpose we have produced the following profile of an area office. The focus is:

- To increase the availability of local parenting support at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the continuum of need.
- To add to local social capital amongst excluded parents and communities.
- To ensure that parents participate in the development and delivery of family and parenting support services.

The area office does this by:

- Contributing the knowledge of parents' concerns to local strategic planning partnerships.
- Providing information to local commissioners about the reasons why local parents have called Parentline.
- Working with local partners to ensure good information and signposting is available to parents and providing some of that information.
- Working with local Children's Information Services to highlight Parentline and Parentline Plus information sources and website and to promote training and consultancies to enable CIS to better fulfil their obligations to inform and support parents of children aged up to 19 (Section 12 Childcare Act 2006)
- Working with local partners to organise awareness raising campaigns so that local parents are aware of their entitlement and can access national and local support services.

- Enabling and supporting volunteering to support parents – providing opportunities for volunteering on Parentline, and/or outreach volunteering and/or befriending volunteering.
- Feeding information into central office about local issues, so that this information can inform national lobbying and campaigning.

And where specifically funded:

- To undertake local needs audits with parents.
- To organise and undertake parent participation activities locally.
- To work with local partners to undertake a range of outreach activities in places where parents are, and working to inform parents of what is available to them. To distribute information and to highlight the Parentline Plus universal offer.
- To demonstrate and test out different service delivery options so as to build knowledge about flexible ways to engage and work alongside parents at the first three levels of need.
- To provide some service delivery at the first three levels of need to fit into the local service provision mix.
- To enable training and support for professionals in a range of agencies to provide parenting support in their workplaces.

The Parentline Plus area office does not seek to compete with other local providers (statutory or voluntary) but to add value to their work, to ensure that the local area has a mix of provision across the different levels of parents' needs.

PARENTLINE PLUS PROGRAMME OF LOCAL SERVICES

OUTREACH

“Last month Parentline Plus came to our School to introduce themselves. As we all know being a parent isn’t always an easy job. At times it can be very challenging. The evening was a really enjoyable social evening. It enabled parents to talk to each other about their own experiences of bringing up their own children and some of the challenges they have experienced. Sometimes it can be good to talk and sometimes just as good to listen and learn that we are not the only parents trying to do the best for our children with sometimes challenging results.”

Over the years Parentline Plus has honed and enhanced our methods of outreach in ways that mean we can reach out to excluded families, work to gain their trust and through this to point them to services which will help them and their family. It is equally important as an awareness-raising tool. We arrange stands at places where we know we can engage with parents and have posters, fliers and leaflets, all of which are designed to encourage parents to seek information, advice and support whenever they need it. In fact, we see outreach as a service in its own right because just being there for an isolated parent can be enough – as can letting them know that Parentline is there for them, whenever they feel the need to talk things through.

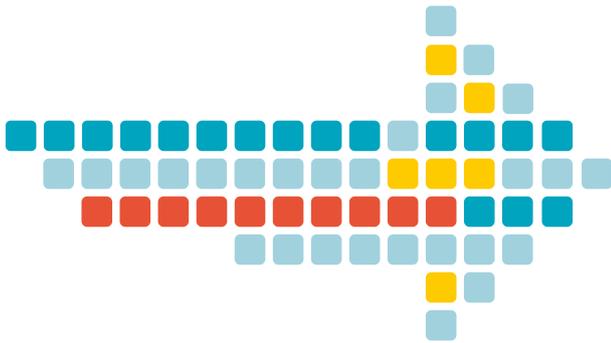
We value and wish to build on the use of volunteers particularly in raising awareness and this year we are piloting a befriending model of service delivery which has evolved from a scheme developed in Oxford. It aims to improve the mental health and parenting skills of parents by offering peer to peer support and mentoring from a trained parent volunteer.

The projects to be piloted (Southampton, Bristol and Liverpool) are variations on this original model: all involve a trained volunteer-base offering peer to peer support but have local variations reflecting local needs and to enable different models to be piloted.

During the year, as part of our Horizons programme, we have tested the use of ‘fun events’ whereby we offer parents the opportunity to join in with other parents in a variety of activities. This helps to reduce feelings of isolation, enables parents to make new friends and gives us the opportunity to talk to parents about what we could do to help them.

Networking with professionals is another facet of our outreach service and we now take regular exhibition space at key national and regional conferences and other events. This is a really valuable method of raising awareness of Parentline Plus and of how other workers in the field can use our materials and the information on our services.





INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Individual Support (IS) enables us to work on a one to one basis with parents to reflect on a specific difficulty or worry, to identify and consider possible options and strategies and to work with the parent to enable them to come to their own decisions about what they wish to do next. This service is delivered on the telephone or on a face-to-face basis. Over the year 830 parents have received our intensive IS service. 80% of parents who received IS were mothers and female carers; 9% were fathers and male carers.

We offer a parent a fixed amount of time – usually between 20 and 45 minutes – to provide focused, parent-led support. The session has been designed to mirror the support possible delivered when a parent calls Parentline. An extended version – across up to six weeks – has been available by telephone for several years, offered free to parents who call Parentline and are felt to need a bit more than an initial phone call. During this year we began testing offering this extended service on a face-to-face basis. The findings of this pilot will be available during late 2007.

GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

Parents who attend our group and workshop sessions are benefiting from Parentline Plus' years of experience of delivering high quality evidence-based parenting support. We focus on helping parents to develop their understanding of themselves and their children and to learn core communication skills for family life from babyhood to teenage years. The key objective of our groups and workshops is to enable parents to bring up children who grow into emotionally healthy and resilient adults, able to take responsibility for themselves, their behaviour and their choices.

During this year, all our area offices have delivered groups and workshops, utilising the flexibility of our programme to cater for specific needs or commissions. Examples include North London's work on an estate which, backed up by intensive outreach, has resulted in high and consistent attendance rates; our work undertaken by our Newcastle office with prisoners' families; innovative work with young parents in Bristol, together with a range of activities offering support and help across all the offices with lone parents as part of the Barclaycard-funded Horizons programme.

Of those who attend our groups and workshops, 76% of parents were mothers and female carers, 9% were fathers and male carers. 11 % were from black and ethnic minority communities.

FACILITATED SUPPORT GROUPS

Area offices regularly offer parents the chance to meet on an informal basis with other parents – often those who they have met while attending one of our groups or workshops. These gatherings are always facilitated by experienced Parentline Plus Parent Support Workers and are very popular with parents.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

We continue to develop new ways of reaching and working with parents. Many of the exciting developments have been using internet-based technology including the launch of our online communities section on our website (as described below in the section on the website). We aim to focus further on new technologies to pilot new ways of reaching out to parents.

Our partnership with Barclaycard, as part of the Horizons project, has provided us with an opportunity to work in more innovative ways with lone parents in collaboration with other agencies. We have piloted running outreach 'fun events' as a method of reaching lone parents, providing activities as well as taster workshops. We have learnt from these and will continue to run them as more focused outreach events.

Individual Support continues to develop and we are now providing more than one-off sessions and continuing to monitor and develop this aspect of our work. Our befriending service, which originated in Oxford, is being piloted in other areas and we hope to expand it elsewhere.

We now have a Research and Development Director and regularly meet with representatives across the organisation to discuss new developments at our Research and Development Group.



WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

We continue to develop services and campaigns in partnership with key agencies, both statutory and voluntary. Our partnership with the Family and Parenting Institute, Parenting UK and One Plus One, funded by the Lloyds TSB Foundation, and looking at delivering complementary services, was completed this year. We also continued to work in partnership as a key element of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funding which has allowed us to look at viability of a social franchise model.

The Barclaycard-funded Horizons programme has enabled us to work with Citizens Advice, the Family Welfare Association and One Parent Families to support lone parents on low income and to help them tackle any financial problems they have.

During the year we expanded and re-launched our national training for professionals programme and we now have 12 workshops and courses on our external training menu.

We deliver training for frontline workers offering a number of courses, ranging from one-day, topic-specific workshops, such as 'Supporting Parents Dealing with Bullying', enabling practitioners to work more confidently in supporting parents worried about their children being bullied, to five-day accredited courses, designed to develop practitioners' knowledge, skills and understanding to support family group work and facilitate parenting courses. In addition we have developed a Resource Pack for practitioners to promote and enhance good practice in the delivery of parenting support.

In the last year we have delivered external training to over 250 individuals who have come from a range of voluntary and statutory services, including Social and Health Care, Education, Children's Information Services and the 'Looked After' sector.

DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

This year we established a Diversity and Equality Action Group, across the organisation, and through the work of this group have developed guidelines for staff on Diversity. We have used the web to ask parents what kind of support they need and how we could develop more culturally specific services. This survey has not only informed and influenced our work but has been widely circulated to policy makers and providers.

Through our Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funded project we have worked with Deaf Parenting UK and have trained facilitators who can now deliver the programme in British Sign Language. We are collecting examples of good practice on Diversity and Equality to share across the organisation.

As a result of our work on Diversity and Equality over the last year we have employed an equalities specialist to assist Parentline Plus, both internally and externally, with equality and diversity issues. Over the next year we have processes in place to agree targets and monitor for diversity and equality in all our services, which will enable better planning for the future.

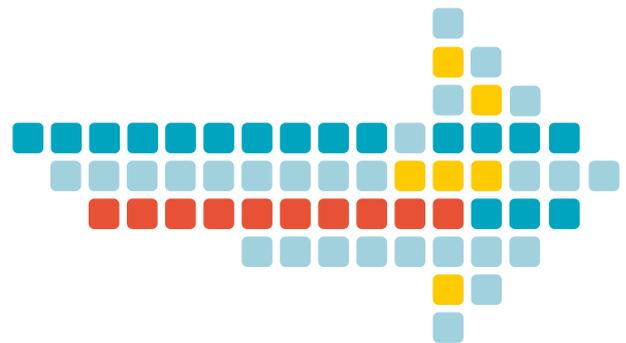
HUMAN RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

Human Resources, incorporating the Training and Development team, have continued to work proactively throughout the charity. We continue to update and develop our policies and procedures to enable Parentline Plus to effectively attract and retain excellent staff.

Staff numbers throughout Parentline Plus have remained steady over the last year which has enabled the HR Team to work closely with managers in the development and implementation of HR management to enable more focused and productive working methods. The key development was the implementation of

the Parent Support Coordinator structure which now allows us to clearly focus our work and also provides a clear career structure for staff.

The Training and Development team has been extremely busy over the last year with the development and implementation of a practitioner-wide competency-based training framework. This not only replaces our existing facilitator training but also builds on it to include all other practitioner roles including the Parentline call takers.



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS – THE BIRTH OF OCEAN

2006 saw the launch of our very first intranet: the Online Communication Exchange and News resource known as OCEAN. OCEAN is one of the most important tools for Parentline Plus staff and volunteers. It stores the most up-to-date versions of all the charity's policies, procedures and forms, as well as breaking news and details on future plans. The team are dedicated to making OCEAN a one-stop shop for all of those working for the charity and are constantly changing and enhancing the way information is spread through the organisation, including case histories and quotes from parents and professionals on our services.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

The work undertaken by the External Relations team focuses on raising awareness of Parentline Plus services amongst parents, commissioners and policy makers and campaigning for more high quality provision which meets the needs of parents. The team undertakes regular consultations with parents via focus groups, mailings, surveys and discussion groups. These findings, together with the rich and unique data on why parents are calling Parentline, enable us to undertake campaigns and lobbying with confidence that we are acting as a voice for parents.

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The team has continued to achieve qualitative and positive coverage for Parentline Plus in an array of national and regional media ensuring parents are given a voice. We succeeded in placing over 1,300 hits in the media for the year April 06 – March 07 with, on average, 30 pieces of national and 83 pieces of regional coverage secured every month.

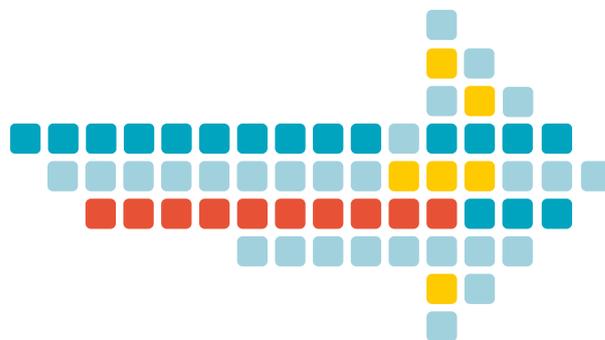
The press office has been monitoring the equivalent advertising cost for the print editorial secured each month. Since this monitoring was introduced in November 2006 it is estimated that the equivalent advertising costs for the editorial secured in four months alone totalled nearly two million pounds.

Funded awareness raising campaigns have ambitious targets for media coverage. For instance our Time to Talk campaign, which has been developed to help parents to talk more openly with their teenagers about responsible decisions about sex and relationships, has achieved 15 hits in the media per month with circulation figures totalling over 65.5 million.

POLICY

During the year the Chief Executive and senior Parentline Plus staff have undertaken regular liaison with Ministers and senior policy officials. We were delighted to play host to the Rt Hon Parmjit Dhanda MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families, in the Department for Education and Skills, who visited central office and our Kentish Town-based call centre (8th January 2007). Both he and senior officials talked at length to volunteers and staff and met Professor Marjorie Smith and Dr Janet Boddy, from the Thomas Coram Research Unit, who presented the findings of their evaluation of Parentline and the Individual Telephone Support service.

We welcomed the introduction of named commissioners for parenting support and have lobbied for sustained investment in parental involvement in the planning and delivery of extended services and universal access to support for all parents when they need it most. Parentline Plus was instrumental in campaigning for a parental view to be considered in aspects of the exclusions legislation that was introduced as part of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.



MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF PARENTLINE PLUS

During this year we have been able to allocate a modest level of funding for advertising to focus on improving the profile of Parentline Plus and to make sure thousands more parents knew that we are there to help them. The new Parentline Plus logo is the key element in a structured re-branding programme. Our aim was to create an image that is easily identifiable and memorable – essentially that we are ‘available for parents’. It was developed after feedback from many Parentline Plus staff and volunteers and external stakeholders.

The logo was further developed in full page print advertisements which featured in the March/ April edition of the free Tesco Store Magazine strategically placed opposite the mother of the year article.



Funding our work with parents and families

During the year the charity raised £5.79m (2006 £5.88m) and spent £6.21m (2006 £5.43m), the remainder of expenditure being funded from brought forward restricted funds. After allowing for the allocation of the appropriate expenditure in the year against restricted funds balances brought forward a total of £0.14m was added to the free reserves in line with the charity's policy.

The Unrestricted Funds of the charity now total £0.92m (2006 £0.78m). After allowing for the funding of fixed assets the free reserves now stand at £0.87m (2006 £0.72m). The trustees believe it is prudent to build up free reserves to act as a cushion to the continuing uncertainty of funding from statutory sources, as new commissioning processes and structures are implemented nationally and locally.

A total of £4.83m (2006 £4.86m) of restricted income was received in the year and there was a balance of £0.92m (2006 £0.67m) brought forward from the previous year. Against this expenditure of £5.40m (2006 £4.6m) was set leaving an amount of £0.37m (2006 £0.92m) to carry forward to fund designated activities next year.

The charity raised £0.96m (2006 £1.02m) of general or unrestricted income against which was charged £0.82m (2006 £0.84m) leaving a balance of £0.14m (2006 £0.18m) to add to the general reserves brought forward.

Sources of income: £3.9m (2006 £4.04m) was from central government sources, £0.64m (2006 £0.84m) was from local authority sources and £0.97m (2006 £0.76m) was from corporate bodies, trusts and foundations and individuals. Hours contributed by our volunteers amounted to the equivalent of £0.22m as gifts in kind (2006 £0.24m).

The reduction of income from central and local government sources is in line with the experience of other charities working with children and families, and reflects the insecurities brought about by the implementation of the Every Child Matters Change for Children policy by the Department of Education and Skills.

Expenditure: Investment in national helpline services increased to £3.07m (2006 £2.72m) and expenditure on local services remained at £1.88m. Expenditure on public education increased substantially to £0.91m, (2006 £0.49m). This was because we had sufficient capacity in our helpline to be able to advertise it for the first time. We will be monitoring the impact of advertising over the coming year. Expenditure on policy work reduced to £0.18m (2006 £0.24m) because grant funding for this work has ceased. The charity's governance costs account for 1.4% of gross expenditure at £0.09m.

The trustees would like to thank all those who funded our work during 2007/08. Trustees would also like to thank the charity's volunteers who generously provided 17,344 hours of their time to support other parents.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



RESERVES POLICY

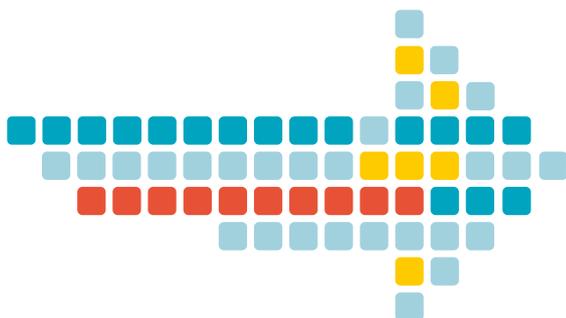
The Trustee Board continues with its policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets ('the free reserves') held by the charity should be 3 months' total operating costs. At this level, the Trustee Board considers that they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding, or pay redundancy costs.

INVESTMENT POLICY

In the current climate of uncertainty, volatile equity markets and a recognition that the current reserves are not long term in nature the Trustee Board has decided to take a cautious approach to the investment of its liquid funds. Accordingly these funds have been invested in a high interest COIF cash account.

RISK REVIEW

Trustees reviewed the risks to which the charity could be exposed in 2007/08 and trustees are satisfied that the charity has taken all reasonable steps to minimise risk, and that it has policies and procedures in place to manage risk effectively in all areas of the charity's work.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank all those who have supported our work this year. We would also like to thank the hundreds of volunteers who have helped us during 2006-2007.

The major funders of our work include:

Barclaycard
Big Lottery Fund
CAMHS
Children's Fund
Croydon Council
Department for Education and Skills
(now known as Department for Children,
Schools and Families)
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
European Social Fund
Gloucestershire County Council
Healthworks
Henry Smith Charitable Trust
Hertfordshire County Council
LankellyChase Foundation
Lloyds TSB Foundation
M&C Trust, Bernstein Family Trust
Metropolitan Housing Trust
Neighbourhood Renewal South Bristol
Newcastle New Deal
Nottingham Teenage Pregnancy Partnership
Peter Harrison Foundation
Radstock Norton Extended Schools
South Tyneside MBC Youth Offending Team
Southend Borough Council
The City Parochial Foundation
The Dorus Trust
The Leathersellers Company Charitable
Foundation
The Sutton Trust
The Tudor Trust
The Wixam Tree Trust
Wates Foundation

TRUSTEE BOARD

The members of the Board during the year were:

Chair

Michael Leadbetter

Vice Chair

Jabeer Butt

Treasurer

Stuart Bayliss	Treasurer until 24.1.07
Warwick Jones	Appointed to Board 16.10.06
	Appointed Treasurer 24.1.07

Felicity Blair

Christopher Clulow

Suzie Hayman

Max Hubbard

Doro Marden

John Penny Reappointed 18.10.06

June Thoburn Reappointed 18.10.06

Soona Vahid Reappointed 18.10.06

Trustee Members of Policy & Finance Sub-Committee:

J. Butt, M. Hubbard, W. Jones (appointed 24.1.07)

S. Bayliss, D. Marden, J. Penny

Trustee Members of Human Resources & Remuneration Sub-Committee

J. Butt, C. Clulow (appointed 28.3.07),

J. Penny, S. Vahid

President

Lord Justice Thorpe

Chief Executive and Company Secretary

Dr D. Braun OBE

Registered office

520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road,
London NW5 1TL

Auditors

Hillier Hopkins LLP, Charter Court, Midland Road,
Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 5GE

Solicitors

Farrer and Co., 66 Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London WC2A 3LH

Looking forward

Parentline Plus will continue to work towards achieving the objectives set down in our Five Year Plan and to enhance and develop the way we offer parents information, advice and support. Key targets for the next financial year include:

To answer 128,000 calls on Parentline and ensure at least 10% of these are from black and minority ethnic communities.

To expand and enhance the accreditation training for volunteers and the opportunities open to them at Parentline Plus.

o increase Parentline Plus website users by 25% and to introduce new on line community tools.

To ensure all Parentline Plus area offices are contributing to local parenting support service development and delivery at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the continuum of need.

To ensure that parents participate in the development and delivery of family and parenting support services.



We have a London based central office and 12 area offices operating across:

- The North West
- The North East
- The Midlands
- The East
- London
- The South East
- The South West
-

Our services include

- A free, confidential, 24-hour Parentline on 0808 800 2222
- A free textphone for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment on 0800 783 6783
- Email support parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk
- Individual support
- Parenting groups and workshops
- Information materials
- A helpful, interactive website
- An online community
- Training for professionals

Parentline Plus:

520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town,
London NW5 1TL

Free Parentline: 0808 800 2222

**Free textphone for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment:
0800 783 6783**

Web: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Email: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk

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