



Welcome to Edition 6

INTEREST SESSIONS

Parenting West Lothian has recently started some talks by experts on issues that concern parents—Interest Sessions. This was prompted by the fact that all parents need up to date information and support. We have run two of these so far available for all staff of West Lothian Council and the Health Services.

Parenting West Lothian is a steering group that has aimed to develop services for the support of parents. We have overseen the development of group-based parenting groups and courses, and these are increasingly seen as a vital support for parents who often are doing their best, but in isolation. Meeting other parents can be a huge relief. What a parent might have thought was worrying behaviour, actually is often quite normal, and can be dealt with quite simply. If things have gone badly wrong, parents often find, the support of other parents and the ideas on the courses, provide enough help to start to deal with issues they may be having with their children/teenagers.

Sometimes it can be information that we parents need. The two talks delivered so far have been on the brain development of babies, and on how the teenagers' brain develops. Both talks, in these cases given by Educational Psychologists, were well attended (between 50 and 70 attendees), and over 90% rated the sessions excellent or good.

In the case of the Teenage Brain session, staff (often the parents of a teenager) had sought information on understanding their teenager's behaviour, and from this requested some tips on how to manage the behaviour better. This understanding also extended to feeling reassured, egg about sleep (teenagers are not able to produce the chemical Melatonin, which makes us go to sleep quickly, so they often stay up late, and find it hard to get up in the morning).

People who attended wanted more sessions, especially on teenagers. While there were requests for "more" generally, there were more

specific requests on strategies for dealing with teenage behaviour, how to build confidence, etc.

The talks on teenagers were put on slides, and these are available for people's information on the Parenting West Lothian Website. http://parentingwestlothian.org.uk/a-z_braindevelopment.htm

As well as outlining how the teenage brain develops, there are tips on how best to help a teenager with behaviour and overall development.

Sessions are run at **lunch time (12.30 till 1.30pm)** in various venues convenient for West Lothian staff (Council and Health). The next two sessions will be held in the main hall in **Strathbrock Community Centre**.

The next sessions are:

29th January Susan Duffy & Rosalind Witcombe, Early Years Development Workers, will give a talk on **The Incredible Years Parenting Programme**, and how we in West Lothian are developing this so as to reach as many parents as possible, especially those parents with young children.

26th February Karen Love, Senior SW Sure Start has been instrumental in developing a course on **helping mothers with Post Natal Depression called Positive Steps**. The course has been well researched to see if it works and results so far are very positive.

We plan to have further sessions regularly. The next session will be on protecting your child from the dangers involved in using computers – networking and online safety. This will be delivered by Paul Corner, a policeman based at Deans Community High School.

We welcome suggestions for future sessions that would be of concern for parents of children of any age. Let us know. Enquiries@parentingwestlothian.org.uk

John Rogers, Parenting Co-ordinator, West Lothian

DEANS SUPPORT GROUP

A support group for parents (mostly mothers) has been started this year. It is facilitated by the Parenting Co-ordinator and the Depute Head Teacher for Learning Support, who attends each week.

The group started because we ran a group for parents whose children were part of a Nurture Group in P7. There was concern how these children might settle into Secondary School. The parents undertook a course which focused on listening and communicating with the children, and on better ways to manage behaviour, particularly anger outbursts. In addition, parents and the children went to Deans CHS to familiarise themselves with the school, by way of an enhanced transition. The parents were very impressed by the welcome they got, and asked if they could continue to meet as a support group in Deans CHS. This idea was welcomed by the school, and the parents attended one of the talks the school offers to all parents whose children were about to start in Secondary School. They identified themselves to the parents, and three parents came up and asked if they could join the group.

So in August/September, the parents met. The Depute HT attended and immediately it became apparent that there were real benefits to parents feeling able to communicate with the school. In one case, (in the first week of term) a parent with a child with Asperger's Syndrome was able to communicate her concern at her child finding it difficult to adjust to the jostle and rush that is part of Secondary School life. The Depute HT listened, and offered the use of the quiet room, along with a locker. The child was thrilled to have a locker and used the quiet room at breaks, lunch if he needed to, and has since settled well into school. This was because the parent felt enabled to talk with the school, having met the Depute HT. This has been just one of many instances when a quick response from school has prevented a potential problem from escalating. The fact that the school has been able to offer a prompt response has also generated confidence in the parents about the school.

All the children from the Nurture Group have experienced "issues" at times, but all these have been dealt with. And this has been in the

context that there had been concern that the children would experience difficulties settling.

From the school's point of view, a lot has been learned about how it is day in, day out for parents. This has generated a deeper understanding as to the genesis of potential difficulties, and also the confidence to make quick responses. It has also promoted how well parents can support each other through quite difficult times.

The group aims to promote good communication, and links between parents and the school. This has involved encouraging parents in feeling able to talk about their concerns.

We now think the group can be expanded to include more parents, even if they do not attend Deans CHS. We also think this sort of initiative has potential for other schools.

John Rogers, Parenting Co-ordinator
Carol Mordaunt, Depute Head Teacher

We plan to run Surviving Teenagers Courses.

One will be an evening course and will be open to all West Lothian parents. This course is due to start on February 19th.

Another Surviving Teenagers Course will start on Wednesday 30th January 2013 in Strathbrock Partnership Centre. The group is running in the afternoon. The course lasts for 8 weekly sessions.

The groups are suitable for any parents or carers who would like to find out more information about parenting teenagers. Some of the topics included in the courses are: Communication and Listening, Why Teenagers behave the way they do, Getting Cooperation and Negotiating with your Teenager.

If you would like to book a place on either of these courses please contact the Children & Young People Team on 01506 282948 or email cypt@westlothian.gov.uk

The Parenting Programme is being updated and will be available on the website soon.