



2005-2006

ANNUAL REVIEW

Parentline_{plus}

Because instructions aren't included

Contents

Letter from the Chair	3
Report from the Chief Executive	4
Our vision and strategy	5
Our values	5
Update on our services	6
Focus on reaching out to parents and carers	9
Horizons	10
Development and partnerships	10
Funding our work with parents and families	13
Reserves Policy	13
Investment policy	13
Risk review	13
Thank you to our supporters	14
Outlook.....	14
The Board.....	15





Letter from the Chair

This is my first letter as Chair of Parentline Plus, and I am pleased and encouraged to report that the targets we set for our services for the year have been met and, in many areas exceeded, across the organisation. At the same time, Parentline Plus has continued to innovate and develop services.

Our service development continues to look at new ways of supporting parents and this has resulted in our being able to help more parents than ever before through a broad and flexible mix of services. These vary from our free, confidential Parentline available at any time for any parent, whatever the problems or issues, to locally-delivered flexible services which have been developed to reach and support the most vulnerable of families in the local community. We are particularly proud to say that wherever possible we deliver support to parents by parents, and that our services are shaped by parents through regular consultations, reviews and feedback from our service users.

Reaching out to parents and raising awareness of the information and support we can give them is a key focus. It is vital that we use all the possible communication tools to tell parents that we are here to help. During the year we have seen our leaflets available through doctors' surgeries; we have launched a small scale advertising campaign in areas where parents are not making regular use of our Parentline, and have produced many posters and other materials to give to parents during outreach events. We will monitor and review all these awareness raising tools and plan, during the autumn of 2006, to launch a further promotional campaign which encourages parents to ring our freephone number 0808 800 2222 to ask for information on a range of parenting issues.

None of this work would be possible without our regular and generous funders. On behalf of the Board I thank all those who have supported us during the year. Funding from government has enabled us to expand capacity and to develop local work, whilst new funding from Barclaycard has enabled us to develop new ways of reaching out to lone parents and to help them overcome their feelings of isolation and to point to ways that could improve their family life.

I would also like to thank the staff, volunteers and trustees of the charity who have done so much to

further our objectives, to enable us to put our vision and values into practice and to meet the challenges facing us. In particular I would like to thank Max Hubbard, who has resigned as Treasurer after 5 years. His careful financial management and expertise has been invaluable over the years, ensuring that the charity's finances have always been closely monitored and that we have kept within the confines of our income base. We are delighted that he will remain a Trustee and welcome Stuart Bayliss (trustee of Parentline Plus since 1999) as our new Treasurer.

The Board plans to review and expand its membership to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the organisation. The Chief Executive is pleased to discuss possibilities with individuals interested in considering becoming more involved with Parentline Plus at Board level.

The trustees were delighted that Lord Justice Thorpe accepted our invitation to become the first President of Parentline Plus and we have his continuing support. Mathew Thorpe, as the first Chair of the Board, guided our organisation from 1999 to April 2005 and his great experience and wisdom proved invaluable.

Michael Leadbetter

Chair of the Board of Trustees

“Thank you for all your support and advice over the last six weeks. The phone calls were invaluable. **You helped me get through some really tough times.** I am now so much more confident with my parenting.” A parent talking about Individual Telephone Support.

Report from the Chief Executive



One of the most rewarding elements of working for Parentline Plus is reading the thousands of messages and letters we receive from parents who talk about how Parentline Plus has helped enhance their family life. Our core belief, which underpins all our services, is that parents want to do their best for their children and these letters from parents prove that we are helping parents to do just that.

This year we took this vision one step further and launched our Just Ask campaign, designed to encourage parents to ask for information, advice and support and reassure them that doing this is not a sign of failure but of strength. We are delighted in the support we have from both parents and stakeholders for the campaign which included the tabling of an Early Day Motion by Annette Brooke MP.

The further integration of our services was a major priority during 2005-2006 – developing our local services to give parents a choice of many different entry points. We know that parents have different needs and that these change as their children grow up and as life events occur. We want to make sure that our services are there throughout a parent's journey and that they offer high quality, accessible support whatever the need. Every year I visit each of our area offices with a trustee and we are always overwhelmed by the level of work being undertaken and how innovative our local staff and volunteers are in meeting local needs. We intend to use our new Intranet to make sure case studies and parent feedback are shared better so that we can all learn from the work being done at a community level.

During the year, with welcome funding from government, we have begun to roll out our ambitious ICT strategy, ready for the challenges of the 21st century's technological revolution.

We continue to develop our role as the voice for parents and as parenting becomes a priority focus for government, we have made sure that our unique knowledge

“Being a parent is something you do. It's a roller coaster... the highs and joys are better than anything you can describe, but the lows and difficulties are much harder than anything you could have predicted. And it keeps changing as circumstances change and as children get older so you can never be sure what will be needed of you and whether you will feel up to the task.”

of parents' needs and views is heard at government level. Beverley Hughes MP, the Minister of State for Children and Families visited our North London call centre in January. She listened to calls and met volunteers who talked at length with her about the depth of the problems parents voiced. As the Department for Education and Skills looks at the possibility of running a new telephone and information based service for parents, we hope that this visit reinforces our belief that Parentline Plus should be at the core of any offer for parents.

In May 2005 we were delighted to have been shortlisted for the Charity Finance charity awards in the education and training category for our telephone support services. It goes without saying that without our staff and volunteers we would never have got this far. Thank you to all those who have helped make this a truly memorable year for Parentline Plus.

Dorit Braun OBE
Chief Executive



Our vision and strategy

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.

Our values

Parents want to do their best for their children. Services should be built on that desire, work flexibly and in partnership with parents in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

Parents have a right to stay in control of their family life. Services must be responsive and respectful, acknowledging that parents want support and information so that they can make informed choices about how to tackle family problems, and in so doing take responsibility for that choice.

Families come in different shapes and sizes. Services must make efforts to be inclusive of all significant adults for children who are in a parenting role – fathers and mothers, stepparents, non-resident and resident parents, grandparents, siblings and extended family members. Families should be enabled to decide for themselves who constitutes their family.

Family life is complicated. Services must value the everyday intimate connections between people and facilitate caring and acknowledge interdependence between family members. We encourage parents to appreciate their families and to see their successes as well as helping them through their difficulties.

All families have difficulties from time to time. Parents are entitled to support when they need it and in ways that suit them, their children and their circumstances.

There is no one right way to parent. Families can learn from each other, sharing ideas and experiences, and in particular can gain from the richness of diversity present in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world.

Praise and encouragement is more effective than blame and punishment. Parents and children need to be valued for who they are and what they have done and can do.

People can change. We work with parents on their inner attitudes and understanding as well as developing their skills. Giving parents opportunities to learn and develop and supporting them to make changes in their family is often a first step towards many other life changes.

People grow from giving and receiving. We enable volunteering, we support and enable parents to give to each other (whether living together or apart), to their children and to their wider community and networks.

Practice should mirror service values. Practitioners will receive training, support and ongoing development so that they can continue to do their best for the parents they work with.

“Sometimes in life there are chance happenings that change our lives for the better and **Parentline Plus was that sort of chance for me.** It gave me the means to cope with my daughter and helped in other areas of life like work and dealing with other people and friends.”

Update on our services

Parentline 0808 800 2222

Parentline Plus's free confidential Parentline is used by thousands of parents and carers seeking support. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and during 2005/06 we answered almost 115,000 calls and emails. Many of the parents calling us talked of multiple problems and were often very upset and desperate for help.

Call length varies, and although the average for all calls answered is just over 12 minutes, many calls are far longer and were about very complex family problems. As always, we are extremely grateful to the committed and hard working volunteers and paid call takers without whom we would not be able to have achieved and exceeded our targets this year. They have contributed over 45,000 hours of call taking time this year. We trained 136 new volunteers and we continue to increase the number of men and those from black and minority ethnic and low income backgrounds.

The reasons why parents contact us are broad and varied. No family is the same and so no call is the same. However from our compilation of extensive data, we can assess what the key issues are. This year showed parents' deep anxiety about their child's emotional health. Once again most parents rang to talk about their child's challenging behaviour and the impact this is having on their family life.

Challenging Behaviour

category	total no	of all forms %
a) Conflict with siblings	4745	10%
b) Conflict with parent	19424	42%
c) Conflict with peers	1471	3%
d) Conflict with stepparent	1797	4%
e) Conflict with other family members	974	2%
f) Lying	3284	7%
g) Stealing	2648	6%
h) Involved in Youth Justice System	573	1%
i) Pester power	1161	3%
j) Smoking	1843	4%
k) Drug use	2625	6%
l) Alcohol	2060	4%
m) Threatening/wanting to leave home	1680	4%
n) Runaway	1372	3%
o) Bad crowd	3237	7%
p) OTHER	4965	11%
total responses for this section	53859	

“Thank you so much for your advice and thoughts which I found very helpful.

I am aware that my patience is thin when I have had no time for myself and I need to build that into my schedule. I will think about the options for further advice and support. I have had telephone support from Parentline in the past and found it excellent. Again, many many thanks. Just knowing it is not all my fault and there are things I can do to change the way I am behaving is a big help.”

Parentline Plus is committed to making Parentline as accessible as possible and the development of policies and practice which promote the value of diversity and we monitor all our services to ensure we better meet the needs of specific groups. Analysis of our call data demonstrates that the number of fathers using the line has increased dramatically this year, to represent 26% of all calls. 46% of calls were from lone parents, 48% were from parents of teenagers and the number of calls from families from black and minority ethnic communities continues to rise and this year stands at 10%.

With continuing funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) we have further developed our extra services to offer to those who need more than a one-off phone call. These parents are offered additional options, which can include a free place on our telephone parent support services, the opportunity to attend one of our locally based parenting groups, a range of information to meet their stated needs or signposting or referral to other specialists and organisations.

We signpost to a number of specialist providers and have worked closely with others to develop better arrangements for providing information to parents. Partners include the Advisory Centre for Education, One Parent Families, and the Children's Legal Centre, with direct referral in place for parents to YoungMinds.

We monitor the quality of the service on an ongoing basis. As part of our quality assurance and to assess how parents used and appreciated our support, we commissioned the Thomas Coram Research Unit to undertake a follow up external evaluation of the line and of the telephone-based additional individual service. The TCR Unit previously undertook an evaluation commissioned by the Home Office. www.parentlineplus.org.uk/evaluations

We are continuing to review and evaluate all areas of provision including effective advertising to ensure parents are aware of the service; addressing issues of low take-up by minority groups; technical requirements and staff development.



Email support

Parents email us about a wide range of family issues. Some ask very specific questions while others seek support for difficult, painful and complex family situations. Many parents respond with appreciation for the support they receive but also a number comment on the value of just writing down their problems, reading it through and having the opportunity to reflect on their situations.

During the year we continued to develop the way we respond to emails from parents. Our aim is to offer an empathetic and informative response, signposting where appropriate, offering access to other Parentline Plus services and encouraging parents to continue using the service if they wish to do so.

In the light of our experience we have reviewed our recruitment, selection and training processes. We are now better placed to recognise the particular skills and attitudes necessary for recruitment to the team and have enhanced the training to meet the demands of the work. We recruited two additional workers offering them more intensive training and will continue to evaluate its effectiveness.

“Thank you so much for the site that you have produced - you have got to be a help to anyone that needs it. I am a stepparent and this is why **I am so impressed with your site**. I prefer to type than talk. I feel totally overwhelmed, desperate to talk, out of my depth and need to vent. Thank you for your email support.”

“Thank you again for your very valuable support and advice. I will definitely be recommending your website, email address and number to anyone who asks me for this sort of advice. **Keep up the good work.**”

Face-to-face parenting groups

This year was the second year of our new curriculum for parents, the Parents Together programme. Run by trained facilitators with experience of bringing up children, Parents Together offers a flexible series of 30 Open College Network accredited groups and workshops. These can be

delivered separately or combined to provide sessions tailored to different needs. Delivery can include one-off workshops and groups varying in length from two to seven two-hour sessions.

The programme is highly experiential and participative, focusing on helping parents to develop their understanding of themselves and their children and to learn core communication skills for family life from babyhood to the teenage years. It aims to enable parents to bring up children who will grow into emotionally healthy and resilient adults, able to take responsibility for themselves and their behaviour and form caring relationships with others. Our most popular groups and workshops are:

- **Stress Busting for Parents**
- **Bringing up Confident Children**
- **Let's Play**
- **Less Shouting, More Co-operation**
- **Coping with Teenage Issues**

“I don't jump in and react like I did before the course. I can stand back and think before I say anything.”

Parent of a young offender who attended a Parents Together group.

The benefits that parents derive from the programme are clear from their feedback and from the excellent attendance rates. Parents describe feeling less stressed as a parent by the end of the programme, more able to listen and deal with problems firmly and calmly. These changes in parenting have a positive impact on their children; as well as noticing improvements in their children's behaviour, parents feel closer to their children and find that their children talk to them more.

As well as delivering 'open' groups and workshops across local communities, we also ran programmes with targeted groups such as deaf parents, lone parents, teenage parents, prisoners and their families, parents of young offenders and parents recovering from addiction. This year we have focused particularly on increasing the ethnic diversity of parents reached by our groups and workshops with very positive results; 17% of parents participating in the programme were black or from minority ethnic groups. This has resulted in a wide range of new projects: in Peterborough we ran groups in a mosque; in Newcastle groups were delivered with a language interpreter and in Gloucestershire and Bristol we developed a project to train bi-lingual facilitators from local minority communities.

Telephone groups

“The telephone group re-charged me and helped me cope with my son’s behaviour. It was such a relief to have some time for me and to have the weekly support of the group, as well as get tools that helped with my son’s behaviour.”

Our parenting groups’ programme is also delivered by telephone. This allows us to support parents who cannot access local parenting programmes. Telephone groups are six sessions lasting one and a half hours, with an introductory one-to-one call with each parent to explain how the teleconference will work and put them at ease. Facilitators running these groups have done additional training to enable them to adapt our groups for delivery via teleconference. Parents are called each week, free of charge, and are connected to a conference call with around five other parents and the facilitator.

Parents access telephone groups from our website or as a result of ringing Parentline. This year 336 parents participated in telephone groups, an increase of 100% on the previous year.

Individual Telephone Support

Parents are referred to this service via Parentline. The ITS service offers parents who are experiencing difficult, complex and entrenched problems the opportunity of longer-term support. The telephone support worker calls the parent once a week for up to six weeks. Parents are encouraged to think about the changes they would like to make, discuss how this might happen and try out some of the suggested strategies while receiving support.

Parents using this service are experiencing a very wide range of family difficulties and struggles. They are often suffering a higher than average level of emotional distress because they are facing extremely challenging behaviour from their children. Their children too are displaying extremes of emotion leading to quite tense family environments.

Parents overwhelmingly say they value the support they receive. The workers themselves, although finding the work challenging, find it extremely rewarding, giving them the opportunity to use their considerable skills to make a real difference to family life.

The demand for the service has continued to grow and we supported 1,174 parents during the year. To meet this increasing demand, we have expanded the team to 44 workers offering the service from five of our area offices. The recruitment, selection and training have been reviewed during the year with training increased to continue to ensure a high quality service is offered to parents.

From 2006 we have branded our helpline ‘Parentline’ 0808 800 2222.



Focus on reaching out to parents and carers

Outreach and development are key to the effectiveness of our face-to-face work especially as we continue to find ways to support the most disadvantaged families. Research shows that many socially excluded families are isolated and make little use of social support networks of family and friends – often because these networks rely on reciprocity and families facing many challenges feel they have nothing to give in return.

Research also shows that families who lack social networks are less likely to use formal services because it is usually word of mouth that enables parents to feel that a service will be beneficial to them. Our parent to parent delivery allows us to approach individual parents as a friend and to breach this gap, so helping them to access other forms of help in the future.

The ways we offer outreach vary from office to office. What is common is the focus on approaching families in an informal way, ensuring that appropriate and targeted information and support is provided, either by the worker talking to a parent or signposting the parent on to further specialist help.

Outreach work to parents may involve:

- Making contacts, distributing materials on our services, putting up posters in specific venues.
- A stand in a specific venue (such as a shopping mall), offering information, signposting to our services or useful organisations.
- Drop-in series of regular sessions in a particular venue, organised in conjunction with a partner organisation (e.g. school) and offering information on our services, signposting and a chance to talk informally to a worker.
- Outreach one-to-one, where parents are booked onto a more in-depth support session which parallels a call. It is delivered by experienced Parentline Plus staff who have undergone additional training. The parent is given a written sheet at the end of the session, with relevant signposting information and possible things to try out. This particular service has been piloted during 2005-2006 and we are now developing protocols and training as a result of this pilot.

These case histories and examples of service delivery give just a flavour of how outreach works, and the benefit parents' voice as a result of this support.

Work with parents of children with antisocial or criminal behaviour

Bristol has been working with a range of inter-agency partnerships to support parents whose children were persistently truanting and/or coming before the Youth Courts. The children were aged 10 years and upwards; none attended school regularly.

To reach and engage with the parents waiting at the Youth Courts with their children, a Parentline Plus facilitator attended the Courts weekly for 9 months in 2005-6, meeting 117 parents. We collated requests for further telephone, individual and group support and gave the Parentline

number to all. Some joined a rolling, facilitated support group for parents of older children with challenging behaviour; three group members were referred by the YOT and five by the education welfare officer. All were single parents, some with new resident partners. All these women had experienced domestic violence from the children's fathers and/or stepfathers.

40% of the children were girls; the difficulties with them were truancy, self-harm, running away, drugs misuse and concerns about sexual activity. The boys were also involved in active offending including violence, drugs dealing, burglary and affray.

This outreach also introduced parents to two groups for parents of older children with 'challenging behaviour'; nearly all the mothers in the group have experienced significant violence from their teenage children. 80% of parents were using prescribed anti-depressive or anti-psychotic medication.

One family's story:

George is 14 and spent October to December in local authority care at his mother's request. He was stealing regularly, was a gang member, lost his school place when he was in care out of the county and has not returned to school since. His mother Carry came to an individual support session here in March on social services' recommendation and then enrolled on Getting on with your Teenager and Dealing with Anger groups. George does not want to use services himself. Recently he was badly stabbed in a gang fight.

During the groups Carry has attended she has been supported to use listening skills to understand how her son is feeling. He has told her he is very distressed about the breakdown of his relationship with his father. She now sets boundaries confidently and reports a reduction in George's violent outbursts and an increase in his time spent at home. The younger children in the family are less fearful and their behaviour is also calmer.

Working in an extended school

The Parent Support Worker liaised with the extended schools co-ordinator in a school in Hertfordshire to reach parents wanting individual support. Parentline Plus advertised services with posters and leaflets in the school and provided a worker to run day-time drop in sessions at 9.00am after parents had dropped their children off at school.

"I just wanted to say a super huge thank you to my little helper who comes into school. Nothing happens overnight but it don't half help to have someone who will listen to my nagging, whinging and moaning and after all that offer some form of solution. It may not all work but every little helps and the talking helps me decipher why my babies are the way they are.

I think this is a brill idea to offer outreach to schools and whoever thought of this needs at least 10 housepoints!!! Once again thank you. The only problem is I need more!"



Horizons

Horizons

The Horizons Programme, funded by Barclaycard, has enabled us to experiment with new ways of reaching out to parents. The programme has been designed to support lone parents, especially those experiencing debt or who are

worried about family finances. Four national charities are working together to deliver this ambitious programme and Parentline Plus' role is to reach out to lone parents, contribute to a reduction in their feelings of isolation and to build up their self-confidence.

“Sometimes as a single mother, you can feel very alone and not sure you are doing the right thing. But **you have made me feel a lot better and stronger.**

Keep up the good work and thanks again.”

Parents told us they wanted fun events, and new ways of meeting other lone parents and area offices have developed strategies to reach out to parents, working with other organisations - who provided the fun element - or using the resources of a local Children's Centre.

One Parentline Plus office invited parents in a local school to join them for coffee and cake after going to their children's class assembly. The worker led a discussion about parenting issues and arranged that some of the parents would return the following week for a taster session on a topic of their choice.

A Parentline Plus worker arranged to have a stand at a local festival in a park. There were activities arranged by other stall holders and the worker agreed with another stall holder that while they were providing entertainment for children Parentline Plus would demonstrate our website on a laptop and talk to parents about support available to them.

In Parents' Week a local office set up a stall and provided a breakfast club calling upon the services of a storyteller who was linked with a local Children's Centre (and had been CRB checked and was covered by the Children's Centre insurance). Parents were given information about Parentline Plus' services and details of groups and workshops in their area.

Development and partnerships

Working with professionals

Our work with professionals this year has included a new partnership with National Family and Parenting Institute, Parenting UK and One Plus One which, with funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation, has enabled us to look at joining forces to deliver complementary services for the family support field.

We have also been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to pilot a social franchise model with an external evaluator appointed. The franchising model enables us to pilot different ways of expanding services through training the trainers so that other organisations may deliver our range of services. A key development element is to ensure quality partnership systems are in place.

At local level, new partnerships are forged every year. By developing networks with community organisations for instance, we can reach a more diverse group of parents and thereby ensure our services reach out to all parents.

As part of our remit to provide training, resources, consultancy and support to professionals, we have been developing an external training menu of courses and workshops relevant to professionals and agencies working with parents and children. At this time of great change within central and local government, in response to Every Child Matters, we are well placed to be part of the changing landscape, which is creating a demand for quality training to work with parents.

Expanding our services and new ways of working

With ambitious business plans pointing the way to deliver our strategy, we have focused on enhancing existing provision and developing new ways of supporting parents. The Parenting Fund has enabled us to expand and develop a new model of Individual Support for parents on a face-to-face basis. Following the pilot we will roll out this new face-to-face service throughout our network.

Our outreach and development work continues to prove an essential method of engaging parents, building up their trust and encouraging their staying power should they be opting for a more sustained level of support. It enables us to reach out to isolated parents and offer informed parent to parent support.

We see outreach as essential if we want to engage and support parents in a community setting and particularly those parents who do not easily access mainstream services. By developing networks with community organisations we can reach a more diverse group of parents and thereby ensure our services reach all parents.

Diversity Action Plan

Our annual residential meeting of all managers took place in July 2005 and focused on diversity issues. We have undertaken an audit for each service and have also been developing baseline information in all of our area offices in order to help us in planning, setting targets and in fundraising. This has resulted in all services having individual diversity action plans and targets.

Much of the work undertaken to reach out to parents who do not traditionally seek help is very labour intensive. The audit of diversity work illustrated that there is a lot of interesting work being undertaken locally and lessons are being learnt about how to reach out to disadvantaged groups. This includes work with parents from black and minority ethnic groups, work with fathers, lone parents, young mothers, deaf parents and travellers.

Monitoring of all our work will be in place as the ICT strategy is implemented. This will ensure that we will be able to monitor ethnic origin, gender, age, disability, and socio-economic status.

HR and Training

Over the last year the Training and Development team has developed and grown within the HR function and now provides proactive, quality training and development initiatives through a variety of learning interventions to all practitioners and staff.

Current new work now includes the development of a new training framework for all Parentline Plus practitioners. The aim of the work is to recognise and define the core skills that are common to all kinds of direct work with parents, to link these with the new National Occupational Standards for work with parents (Programme code 2297), and to use the resulting set of competences as a basis for a unified training structure that offers accreditation of all training that we provide.

Getting the message across

“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.”

Communications

This year the Communications team has focused on producing informative leaflets to support campaigns. We have worked closely with DfES and the Time to Talk campaign to produce publications for parents which help them to feel able to talk with their children about relationships and sex. In consultation with parents through focus groups, we developed two versions of our leaflet The Real Picture, one for parents of teenagers and another for parents of pre-teens.

We also produced information for parents around Risky Behaviour, Growing Up and What to do if your Daughter is Pregnant which are available through Time to Talk outreach events. Other new materials produced include Bullying, and a new schools series including Starting School, Moving on to Secondary School and Homework. We have also begun to identify resources for parents of young children and produced Learning and Play.

The team continues to look at innovative ways of communicating with parents and have started a new range of marketing materials with the production of fridge magnets that target parents of teenagers, and those with young children. Parents have indicated through our focus group work how much humour helps them to engage with Parentline Plus. Humour sets the tone of the new Just Ask campaign materials which have proved to be popular resources.

As well as resources for parents, our work as part of the Family Policy Alliance has enabled us to produce an invaluable toolkit for professionals, Parent Participation - Improving Services for Children and Families. This helps professionals look at the principles and practice of consulting with parents.

With the increase in marketing activity promoting our materials we have seen a rise of nearly 50% in sales, with 46,355 items sold in 2005/06. The number of information materials distributed free to parents reached 221,612.

Website

The Parentline Plus website continues to build on visitors to the site. In the last year we saw 223,883 visitors to the site with, on average, 18% of these parents returning each month. Content is regularly added and updated on areas of the site. This has ranged from information on postnatal depression, parental responsibility, sleep and breastfeeding, to travelling with children, teenagers on holiday, bullying by phone, alcohol, healthy eating and internet safety.

We have introduced polls to get instant feedback on current issues such as sex and contraception and online surveys with parents which have contributed to a range of influential reports on girls and bullying, youth matters, parenting teenagers, non-resident fathers and school transitions.

We are in the process of introducing more dynamic elements to the site and are implementing an online communities' strategy; the first stage of which is the launch of a new homepage and message board facility in May 2006.

Press and PR work

Parentline Plus has had another successful year featuring in the pages of newspapers and magazines and broadcasting on national and regional radio and television. It is estimated that in 2005/06 Parentline Plus UK media coverage achieved circulation figures of over 322 million as a result of over 1,304 hits, enabling us to offer millions of parents the opportunity to access information and support on key issues identified through our services.

We are often the first point of call for journalists on parenting issues and continue to set the media agenda for family and parenting issues. We tackled a number of topics in the media including stepfamilies, bullying and schooling, teenagers and student finance.

The charity's Time to Talk campaign has had another good year with 183 hits in the media totalling circulation figures of over 43 million. In addition to the charity's consumer and regional media activity for Time to Talk there has been a greater policy focus in 2005/06. The campaign has increased its coverage in trade and broadsheet media covering issues such as confidential sexual health for under-16s, sex education in schools and teenage pregnancy rates. Coverage includes Community Practitioner, Professional Social Worker, Community Care, The Independent, Telegraph and Times. The charity continued its commitment to secure coverage in black and minority ethnic media during the year with coverage in New Nation, BBC Asian Network, The Voice, Sunrise Radio and www.blackbritain.co.uk

The emphasis for the second year running was to secure more hits in trade publications to carry stronger Parentline Plus policy messages. This was achieved with coverage in an array of magazines and broadsheets including Community Care, Children Now, Community Practitioner, Practice Nurse, 0-19, 3rd Sector, Professional Social Worker, The Teacher, Education Today, Times, Telegraph, Independent, Guardian, BBC Woman's Hour, You and Yours and many others.

Policy

Parentline Plus' Policy team has been very active this year, responding and influencing the roll-out of the Every Child Matters implementation programme.

Our partnership The Family Policy Alliance (FPA) broke new ground this year. FPA is a partnership between ourselves, Family Rights Group, and Family Welfare Association. The alliance produced a toolkit which has been developed to help local commissioners and planners to ensure parental involvement in their plans. The good practice highlighted in this publication is based on the FPA's experience and expertise of engaging with parents who use our services and was complemented by the production of an innovative bookmark detailing what parents want from services and a highly regarded briefing on supporting children and families.

The work of the Policy team is greatly enhanced by the ever-increasing data on parents' concerns. We analyse

findings from our call data, focus groups and also surveys on the website. This in turn enables us to write and disseminate a number of briefings. This year we produced briefings on girls and bullying, the association between seeking help and feelings of failure and the challenges facing stepfamilies.

Just Ask



Just Ask

Launched in 2005, the Just Ask campaign was very much a cross organisational activity. The aims of the campaign are to deliver a focused proactive media and policy campaign focusing on creating a culture change in the way family life is perceived and emphasising the fact that parents should be entitled to support and information at key transition phases as their children grow up.

A range of materials were developed and tested with parents and a campaign pack was produced. The materials include cards for parents, innovative and fun coffee coasters delivering the campaign messages and including quotes from parents, plus guidance for those working with parents. The launch in November was multi-faceted as we worked to ensure that parents, the media, policy makers and stakeholders were onside with the essential messages about parents' right to have help for any problems they may have about their family life, and their right to be respected if they do seek such help.

The media launch resulted in extensive national and regional TV and radio coverage. Just Ask has proved to be our most successful campaign launch to date. One week after the campaign launch 1,500 Just Ask campaign packs had been sent out and we mailed 450 Sure Starts and 451 schools throughout the country. Over 160 Youth Offending Teams and 330 councils were emailed about Just Ask. There was widespread enthusiasm for the campaign with multiple orders for the materials.

A secondary school headteacher contacted us to say,

“Your Just Ask campaign is just what the world needs. I intend to make sure that every parent of a child at my school gets a copy of the Just Ask card.”

The briefing produced to support the launch entitled *Behind Closed Doors* was sent out to 76 policy makers, MPs and ministers. Just Ask was also tabled as an Early Day Motion by Annette Brooke MP:

“That this House congratulates Parentline Plus on the launch of its Just Ask campaign and welcomes the publication of its report ‘Parenting Behind Closed Doors - seeking help and feelings of failure: how to make the difference for parents and families’; commends Parentline Plus, the national charity, on its independent work undertaken to provide support and information on parenting issues through its 24 hour national helpline; applauds the volunteers on the helpline for their invaluable support given to parents under stress or in distress; stresses that asking for help when struggling with raising children should be seen as a strength, not a weakness, and demonstrates a wish to do the best for one’s children; acknowledges that more support for parents is the answer to many challenges facing family life in today’s society and recognises that more should be done to involve parents in shaping services in their area; and endorses the campaign’s aim to promote the need for long term sustained investment in family support services so that the 24 million parents and carers in the United Kingdom can find information and support whenever they need it, because instructions are not included with parenthood.”

The campaign continues and during 2006 and 2007 we will be launching specially themed Just Ask activities. The first will be about the transition to secondary school, whilst in November 2006 we will focus on children’s emotional health and well-being.

Funding our work with parents and families

During the year Parentline Plus raised £5.64m and spent £5.19m, resulting in a net surplus of £0.45m, of which £0.18m was added to the charity’s free reserves. This was in line with the charity’s reserves policy.

Of the £5.64m raised, £4.86m was restricted income and £0.78m was unrestricted income; £4.04m was from central government sources, £0.84m was from local authority sources and £0.76m was from corporates, trusts and foundations and individuals. This compares favourably with the previous year in which £4.48m was raised (£3.91m was restricted and £0.57m was unrestricted).

The restricted income of £4.86m which was received in-year was added to the £0.67m restricted funds brought forward from the prior year. Expenditure related to the

restricted funds was deducted and a balance of £0.93m was carried forward to 2006/07.

During the year Parentline Plus secured vital funding to expand its national services and develop its local services from the Parenting Fund, a new national government funding stream to support parents and families. It also continued to pursue alternative sources of income while fulfilling its primary charitable objectives, in particular concentrating on generating future income from local government initiatives, local trusts and foundations and corporate bodies.

In line with the rise of income, expenditure to further the charity’s core charitable objectives has also increased to £5.10m. Investment in national services increased to £2.48m (23% increase) and expenditure on local services increased to £1.88m (46% increase). Expenditure on public education also increased to £0.49m (37% increase). Expenditure on policy work remained at £0.24m.

The charity’s governance costs account for 1.8% of gross expenditure at £0.09m.

The brought forward unrestricted funds balance was made up of £0.54m general funds and a capital fund of £0.05m. Combining these with the in-year surplus on general funds of £0.18m gives a total of £0.78m unrestricted reserves. Free reserves, excluding fixed assets, amounted to £0.72m.

The Trustees would like to thank all those who funded our work during 2006/07. Trustees would also like to thank the charity’s volunteers who generously provided 19,678 hours of their time to support other parents. This equates to £243k of gifts in kind.

Reserves Policy

In the light of continued and rapid expansion the Trustee Board has established a 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 consider 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 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 and regularly reviewed in order to ensure that best rates are achieved.

Risk review

Trustees reviewed the risks to which the charity could be exposed in 2006/07 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

Parentline Plus' ambitious work plan relies on the generous support of our donors. As Parentline Plus has grown and developed, the organisation faces an even more pressing need to bring new supporters on board, and is working hard to convince grant-making trusts, corporate supporters and individuals to invest in our vision of a time where parents and families receive the high quality support they so desperately need.

This year we have been lucky to have received grants and donations from:

Awards For All
Barclaycard
Big Lottery Fund
Bristol Youth Offending Team
Bristol Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
CAMHS
Children's Fund
City Parochial Foundation
Department for Education and Skills
Equitable Life
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Gloucestershire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Masterfoods
Metropolitan Housing Trust
New Deals for Communities
Oxford County Council
Parenting Fund
Peter Harrison Foundation
Sure Start
The Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund
The Sutton Trust
The Tudor Trust
Teenage Pregnancy Unit
Wates Foundation

Thank you!

If you agree that parents deserve respectful and positive support to enable them to do the difficult job of bringing up their children, we hope you will consider making a donation to Parentline Plus to help us reach more parents and families.

- £10 pays for the telephone cost of a call for eight parents needing help and support from Parentline.
- £20 pays for a parent to receive support via email.
- £50 helps a parent to benefit from one-to-one in-depth support via Parentline.
- £100 allows us to print 500 information leaflets to be sent free of charge to parents.
- £250 pays for one of our area offices to run a volunteer recruitment advertisement for volunteers to help us deliver our services.

If you would like more information please contact the Fundraising team on 020 7284 5543, or email fundraising@parentlineplus.org.uk

Outlook

Parentline Plus will continue to work towards the targets and objectives set down in our Five Year Plan launched in 2005. The business targets set for 2006/07 reflect our resolve to expand our services and to reach out to many more parents, particularly those who do not find it easy to take up statutory services. We aim to:

- Continue to provide a high volume, high quality service to parents, maintaining the call rate of 115,000 calls answered per year.
- Develop new monitoring systems through our services to enable us to build a more "in-depth" profile of the parents contacting us and of the issues they raise.
- Expand the number of parents benefiting from our extra telephone-based services for those who need more than a single phone call.
- Further develop our face-to-face work in areas where we have an office by providing a range of integrated services.
- Further develop targeted ways of supporting parents and carers facing exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination.
- Launch new online communities to our website.
- Develop, produce and test with parents a range of innovative materials that meet stated information needs.
- Continue to inform and influence policy development at national and local level.

The Board

Chair

Michael Leadbetter (appointed 06/04/05)

Vice Chair

Jabeer Butt

Treasurer

Max Hubbard (until 19/10/05 – remaining as trustee)

Stuart Bayliss (appointed 19/10/05)

Board members

Felicity Blair (appointed 06/04/05)

Christopher Clulow

Suzie Hayman (appointed 06/04/05)

Doro Marden

Patricia Newton

John Penny

Skeena Rathor (resigned 25/01/06)

June Thoburn

Soona Vahid

Chief Executive and Company Secretary

Dorit Braun OBE

President

Lord Justice Thorpe

(further to his resignation as Chair, 06/04/05)

The Board has two Sub-Committees:

Policy and Finance

Human Resources and Remuneration

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



Parentline Plus is a national charity and a leading organisation in the development and delivery of support for parents and families. We work to recognise and to value the different types of families that exist and to shape and expand the services available to them. We understand that it is not possible to separate children's needs from the needs of their parents and carers and encourage people to see it as a sign of strength to seek help. We believe it is normal for all parents to have difficulties from time to time.

Parentline Plus: 520 Highgate Studios • 53-79 Highgate Road • Kentish Town • London NW5 1TL
Tel: 020 7284 5500 • Fax: 020 7284 5501

Free Parentline: 0808 800 2222

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

Email support: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Parentline Plus is the operating name of FamilyLives

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