

Parenting West Lothian

A Framework for Action
2009-2012

FOREWORD



Being a parent is probably the most difficult job we will ever do. We do it with no formal training and there is no pay – indeed it costs us quite a lot to do it! Everyone, including our children, seems to have a view on how we are doing and often the feedback does not feel very complimentary.

Services in West Lothian recognise the pressures on parents today and the need they have for information, strategies, support and exchange about a whole range of issues with which they have to deal. This strategy seeks to help meet that need in a way that respects parents' abilities and opinions.

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INTRODUCTION



In developing this guidance, we hope to make clear the commitment within West Lothian to raising the importance and profile of parenting and to outlining the strategy for delivering this support over the next few years and which we hope will become firmly embedded in practice.

Where reference is made to “parent” this relates to anyone who is in a parenting role, be they mother, father, grandparent or other relative, foster carer, or any other person who has responsibility for caring for a child.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim is to improve outcomes for children. This can be achieved by enabling parents to feel more confident in themselves and in their parenting role, and to feel supported in a non-stigmatising way.

Objectives

- To ensure all parents can access information and support to improve outcomes for children
- To co-ordinate parenting work across West Lothian
- To promote parenting group work as an intervention
- To provide a range of services for parents using various media.
- To provide parenting support programmes that align with and complement informal community educational opportunities
- To provide universal support, but target those most at risk
- To be responsive to need
- To build a confident and competent workforce through training, mentoring and supervision
- To ensure quality through developing systems of evaluation and feedback
- To continue to research what works in parenting education/support

Principles and values

- Although there are exceptions, parents are normally the best carers for their children. They are part of the solution, rather than just part of the problem.
- Warm and loving relationships are the basis for children's well being
- The notion of promoting resilience underpins interventions
- Services are delivered within a context of peer learning, building on existing strengths and working in partnership with parents in a non-stigmatising way.
- Support should be offered at various levels, i.e. through website, written materials, articles in local press as well as a range of individual and group work programmes.
- Diverse family patterns should be respected and valued.
- Interventions should be flexible and responsive to need
- Service delivery is based on multi disciplinary work and also involves parents engaging in peer support.
- Advice/support should be made available universally, but additional targeted supports should be offered to those most at risk.
- The contributions of all who are in a parenting role are valued, be they mothers, fathers, or substitute carers
- Programmes should be evidence based and performance measured

WHY A PARENTING STRATEGY?

Research

There is now greater understanding and increased evidence that very early experiences have long-term effects on a child's development. Research on the developing child's brain has highlighted the importance of the period from pre-birth to 3 years old. Although subsequent years are also important it is particularly crucial in the early years, when the brain is developing at a considerable rate, that a child has the opportunity to develop warm reciprocal relationships with a small group of special adults who respond to the child's varying needs appropriately, and this will influence later relationships, ability to control emotions and the development of empathy. Poor relationships with parents/carers can lead to insecure attachment and a range of problems later in life. Parents who themselves face challenges are less likely to be able to offer the sensitive, responsive and consistent care needed for positive emotional, social and psychological development.

The aim of this parenting strategy is to help parents to have greater understanding of the needs of their children at all stages of development, and to ensure that there is access to parenting information and a continuum of support from pre-birth through the life stages of children to 18 years through a range of services.

Government guidance

A plan for the support of parents will require to take into account national government policies and priorities, including the Early Years Framework, Getting It Right For Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence and Equally Well and also the local priorities identified by West Lothian Community Planning Partners, which are aligned to the 15 national outcomes.

The National Performance Framework identifies the following desired outcomes:

- **Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.**
- **We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk**
- **Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens**
- **We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.**

The Early Years Framework includes the following statements:

- **Parents are given appropriate support to help them understand the responsibilities and sustained commitment associated with bringing up a child and to develop the skills needed to provide a nurturing and stimulating home environment free from conflict**
- **Parents and children have integrated support from services to meet a range of needs they may have. This includes help for parents to develop relationships with their child and to address stresses which may impact on their ability to perform their parenting role**

In West Lothian we have a vision that children and young people should be valued, and, using a life stages model, services aim to ensure that children and young people are:

- **Safe**
- **Nurtured**
- **Healthy**
- **Achieving**
- **Active**
- **Respected**
- **Responsible**
- **Included**

These 8 factors underpin our approach to promoting wellbeing and Getting It Right For Every Child

This Parenting Strategy will contribute to these aspirations, providing early intervention to promote positive parenting from pre-birth, a tiered model of intervention to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, and supports, which can be accessed by all parents.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



Within West Lothian we have significant strengths on which we can build. There exists a range of practitioners working in partnership across the statutory and voluntary sectors who are providing support on both an individual and group work basis, from universally available antenatal and maternity care through to more intensive, targeted supports for those families believed to be at greater risk.

These parenting programmes run alongside and complement other community based informal educational methods and approaches that deliver programmes on issues that affect parenting.

Parenting West Lothian was set up in 2005 with the aim of increasing parenting support across West Lothian, improving the availability of support and training a wide range of practitioners in delivering parenting support. It operates under the framework of the Children's Services Management Group and within the context of the Children's Services Plan.

The Parenting West Lothian website (www.parentingwestlothian.org.uk) was set up in 2006. This contains a range of information about supports available in West Lothian and provides information for parents on a broad diversity of parenting issues, with a facility for parents to contact us on specific topics if they wish information to be included on the website.

For the year 2009-2010 funding has been approved by the Government to employ a full time Parenting Co-ordinator whose role it will be to develop parenting support across all ages in West Lothian.

The National Institute For Clinical Excellence in England states firmly that the most productive means of improving parenting is through group work therefore there has been a focus on the delivery of a wide range of parenting programmes. However, individual methods of developing parenting have been widely used, including the use of video feedback and the development of specific programmes for use on an individual family basis

Training of staff across all services continues to be provided.

WHAT SUPPORTS WILL BE AVAILABLE?



The website will be the primary source of providing information on children's development, specific issues, advice and services available to support parents.

Using a model of tiered intervention (see appendix 1), supports can be offered as follows.

Level 1 - Universal services

These include services which are generally provided for any parents who are new to parenting or who simply wish to become more confident in their parenting role and facilitate their children's development, and include:

- health programmes (including pre and post birth groups)
- family learning programmes including informal educational opportunities relating to parenting issues i.e. Health & Well Being, ABE, HIC
- groups such as baby massage which promote bonding and attachment
- parenting programmes run in many nurseries (Parents in Early Education Partnership)
- play groups and toddler groups (Scottish Pre-school Play Association development workers are trained in delivering some programmes)
- parenting programmes which could benefit any parent, such as Getting Through the Day and Stay and Play
- dads' programmes

Level 2 – Communities at risk

These include services for parents in areas of high vulnerability which provide the opportunity to develop positive parent/ child interactions through play, reducing social isolation and support from qualified staff and include, in addition to the above:

Parenting groups/programmes

- Daisy Drop in
- Early years centres/family centres
- Teenage parents programme
- Mayfield community house
- Broxburn Family Centre
- Blackburn Family Centre

Level 3a – For families requiring additional support

These include families who may have additional needs due to, for example, disability, ethnic minority, or those beginning to experience difficulties in parenting. They provide opportunity for interventions specifically tailored to meet the needs of that particular group. For example: Mellow Parenting, Incredible Years, Surviving Teenagers, Getting Through the Day, Video Interaction Guidance, and family based work on behaviour management

Level 3b - Targeted interventions (high level of vulnerability)

These include interventions by child and adolescent mental health, group work programmes such as Mellow Parenting, Incredible Years, Surviving Teenagers and Getting Through The Day, programmes specifically for parents with addiction problems, and programmes for looked after children.

EVALUATION



West Lothian is using interventions that we know from research are proven to work. All programmes are evaluated using both participant and referrer feedback. For many programmes external measures are also used which have been shown to be most useful in the past. These include the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which measures the progress made towards raising self esteem, and the Eyberg Behaviour Inventory, which looks at the changes in frequency and intensity of behavioural problems. In addition, we are using the “Strengths And Difficulties Scale”. Measures are taken at the start and on completion of programmes, to measure progress made.

Some results have been audited by research assistants from Psychological Services, both clinical and educational.

An evaluation of the Getting Through The Day programme, undertaken by a trainee psychologist identified positive short term outcomes, but further evaluation is ongoing.

We intend continuing to use these measures in order to evaluate any new programmes, but will use any others that are user friendly and can be validated


TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT



Over the last few years, Parenting West Lothian has developed a programme of training, which can be accessed by any member of staff delivering parenting support. We are committed to continuing to deliver regular training opportunities, as we believe that all staff working in this area should be appropriately trained and well supported.

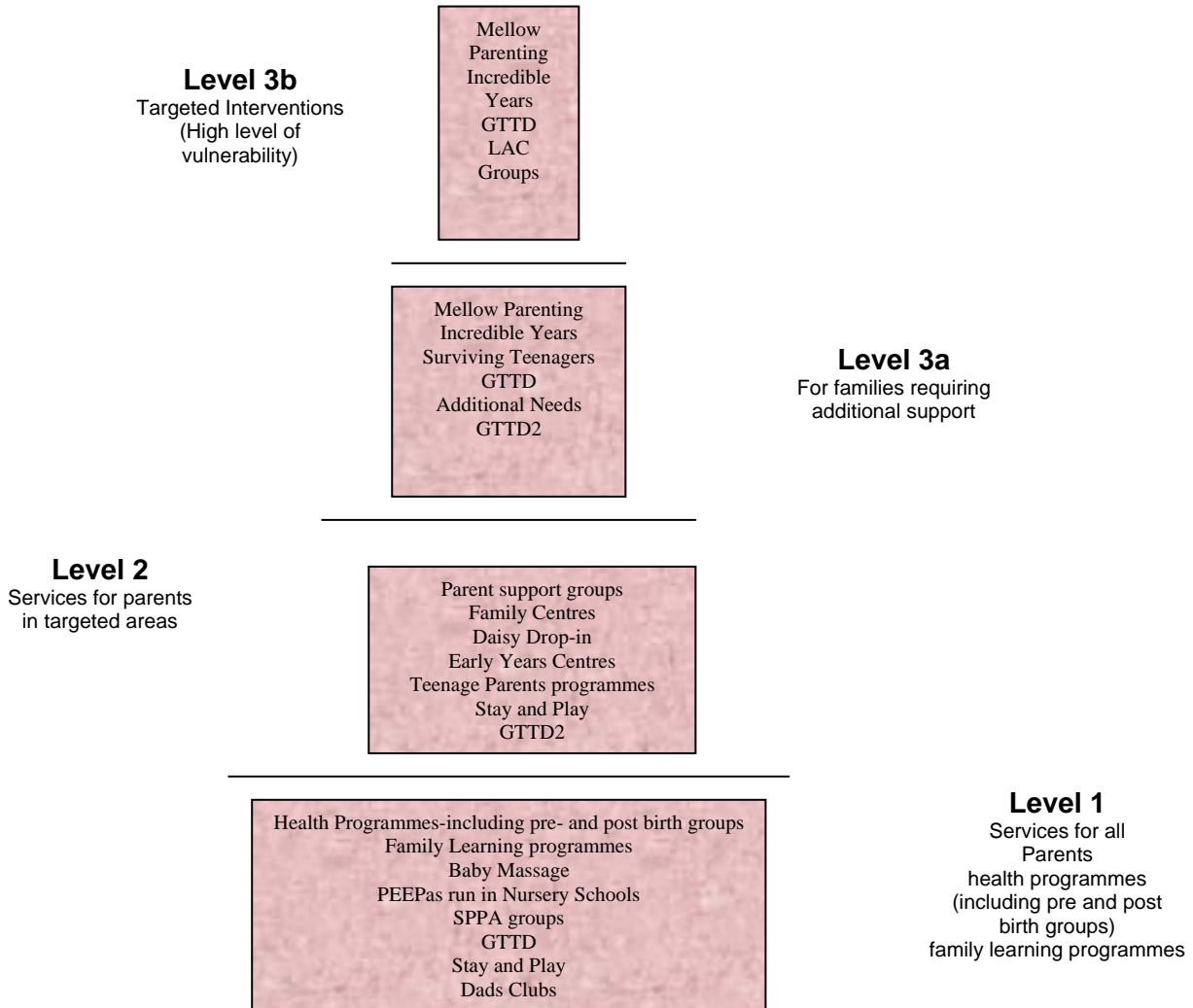
For the year 2009-2010 we will be able to develop training and new programmes due to the recruitment of a full time Parenting Co-ordinator, with funding received from the Government specifically to develop parenting supports.

CONCLUSION



West Lothian has taken a multi agency approach to the provision of parenting support services since 2005, with the establishment of Parenting West Lothian. Developments have included the creation of a website specifically for parenting in West Lothian, extensive staff training and consultation with parents. This strategy outlines the approach which has been and will continue to be taken, enhanced this year by the employment of a full time Parenting Co-ordinator. It also serves to underpin the continuing commitment to listening to parents and to providing a range of services, which help parents to ensure that children get the best start in life and are ready to succeed.

Tiered Intervention



Parenting West Lothian Steering Group



Chair:	Rosemary Howe, Group Manager Social Policy,
Administrator:	Beth Sime, Sure Start Administrator, Social Policy
Website Administrator:	Frank Love, Management Info. Services, Social Policy
	Ion Wyness, Senior Clinical Psychologist, St. Johns Hospital
	Janice MacDonald, Senior Educational Psychologist, Education
	Christine Robertson, Manager, Barnardos, West Lothian
	Helen Yewdall, Public Health Practitioner, CHCP
	John Rogers, Parenting Co-ordinator, Social Policy
	Ann Doyle, Early Intervention Officer, Education
	Kirsten Bland, Clinical Psychologist, St. Johns Hospital
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	Kevin Carter, Youth Justice Manager, Social Policy