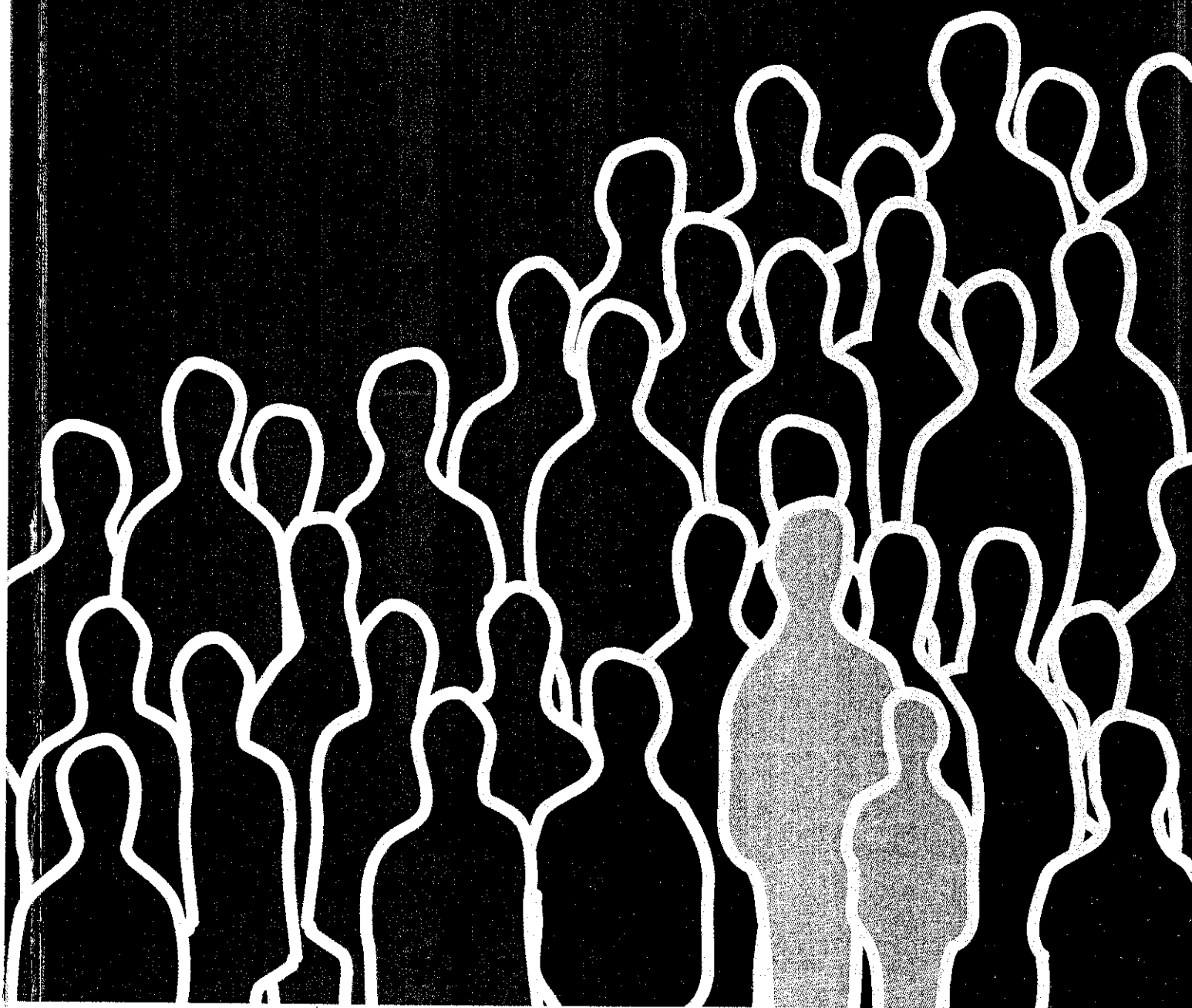


A STUDY OF PARENTING PROGRAMMES IN IRELAND

EXPLORATION OF NEEDS & CURRENT PROVISION



1994 INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF THE FAMILY



DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH



**REFERENCE
ONLY**

A STUDY OF PARENTING PROGRAMMES IN IRELAND

EXPLORATION OF NEEDS

AND

CURRENT PROVISION

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Published in 1995 by the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's in association with the Department of Health.

National Children's Resource Centre
Barnardo's
Christchurch Square
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Department of Health
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2

ISBN 1 898662 45 2

Typesetting:	Margaret Connor and Jennifer Rylands
Cover Design:	True Design Ltd, 11 Parliment Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2
Printing:	Printwell, Unit 6 North Richmond Street Industrial Estate North Richmond Street, Dublin 1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Study was supported by the Department of Health Child Care Policy Unit and the Health Promotion Unit together with the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's, with a representative from each forming the Steering Committee. This Committee comprised Madeleine Clarke, Child Care Manager, Barnardo's, Augusta McCabe, Social Work Adviser, Child Care Policy Unit, and Owen Metcalfe, Chief Education Officer, Health Promotion Unit.

The Co-ordinator of the Study was Jennifer Rylands who wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the following:-

- The Advisory Panel which proved to be an invaluable and enjoyable forum for discussion and contributions to the development of the study. (See Appendix 11.) Thank you to each member of the panel.
- A very special thank you goes to Suarla Fitzsimons, part-time research assistant. Her presence throughout, together with her commitment and enthusiasm, were important ingredients to the successful completion of the study.
- This study would not have been possible without the facilitators and parents who gave so willingly of their time to either complete the questionnaires or to be interviewed during the course of the study - a warm and grateful thank you to all of them.
- Thank you also to Julie Kelleher and Sorcha O'Toole who interviewed a number of the parents and to Claire Fitzsimons who helped with the transcriptions of the interviews.
- Angela Canavan and Julie Kelleher of the National Children's Resource Centre were responsible for the database and the Parenting Programme Materials section respectively - thank you to both of them for their support.
- Professor Sheila Greene, Trinity College contributed to the development of the questionnaire in its initial stage - thank you to her for her constructive comments. Another special thank you goes to Noreen Buckley who was responsible for the computer analysis of the data.
- And finally, a sincere thank you to Margaret Connor, Katie McEndoo and Elizabeth Keane for the typing of this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was jointly initiated by the Health Promotion Unit and the Child Care Policy Unit of the Department of Health and the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's, with a representative from each forming the steering committee.

The primary aim of the study was to ascertain the need for education/training/support for parents at community level and the need for training materials (Discussed in Section 3 - **Exploration of Needs**.) The second aim was to obtain information on parenting programmes identified during the course of the study (Discussed in Section 4 - **Current Provision**.) This information forms a **Database of parenting programmes** available to parents and organisations on request. (Reference Section 1)

An advisory panel consisting of representatives from both statutory and voluntary bodies was established to advise on key issues throughout the study .

A cross sectional survey method was used with two components:

1. Exploration of needs

- (i) A questionnaire was distributed to three hundred and eighty facilitators of parenting programmes to ascertain their perceptions of parents' needs.
- (ii) A semi-structured interview based on this questionnaire was conducted with a sample of eighty six parents to ascertain their perceptions of need.

2. Current Provision

- (i) The questionnaire distributed to facilitators contained a section to obtain information in the programme being offered by them.

The results from facilitators and parents responses indicate that there is a need for a variety of forms of parent education which should be available at local community level. With regard to materials, the results indicate that there is a need for materials that are appropriate to the Irish context and to different socio-economic groups. The main form of parent education identified in the course of the study was that of the structured parenting course for groups of parents, with the key players at a nationwide level being schools and local parish structures. There is some local co-ordination of programmes, however, much of the provision appears to occur in an adhoc manner, with little or no communication between courses. These and other findings are discussed and a number of recommendations are made on the basis of the issues arising.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In recent years the Health Promotion Unit and the Child Care Policy Unit of the Department of Health have been approached by increasing numbers of groups requesting funding for the development of parenting programmes and materials. This seemed to reflect an increasing interest in the area of parent education, yet it appeared that there was little if any connection between the different groups and agencies involved in the area. An overview of the materials currently being used was clearly lacking and without this decision-making and planning were hindered.

A similar conclusion was also reached within the National Children's Resource Centre, (N.C.R.C.) Barnardo's, Dublin which was officially opened in February 1993. The aim of the N.C.R.C. is to provide information and training relevant to the welfare of children in response to current issues and likely future developments in Child Care in Ireland. During its first year a significant number of requests for information were made by both parents and professionals concerning the availability of parenting programmes and training materials. It became increasingly apparent that this information was not available from any central location and was therefore extremely difficult to locate.

In discussions between the Health Promotion Unit, the Child Care Policy Unit and the National Children's Resource Centre, it became clear that what was required initially was a study which would ascertain what both facilitators and parents perceived to be the needs in relation to parent education and training materials. Within this study a corollary aim was to identify and collate information on parenting programmes and materials identified during the course of the study.

It was felt that the results would be of interest and value both to parents and also to professionals and policy makers concerned with developing appropriate services and support structures for families.

It is a particularly apt and appropriate study to have been conducted within the International Year of the Family which provided a welcome spotlight on family life in Ireland.

1.2 A BRIEF REVIEW OF PARENT EDUCATION

An intense interest in the processes and goals of child rearing is not peculiar to the present day. Concepts of childhood and of parenting have changed throughout the years with differing perceptions emerging both of children's needs and parental roles. However contemporary society is undergoing both rapid and major changes in social structures, religious and ethical beliefs, employment patterns, the roles of men and women, and in family structures. As a result, traditional, informal, 'taken-for granted' support structures and learning processes with regard to parenting can no longer be relied upon. It may be said that we now need to consciously recreate what was previously available within a more community oriented social structure.

One attempt at this conscious recreation is represented by the movement towards 'Parent Education' particularly at a community level. Pugh and De'Ath (1984) favour this broad term to cover a variety of forms and they offer a concise definition: *"a range of educational and supportive measures which help parents and prospective parents to understand themselves and their children and enhance the relationship between them"*.

The growth in demand for parent education in Ireland has not been formally documented and there is little available literature specific to the Irish context. Most of the literature on the subject that is currently available is either from England or the U.S.A. where parent education and training is well established. Many of the issues are however relevant to the development of parenting programmes in Ireland and are presented in this review for consideration.

Historically the roots of parent education are varied - they come from the fields of adult education and health education, the growing body of knowledge about child development and also the movement towards a view of the individual which emphasises competency and empowerment rather than problems (Kagan, 1984).

A number of issues have contributed to the development of this type of education and support for parents. These include:

- (i) increasing awareness that the major changes in social structures means that many of the traditional support systems are no longer in place or adequate.
- (ii) increasing knowledge and understanding of the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of children from the field of child psychology.
- (iii) growing recognition that some traditional child rearing practices may no longer be relevant in what is now a very different environment.
- (iv) a more explicit focus on the crucial role that parents play.

The delivery of parent education is varied and ranges from ongoing, informal support programmes such as mother and toddler groups to time limited, structured parenting courses, using materials and guidelines such as the S.T.E.P. programme (based on Adlerian Psychology). Other forms include home visiting schemes to new mothers, antenatal and postnatal groups and education for parenthood during the school years. Pugh, et al (1982) suggest that parent education is a continuous lifelong process during which different forms of education and support are appropriate at different times. They separate the different forms into three broad stages. These are (i) education about parenthood which takes place up to age 16; (ii) preparation for parenthood at the young adult stage before and during pregnancy, and (iii) support structures for parents from the time of the first child's birth and throughout the parenting cycle.

According to the available literature the goals and activities of parent education at a community level tend to cover a broad spectrum of content area. The focus is usually on one or more of the following areas: *information sharing, skill building, improving self awareness, problem sharing*. The relative weight given to these four areas will vary according to the group and its composition as well as the style or approach taken by the facilitator. The form of delivery also varies in terms of the emphasis on these areas and the intended audience (Fine, 1989). The audience most often consists of mothers as fathers do not currently participate in large numbers. Belsky (1990) suggests that this is a result of the traditional perceptions of men's parental roles, which places them in a peripheral rather than a central position.

Quality training materials provide a positive and tangible focus for a programme, for both facilitator and participant. While the content is potentially very broad, a survey of training manuals (Bernal and North, 1978) showed that the most usual content was directed towards learning skills and their practical application.

There is a growing body of evidence which points to the effectiveness of parenting programmes although the quality and type of research varies widely (Dembo et al, 1985). Evaluation of programmes in particular is not a well researched area, however, any available results indicate significant improvements in the attitudes and behaviour of both parents and children (Berrett, 1975, Gordon, 1980). Garabino (1980) points to the preventative value of programmes which by their nature help build informal networks and provide positive models of parenting. In general the research findings to date indicate that parents enjoy parenting programmes, each type of programme has its devotees, and many parents report that they are being helped. However, more empirical evidence is needed to support or refute these impressions (Fine, 1989).

Facilitators of parenting programmes have a wide variety of backgrounds and include teachers, nurses, counsellors and priests as well as parents themselves (Pugh, 1982)

Not everyone however is in favour of parenting programmes, in particular those that are run by 'an expert'. A number of researchers have questioned the intrusion of 'parenting experts' into the family on the grounds that the self confidence of parents may be diminished rather than enhanced and a pattern of dependence on professionals created. Parent education often makes the mistake of taking a prescriptive rather than a supportive approach (Harmon and Brim, 1980).

Instead a self-help, the peer support model is advocated, with the support of the skilled non-professional parent rather than 'the expert' (Gamble 1994). A model of parent education which is based on a group format acknowledges that guidance and support from peers is an essential ingredient of successful parenting (Barber, 1992). In fact some researchers have questioned whether the content of parent education has anything to do with the benefits obtained and suggest that it is perhaps the group process and support that is the most

effective component. Parents themselves report that the group discussions helped them understand and accept their feelings and provided a sense of fellowship and support from others going through the same experiences. Barber (1992) points out that parent education in groups reduces social isolation and promotes the self confidence of parents, increasing their ability to build more supportive social networks.

With regard to parent involvement, research has confirmed that whatever the content and form of provision in services for children and families, the close involvement of parents significantly enhances the benefits (Committee on Child Health Service, 1976). Fine (1989) points out that the more parents are made aware of programme goals and values, the better they will be able to choose the extent to which they wish to participate.

Parent training/support/education in the forms outlined are a visible phenomenon of both English and American society. The apparent growth both in demand and provision here in the Republic of Ireland suggest that a similar phenomenon is in evidence here also.

Gilligan (1991) refers to a number of programmes in Ireland including Parentcraft classes which are often offered by maternity hospitals to assist prospective parents and also to two other specific programmes, one offered within a child guidance setting and the other to parents of children with learning difficulties. However while the needs of parents for education or training may be identified within specialised services, the needs of parents at a broader, community level have not to date been formally considered in this country.

Furthermore, information regarding local availability, types and models of programmes offered and materials used remains difficult to obtain for both parents and professionals. In the absence of such information a coherent and co-ordinated approach to planning programmes remains impossible, and access for parents continues to be based on chance rather than need.

It is against this backdrop that the current study was undertaken.

1.3 AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The primary aim of the study is:

To ascertain the need for training/education/support for parents at local community level and the need for training materials, as perceived by parents and facilitators. (This aspect of the study is referred to as **Exploration of Needs.**)

A secondary aim is:

To obtain information on parenting programmes available at community level in the Republic of Ireland. This information would form a **Database of Parenting Programmes** available to individuals and organisations on request. (This aspect of the study is referred to as **Current Provision.**)

The results in the section **Current provision** are presented at a national level rather than in terms of individual health boards, specific geographical areas or specific single issue groups.

The aims do not include a consideration of the history or the development of parenting programmes in Ireland. Nor does this study attempt to evaluate programmes in any way. While each of these areas present valuable and interesting questions, they are however beyond the brief and scope of this current study.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Definitions:

For the purposes of this study the following definitions are used:

- i) Parent Training/Education/Support: These three terms are used interchangeably throughout. It is recognised that there are differences in definition and interpretation, however in acknowledgement of the variability of usage, the three terms are included.
- ii) Parenting Programme: a broad term covering the various forms of parent education.
- iii) Parenting course: is a structured and usually time limited course which aims to provide parents with support, information and/or skills in relation to childrearing.
- iv) Parent/s: Person/s in the role of primary caretaker of a child.
- v) Facilitator: Person directly involved in giving/presenting a programme.
- vi) Professional: Person with relevant professional qualification eg. psychologist, teacher, nurse and social worker.

2.2 The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, (see Appendix 11) was formed with one representative each from the Health Promotion Unit, the Child Care Policy Unit and the National Children's Resource Centre. Together with the co-ordinator of the study they met at regular intervals to discuss the development and progress of the study.

2.3 The Advisory Panel

In order to facilitate and promote nationwide involvement, an Advisory Panel was established (see Appendix 11) consisting of two nominees from each Health Board area, one representing a statutory body, the other representing a non-statutory body, and also a representative from the National Parent's Council. In establishing the panel, every effort was made to include a variety of backgrounds and interests, which would reflect the reality 'on-the-ground'. The Advisory Panel met on three occasions throughout the course of the study. The function of the panel was to support the co-ordinator in the development of a questionnaire and an interview schedule, in the identification of courses/programmes in their own area and to discuss and advise on key issues.

2. 4 Informing and Enlisting Support

Throughout the study interested individuals, together with relevant organisations and agencies were informed of the study and their support was requested (see Appendix 1).

2. 5 The Method

A cross sectional survey method was used within which there were two components, (i) Exploration of Needs and (ii) Current Provision.

(i) Exploration of Needs - (a) Facilitators and (b) Parents

(a) A postal survey using a specially designed questionnaire (Appendix 111 Questionnaire Part 2) was used to ascertain the needs for training and materials as perceived by facilitators.

(b) A semi-structured interview schedule was designed (Appendix 1V) to explore the needs as perceived by of a sample of parents.

(ii) Current Provision - Facilitators

A second postal questionnaire (Appendix 111 Questionnaire Part 1) was used concurrently to obtain information with regard to the programme being offered by the facilitator. It was intended that information derived from the questionnaire would form the Database of parenting programmes.

2.6 The Database of Parenting Programmes (Reference Section 1)

The criteria for inclusion in the database are as follows:

A programme which is:

- (i) aimed at offering parents support, information and/or skills in relation to childrearing.
- (ii) offered or delivered at community/local level. (This specifically excluded programmes within specialised services.)
- (iii) held/started during the time period June '93 - June '94.
- (iv) more than one meeting.

2.7 Target Population

(i) Exploration of Needs (a) Facilitators and (b) Parents

- (a) The target population for receipt of the questionnaire was all facilitators, currently

involved in facilitating parenting programmes, who were made known to the co-ordinator via the advisory panel and those informed of the study.

- (b) The sub sample of parents for interview was drawn from those who had attended one of the above parenting programmes. Both an urban and a rural sample were included. Dublin city was chosen as an urban area and Sligo, Carlow, Tipperary, Clare and Kildare were chosen as the rural areas.

(ii) **Current Provision - Facilitators**

The target population for receipt of the questionnaire was all facilitators, currently involved in facilitating parenting programmes, who were made known to the co-ordinator via the advisory panel and those informed of the study.

2.8. Development of the Questionnaire and Interview (Appendices III & IV)

i) **The Questionnaire, Parts I and II**

The questionnaire was designed in two parts, Part I relating to Current Provision and Part II relating to the Exploration of Needs.

Part 1 was designed to obtain information on the programme in terms of content, funding, providers and consumers, aims and objectives, structure, materials and methods used, evaluation, follow up and non-users. A total of 29 questions were used, which included a mixture of fixed choice and open ended questions.

Part 11 was designed to explore the need for training and materials as perceived by facilitators. A total of 11 questions were used and as in Part 1, included a mixture of fixed choice and open-ended questions.

ii) **The Parent Interview**

The format of the semi-structured interview for parents was closely based on Part II of the questionnaire, with the addition of some extra questions and slight modifications to Q2 and Q10.

Both the questionnaire and the interview were designed in consultation with the Advisory Panel.

2.9 The Pilot Stage

(i) The Questionnaire, Parts I and II

Parts I and II of the questionnaire were piloted using a sample of 15 facilitators. Seven (46%) questionnaires were returned. There were no changes made in terms of content. Some minor changes in layout were made in order to facilitate its completion. In order to increase the percentage of returned questionnaires, it was decided to include the use of a stamped addressed envelope and also to offer the incentive of inclusion in a draw for membership of the National Children's Resource Centre if the questionnaire was completed and returned by a specified date.

(ii) The Parent Interview

The interview was piloted with a sample of 10 parents. The wording of one question was changed as a result of the feedback. Question 2 was originally as follows: "What in your opinion are the most important skills and knowledge that parents need in order to enhance their children's development?". It was changed to: "In your opinion, what do parents need to know in order to enhance their children's development?". It was established during the pilot stage that the interviews lasted on average 30 -45 minutes.

2.10 The Procedure

(i) The Questionnaire, Parts I and II

A list of facilitators and programmes was drawn up from names and addresses received from the Advisory Panel and all those informed of the study. A letter of introduction, an information sheet about the study, the questionnaire and an s.a.e.were sent to all on the list. (Throughout the course of the study this list continued to be expanded and questionnaires sent as appropriate).

A total of 380 questionnaires were distributed.

(ii) The Parent Interview

As returned questionnaires were received a total of ten facilitators in the Dublin City area who had returned a completed questionnaire, were contacted by telephone. They

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were selected on the basis of availability and willingness to co-operate. They were asked to select up to four participants from either a previous or current programme. Participation by parents was determined by availability and proximity to the interview location. In a similar manner, fifteen facilitators from the rural areas were also contacted by telephone and their co-operation requested. A convenient date, time and local location was organised for the interviews. Interviewees were sent the information sheet and interview schedule before the interviews where possible. Where this was not possible, interviewees were given both before the interview took place. All interviews were tape recorded with the agreement of the interviewees. A total of 86 parents were interviewed, 35 from the urban area and 51 from the rural areas.

3. EXPLORATION OF NEEDS

3.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The main findings from this section are as follows:

- * There is a need for parent education/training/support.
- * A number of related reasons were given for this need. These include the changes in society which have led to isolation and lack of support for parents; a belief that there is a need to learn alternative methods of parenting in a changing society, and a belief that parenting is not a natural skill.
- * A variety of forms of parent education need to be available at local community level and should be available at all stages of parenting, particularly the earlier stages.
- * Parents point to the value of group discussion and peer support in an informal, local setting.
- * Parents with relevant training are considered by both parents and facilitators to be the most appropriate to facilitate parent education.
- * Facilitators believe that there is a need for materials that are appropriate in the Irish context and that are relevant to different socio-economic groups. Parents identified a need for materials in the form of video tapes.
- * In terms of content, communication skills and child development were identified as the preferred topics for the development of materials by both parents and facilitators.
- * Personal development should be included as a module in parenting courses according to both parents and facilitators.
- * Both parents and facilitators agree that there are parents who may benefit but who do

not attend. The main reasons they suggested for this were: a lack of confidence, a lack of interest, practical reasons such as no transport or creche facilities, and insufficient advertising.

3.2 RESULTS

Return rate of questionnaires

A total of 380 questionnaires with stamped addressed envelopes were sent to facilitators. A total of 186 were returned which represents a 49% return rate. This is considered an above average response to a postal questionnaire. Of those returned 24 (6%) were returned uncompleted. A total of 162 questionnaires (Part 11) were used in the analysis of the results of this section.

Response rate for interviews

A total of 86 parents were interviewed. All interviews were used in the analysis of results.

Data Analysis

On receipt of the completed questionnaires the open ended questions were analysed, categorised and coded on the basis of content by two raters who consulted throughout the process. Fixed choice questions were coded from the questionnaire.

The interviews which were taped were transcribed and then analysed in terms of content. Open ended and fixed choice questions were coded as above.

Frequency distributions were prepared for each item and the Applemac Statview package was used for the data analysis.

Presentation of the results

Results are presented in tabular form under the following headings.

A.The PROFILE OF (i) FACILITATORS AND (ii) PARENTS

B.The NEED FOR TRAINING EDUCATION/SUPPORT FOR PARENTS.

C.The NEED FOR TRAINING MATERIALS.

D.The COURSE CONTENT.

The results from facilitators and parents are presented concurrently where appropriate (A = Facilitators and B = Parents.)

A. The PROFILE OF (i) FACILITATORS AND (ii) PARENTS

(i) Facilitator's Profile in terms of Training and/or Profession. (Q.4 Questionnaire Part 1)

Table 1a: Facilitator's Training and/or Profession			
Total number of facilitators:	Relevant Profession: (see Table 1b)		Relevant Training: (see Table 1c)
350	Yes: 39% (136)	of these >	63% (86)described training
	No: 61% (214)	of these >	78% (168)described training

Table 1b : Relevant Profession			Table 1c: Relevant Training	
Total number of Professions	136		Total number of Training	254
Teacher	42.6%		Leadership training	36.6%
Nurse	14.2%		Family Caring Trust	25.5%
Speech Therapist	11.0%		Counselling	12.9%
Psychologist	7.3%		Family/Pastoral Ministry	9%
Social Worker	5.8%		* Hanen Method	5.5%
Antenatal/breast feeding	2.9%		Personal Development	2.3%
Counsellor/therapist	2.2%		Group Facilitation	3.1%
Community Worker	.7%		Marriage Guidance Counselling	6.2%
Doctor	.7%		Attended parenting programme	6.2%
Other	9.5%		Adult education	6.2%

* The Hanen method is a family focused approach to language intervention with young children, used usually by speech therapists.

* Please note that throughout the numerical presentation of results, percentages are rounded off to the nearest decimal point

(ii) Profile of Parents

A total of eighty six (86) parents were interviewed. Eighty five (85) are mothers and one (1) is a father. 60% were from a rural area and 40% from an urban area. 93% are married and 7% are single or separated. Each parent has an average of 3.3 children. Table 2 which follows represents the distribution of the parent sample by occupation, based on census categories, and Table 3 presents the distribution of children in each age group.

Table 2: Distribution of the parent sample, by occupation	
Total number of interviewees	86
Farmers	5
Higher professional	4
Lower professional	10
Self employed and Manager	4
Salaried Employees	5
Non manual	15
Skilled manual	16
Semi-skilled	8
Housewife	8
Unemployed	10
Trainee	1

Table 3: Distribution of children in each age group	
Total number of children	289
0 - 5 years old	65
6 - 11 years old	102
12 - 18 years old	78
18+	44

B: THE NEED FOR TRAINING/EDUCATION/SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

(Q.1a,Q.1b, Q.3, Q.4, Q.5, Q.6 - Questionnaire Part 11)

Q.1a Do you believe there is a need for training/education/support for parents, in relation to childrearing?

Table 4a: Is there a need for training/education/support?			
A. Facilitators		B Parents	
Total number of respondents	160	Total number of interviewees	86
Yes	100%	Yes	100%

100% of both facilitators and parents answered 'yes' to this question.

Q.1b Please give at least one reason for your answers.

Table 4b: - The need for training/education/support - the reasons			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	153	Total number of interviewees	86
Total number of responses	226	Total number of responses	181
1. Isolation/lack of support	20.6%	1. Isolation/lack of support	39.2%
2. Changes in society/family structure	17.2%	2. Parenting not a natural skill	22.6%
3. Stress on to-day's families	18.3%	3. The need to learn alternative methods	16.0%
4. Parenting not a natural skill	13.1%	4. Changes in society	9.9%
5. Alternative methods	15.8%	5. Complexities of parenting	7.1%
6. Parent's lack of confidence	5.6%	6. Lack of confidence	5.5%
7. Need identified by parents	5.2%		
8. Role of prevention	3.7%		

Similar reasons were identified by both parents and facilitators with isolation and lack of support being the reasons most frequently given by both.

One parent said that *"these days there is no family support especially in new areas"*.

Another described how it feels like *"it's just a leap in the dark (after leaving the hospital) and you're left to find out by your mistakes,... on your own... Its nerve wracking."*, *"People don't have the back up they used to have maybe from extended family and that."*

Other reasons offered by parents were:- *'Parenting is not a natural skill'* - *"We're not taught how to deal with children, you're expected to know just because you have a wedding ring on your finger"*. *"It's a totally different life and you're just sort of fired into it with no preparation and no knowledge"*.

The need to learn alternative methods: - *" People refer back to their childhood, but things have changed"*; *"nowadays there are so many more pitfalls and distractions"*.

The complexities of Parenting: - *"It's such an enormous task"*; *"It's a great responsibility; Parents these days have the most difficult task of any parents"*.

A lack of confidence - *"You often wonder if you're doing the right thing; You always have doubts about what you're doing with them"*.

Each of these reasons were associated with the changes in society as experienced by those parents who were interviewed. Changes described were the loss of extended family; children maturing earlier; more stressful urban lifestyles; the rise in unemployment; the use of drugs; the changing roles of men and women. These changes were also described by facilitators who also pointed to the value of parent training in terms of its preventive value.

Q.3 Which of the following forms of training/education/support for parents are most urgently needed? Please rank from 1 - 6, with 1 being the "most urgently needed" and 6 the "least urgently needed".

Table 5: Forms of training/education/support			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	159	Total number of Interviewees	86

(i) Structured courses on parenting available to all parents		i) Structured courses on parenting available to all parents	
Ranking	%	Ranking	%
1	43.3	1	26.7
2	17.6	2	19.7
3	15.7	3	16.2
total 1,2,3	76.6	total 1, 2,3	62.6
4	11.3	4	26.7
5	9.4	5	9.3
6	1.2	6	1.1
not included	1.2	not included	0

ii)Preparation for Parenthood as part of school curriculum			ii) Preparation for Parenthood as part of school curriculum	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	27		1	31.3
2	17.6		2	9.3
3	8.1		3	10.4
total 1, 2, 3	52.7		total 1, 2, 3	51.0
4	15.0		4	12.7
5	19.4		5	22.0
6	8.1		6	3.4
not included	4.4		not included	10.4

iii) Preparation for Parenthood in maternity hospital			iii) Preparation for Parenthood in maternity Hospital	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	9.4		1	12.7
2	13.2		2	23.2
3	13.8		3	9.3
total 1, 2, 3	36.4		total 1, 2 3	45.2
4	20.1		4	13.8
5	30.1		5	23.2
6	7.4		6	1.1
not included	5.6		not included	12.7

iv) Home Visiting scheme to new mothers			iv) Home Visiting scheme to new mothers	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	12.5		1	12.7
2	22.0		2	23.2
3	30.8		3	32.5
total 1, 2 3	65.2		total 1, 2, 3	68.4
4	16.3		4	10.9
5	13.8		5	8.1
6	.6		6	0
not included	3.7		not included	5.8

v) Informal support networks			v) Informal support networks	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	10.0		1	12.7
2	23.8		2	22.0
3	23.8		3	23.2
total 1, 2, 3	57.6		total 1, 2 3	57.9
4	28.9		4	18.6
5	9.4		5	10.7
6	.6		6	0
not included	3.1		not included	2.2

In terms of the form of training/education and support, facilitators gave the highest percentage of no. 1 rankings (43.3%), to structured courses available to all parents, while parents gave the highest percentage of no. 1 rankings (31.3%) to preparation for parenthood as part of the school curriculum. This latter seems to reflect a desire on the part of parents to commence education for parenting as early as possible. Parents showed some ambivalence about structured parenting courses with the most frequently endorsed rankings being both no. 1 (26.7%) and no. 4 (26.7%). This appears to reflect an acknowledgement of the need for such courses/programmes, together with the opinion was that they were more appropriate for parents of older children. Facilitators also recognise the need for preparation of parenthood as part of the school curriculum, with 27% giving a no 1 ranking.

In totalling the top three rankings 1, 2 and 3, for each form of provision it can be clearly seen that each is highly regarded by both facilitators and parents with each total of these rankings (apart from preparation in maternity hospitals) receiving over half of the endorsements. The totals for 'preparation in maternity hospitals' are 36.4% for facilitators and 45.2% for parents. With this analysis, home visiting schemes are the most popular form of provision for parents (68.4%) followed by structured courses on parenting (62.6%) and informal support networks (57.9%). These are also the three most favoured by facilitators, however with structured courses being considered the most urgently needed (96.6%) followed by home visiting schemes (65.2%) and informal support networks (57.6%).

Q.4 In your opinion at what stage in a person's life should training/support for parenthood take place? Please rank from 1 - 5 with 1 being "most important" and 5 being "least important".

Table 6: Stages in life for training/support/education				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	159		Total number of respondents	86

i) As part of school curriculum			i) As part of school curriculum	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	49.0		1	33.7
2	5.6		2	8.1
total 1, 2	54.6		total 1, 2	41.8
3	4.4		3	8.1
4	10.0		4	10.4
5	27.0		5	30.2
not included	3.7		6	0
			not included	8.1

ii) During Pregnancy			ii)During Pregnancy	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	24.5		1	30.2
2	39.6		2	24.4
total 1, 2	64.1		total 1, 2	54.6
3	5.6		3	5.8
4	11.3		4	19.7
5	15.0		5	12.7
not included	3.7		6	1.1

(iii)When parent's children are aged 0 - 4			iii)When parent's children aged 0-4	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	28.9		1	24.4
2	27.0		2	36.0
total 1, 2	55.9		total 1, 2	60.4
3	35.8		3	25.5
4	3.1		4	3.4
5	3.1		5	4.6
not included			6	1.1

(iv) When parent's children are aged 5 - 12			(iv) When parent's children are aged 5 - 12	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	6.2		1	8.1
2	17.6		2	15.1
total 1, 2	23.8		total 1, 2	23.2
3	29.5		3	30.2
4	43.3		4	34.8
5	1.8		5	5.8
not included	1.2		6	0
			not included	0

v) When parents children are aged 12 - 18			v) When parent's children are aged 12 - 18	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	3.1		1	5.8
2	5.6		2	11.6
total 1, 2	8.7		total 1, 2	17.4
3	20.7		3	24.4
4	23.8		4	25.5
5	43.9		5	1.1
not included	2.5		6	0

Combining the rankings 1 and 2, the stage when their children are aged 0 - 4 is considered by parents to be the most appropriate stage with during pregnancy being the most appropriate stage according to facilitators.

Q.5 In the following list, who do you believe is the most appropriate person to facilitate support/training for parents? Please rank from 1 - 6 with 1 being the "most appropriate" and 6 being the "least appropriate".

Table 7: Most appropriate person to facilitate				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	152		Total number of interviewees	86

(i) Social Worker			(i) Social Worker	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	2.6		1	3.4
2	9.2		2	24.4
total 1, 2	11.8		total 1, 2	37.8
3	32.2		3	23.2
4	25.6		4	24.4
5	20.3		5	13.9
6	1.9		6	0
not included	7.8		not included	11.6

ii) Public Health Nurse			ii) Public Health Nurse	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	7.2		1	6.9
2	25.0		2	24.4
total 1, 2	29.2		total 1, 2	31.3
3	21.0		3	29.0
4	17.1		4	10.7
5	11.8		5	12.7
6	.6		6	0
not included	8.5		not included	6.9

iii) Teacher			iii) Teacher	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	2.6		1	3.4
2	18.4		2	20.9
total 1, 2	21.0		total 1, 2	24.1
3	17.1		3	23.2
4	23.0		4	22.9
5	22.3		5	13.9
6			6	22.0
not included	11.1		not included	17.4

iv) Parent with relevant training			iv) Parent with relevant training	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	78.4		1	70.9
2	10.5		2	12.7
total 1, 2	88.9		total 1, 2	83.6
3	5.2		3	6.9
4	1.9		4	0
5	1.9		5	5.8
6			6	0
not included	1.9		not included	0

v) Psychologist			v)Psychologist	
Ranking	%		Ranking	%
1	10.4		1	12.2
2	22.2		2	22.9
total 1, 2	32.6		total 1, 2	35.1
3	9.1		3	9.3
4	16.3		4	12.7
5	28.1		5	25.5
6	5.8		6	8.1
not included	7.8		not included	4.6

The most appropriate person to facilitate parenting programmes/courses is clearly considered by both parents and facilitators to be a parent with relevant training. The rankings given by both for professionals, are similar apart from social workers who were given a higher percentage of rankings 1 and 2 by parents.

Q.6 Apart from a course which is 'part of school curriculum', where should training/support for parenthood take place?

Table 8: Preferred location			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	155	Total Number	86
Local Health Centre	72.2%	Local health centre	78%
Home	72.9%	School	75.5%
School building	63.2%	Home	54%
Hospital	5.9%	Hospital	36%
Other	52.9%	Other	36%

The local health centre is a popular location for both parents and facilitators with the school being the next most popular for parents and the home being the second choice of facilitators. For "other" what was most often described by both parents and facilitators was a local, neutral, comfortable venue.

Q.13 (parents)/Q.28 (facilitators) In your opinion, are there parents who would benefit from an existing parenting course/programme but who do not attend?

Table 9a: Non-attending parents				
A.Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	105		Total number of respondents	86
yes	100%		yes	100%

Both parents and facilitators agree that there are parents who would benefit from but who do not attend an existing programme.

Q.13b (parents)/Q.29(facilitators) If yes, please outline some of the possible reasons they do not attend.

Table 9b Reasons for non-attendance				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	105		Total number of interviewees	86
Total number of responses	232		Total number of responses	134
1. Lack of confidence/trust	33.6%		1. Lack of confidence/trust	29%
2. <i>Not interested</i>	19%		2. Not interested	23.8%
3. practical reasons	18.5%		3. Practical reasons	17.9%
4. Unaware of availability/value/content	12%		4. Unaware of availability/value/content	17.1%
5. Course not relevant	8.6%	5. Course not relevant	6.7%	
6. Stigma in attending	7%	6. Stigma in attending	5.2%	

A third of the facilitators and almost a third of the parents give lack of confidence as one of the main reasons that some parents do not attend. However of the other reasons, lack of interest, practical reasons, lack of awareness, the lack of relevance and the stigma associated with attending are each important according to both facilitators and parents.

C. The TRAINING MATERIALS

(Q. 8, Q.9, Questionnaire Part 11)

Q.8 Of the training materials used, which did you find most useful? (parents) Do the training materials and resources you are currently using meet the needs of the course/programme you are involved in?(facilitators)

Table : 10 Materials used				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	120		Total number of interviewees	86
Family Caring Trust Materials were used by	84%		Attended a course based on Family Caring Trust Materials	93 %

A range of materials were used by facilitators. However, the most frequently noted by both parents and facilitators were the various materials of the Family Caring Trust. For a list of other materials used please see Appendix V.

Q.9 In your opinion, what other training materials needs to be developed within an Irish context? (eg. Irish made video on language development, resource pack on communication skills for parents and their children, book "Children's Development made easy etc.)

Table 11a: Materials needed by topic			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	52	Total number of respondents	70
1. Communication Skills	44%	1. Communication skills	38.3
2. Children's development	28%	2. Children's Development made easy.	27.2
3. Language Development	23%	3. Difficult behaviour	19.2
4. Ordinary Parenting Problems	7%	4. Language Development	8.8
5. Parents and teenagers	5%	5. Sex Education for teenagers	8.6
6. Training for Facilitators	5%	6. Health topics	3.0
7. Family Life Cycle	5%	7. Stress relief/management	3.0

Table 11b: Materials needed by type			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	52	Total number of respondents	70
Materials for the Irish Context	42.3%	Videos	67.0%
Class appropriate materials	38.4%	Books	21.3%
Video	36%	Resource Packs	16.8%
Materials for specific needs	25%	No material needed	12.3%
		Other	11.2%
		Tapes	5.6%

In terms of type of material, for parents, video is clearly a popular choice followed by books and resource packs.

D. The COURSE CONTENT

(Q.2, Q.7a, Q.7b, Q10, - Questionnaire Part 11 and Q.11, Q.12, (Parents only))

Q.2 What in your opinion are the most important skills and knowledge that parents need in order to enhance their children's development?.

Table 12a: Skills				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	154		Total number of interviewees	86
Listening General Communication Positive discipline General relationship skills Encouragement Love and patience Assertiveness & Self confidence Problem solving Basic Child Care skills Stimulation Instilling independence and confidence			Communication Behaviour Management Relationship skills Listening skills Protecting children Positive discipline Encouragement Stimulation	

Table 12b: Knowledge			
A. Facilitators			B. Parents
Total number of responses	236		Total number of responses
Understanding of child behaviour and needs Self awareness Where to access support and help Information on sex education; peer influence; drugs Practical knowledge Parenting styles			Children's development needs and behaviour Adolescence Information on: Drugs Sex Education School Problem Behaviours Where to access help

A wide range of skills and knowledge were listed by both parents and facilitators with a high degree of overlap between them when categorised. The most commonly mentioned are noted above.

Q.7a In your opinion, should a parenting course/programme contain specific modules on personal development for parents?

Table 13a: Personal Development				
A. Facilitators			B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	154		Total number of interviewees	86
Yes	94.2%		Yes	96%
No	5.8%		No	4%

Q.7b Please give reasons for your answers (parents only)

Table 13b: Reasons for including Personal Development (parents)	
Total number of interviews	86
Total number of responses	84
1. Develops assertiveness & confidence	50%
2. Develops self awareness	26.1%
3. Maintains individuality of parents	17.8%
4. Encourages emotional maturity	8.3%

Personal development is seen as a positive addition within a parenting programme. In particular its role in the development of assertiveness and confidence is given as a reason by half of the parents.

Q.10 In your role as facilitator, what do you believe is the most important message to communicate to parents in relation to childrearing?(facilitators)

On the course/programme, what was the most important message that was given to you as a parent, in relation to childrearing?(parents)

Table 14: The most important message to communicate to parents			
A. Facilitators		B. Parents	
Total number of respondents	152	Total number of respondents	86
1.The importance of communication, i.e. listening talking, discussing 2.Empower parents to believe in themselves - they are the experts 3.Praise and encouragement of the child 4 Respect for child as a person 5.The importance of stimulation for child 6.Spend quality time with child 7.Support is available 8.How to discipline positively		1. The importance of communication, i.e. listening, talking, discussing 2. Reassurance and support 3. Praise and encouragement of the child 4. Positive discipline 5. The child as an individual	

The most frequently noted messages are listed above.

Q.11 Which part of the course did you find most useful? (parents only)

Table 15: Most useful part of the course	
Total number of interviewees	86
Total number of responses	102
1. The Group discussion - sharing of experience, support, social aspect	54%
2. Alternative approaches learned	21.5%
3. The materials used	10.7%
4. The facilitator	5%
5. Other	9%

The group discussion was considered the most useful by over half of the group.

Q.12 What other aspects of childrearing would you have liked to have been included?(parents only)

Table 16: Any other aspects of childrearing	
Total number of interviewees	86
Total number of responses	90
1. Nothing else	43.3%
2. Sex education and abuse	23.3%
3. Adolescence	12.21%
4. Specific problems	11.1%
5. Other	10%

Nearly half of the participants were satisfied with the content as it was. Information on sex education and abuse was required by about a quarter of the sample. Specific issues eg adolescence and specific problems were identified by another quarter of the sample. "Other" included a wide range of topics including bullying, how to play, education, and personal development.

3. 3 DISCUSSION - EXPLORATION OF NEEDS

As already noted the results in the section are based on the responses of 162 facilitators who returned completed questionnaires and 86 parents who were interviewed. While the facilitators sample represents a wide range of professionals and non professionals, volunteers and paid staff, the parent sample consisted of 85 women and one man. Therefore the needs as expressed by parents are primarily those of mothers.

The need for parent education/training/support

All facilitators and parents agree that there is a need for parent education. The reasons they present reflect the perceptions already noted by researchers in England and the US where parent education has been the focus of research for some years. The changing structures in society in particular those which impact directly on family life have led in Ireland also to an erosion of the traditional support structures of the extended family and the local community. This in turn has led to increasing isolation and consequent lack of support for parents and they no longer have the same access to the traditional bank of folk wisdom and support which has sustained them in previous generations. There is also the perception that some of the more traditional child rearing methods may no longer be appropriate to current lifestyles, and consequently parents feel a need to learn alternative approaches. The confidence of parents has been diminished in this process of transition and change and they experience more acutely the stresses inherent in the parenting role. Facilitators also point to the value of parent education and support in terms of the prevention of more serious issues at a later stage.

When asked which term they preferred, ie training, education or support, the majority of parents chose the term 'support'. Through discussion the main reason offered was that this term suggested a more equal relationship while 'education' and 'training' carried echoes of being told what to do rather than being supported and encouraged in the doing. This is further underlined by the choice of parent with relevant training as the preferred facilitator, and also the view expressed by over half the parents that the group discussion is of most value in a parenting course.

Perhaps the most striking and indeed encouraging observation is the similarity in the opinions of facilitators and parents with regard to how, when, where and by whom parent education should be provided. Each of the different forms suggested was considered to be of value with home visiting schemes, structured courses in parenting and informal support networks being the three more favoured. This would appear to reflect the opinion that a variety of education and support is required with different forms appropriate at different stages in the life cycle of the parent or parent-to-be. A recurring theme expressed in particular by parents was that education and support at the early stages of parenthood was the most effective. This is reiterated by facilitators in their recognition of the value of parenting programmes in terms of prevention.

This theme continued when interviewees and respondents were asked to consider at what stage parent education should be offered. Preparation for parenthood as part of the school curriculum is regarded with some ambivalence. The underlying attitude appears to be that while it is desirable to commence parent education at an early stage, it is questionable how relevant this education is before one is actually a parent. 'During pregnancy' is considered the most appropriate stage by facilitators to start and the stage when 'children are aged 0-4', by parents. However neither group consider that this is sufficient but rather that parenting is a continuous process and that support and education is desirable throughout the cycle. New challenges emerge with each developmental stage and so parents and their children continue the learning process throughout the life cycle.

The local health centre, the home and the local school were the preferred venues identified by both facilitators and parents. This reflects the need to consciously recreate at a local community level the learning opportunities and support structures which were previously more easily available and accessible via the extended family and small communities.

A parent with relevant training was clearly identified as the most appropriate person to facilitate parent education by both facilitators and parents. A parent, it was felt, would have a real understanding of the role of a parent, however would also need training to

undertake the role of the facilitator. Social workers and psychologists were viewed by parents in particular as being appropriate when more serious problems were experienced, or as a support to a parent facilitator. Teachers and public health nurses were also seen to have a role particularly because of their positions in the community within which their contact with parents was in a normal context. In the choice of parents with training as the preferred facilitators, rather than professionals, a clear statement is made - parents need not so much to be directed what to do in rearing children and how to do it, but rather support in doing it. The direct involvement of professionals at community level appears to run the risk of pathologising what is essentially normal behaviour. Their skills and knowledge may be more effectively utilised in the back-up support of local facilitators and support structures in terms of training, materials and other resources.

Parents who do not attend

While it has been acknowledged by the sample in this study that there is a need for parent education there is also a perception that there are parents who would benefit from participation but who do not attend. The reasons suggested by parents and facilitators are similar and all of these stated have implications for the planning of courses. Lack of confidence, particularly in a group setting, which is given as the main reason, would suggest that group support and education may not be an appropriate form of provision for all parents. Alternatives such as home visiting schemes or more informal group structures also need to be considered in the planning of parent education. Practical reasons such as lack of transport or no creche facilities was seen to deter potential participants. The stigma sometimes associated with attending was also noted, since attending a parenting programme can be perceived as an admission of failure or an inability to cope. A further reason suggested is that courses may not be relevant to the audience being targeted either in terms of materials, content or delivery. Each of these reasons are relevant and all need to be considered at the planning stage of programmes.

The need for training materials

Over a third of the parents suggested the use of video material in preference to books or tapes. However others felt that no other materials were necessary. They pointed out that the most valuable resource is a skilled facilitator who will guide and support group

discussion.

Facilitators noted more specific needs in relation to the development of materials. The most frequent suggestions in terms of topic were communication skills for parents and children's development, in particular language development. Apart from these topics, it was also pointed out that there was a pressing need for materials specifically relevant to an Irish context and also materials relevant to different socio-economic groups.

Course content

Communication skills and an understanding of children's development, behaviour and needs, are presented by parents and facilitators as some of the more important skills and knowledge that parents need in order to enhance their children's development.

Others noted by both are positive discipline, general relationship skills, how to encourage, where to access help and support and specific information on sex education, drugs. The need for information on sex education and abuse was also mentioned by almost a quarter of the parents' sample when asked what other aspects of childrearing they would have liked to have been included in the course. The majority however were satisfied with the content, which indicates that their needs for education and support were met at that time within the programme they attended.

The importance of communication between parent and child is again reiterated in the messages that facilitators wish to give to parents. It will be encouraging for facilitators to note that most of the messages they intended to communicate were in fact the messages that parents received and valued. As well as the importance of communication, these were: reassurance, praise of the child, positive discipline methods and respect for the child as an individual.

The most useful part of the course according to well over half the parents' sample is the group discussion. This is a particularly significant finding which supports the view that the content may be of less importance than the process of attending, and underlines the need for a skilled of a facilitator who will encourage participation and group support.

This clearly has implications both for the design of parenting programme and the training of facilitators.

Personal development as a specific topic or module on parenting programmes should be included, according to the majority of both parents and facilitators. Parents put forward several reasons for the view all of which pointed to their understanding that their own personal development was ultimately beneficial to their children through the improvement of the parent-child relationship. Parents also considered that such a module would help develop their confidence as parents through the development of skills such as assertiveness. Thus the inclusion of a personal development module was regarded as one solution to the increasing lack of confidence as experienced by parents.

3. 4 THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED - EXPLORATION OF NEEDS

- The need for parent education is acknowledged by both parents and facilitators. Peer support and discussion is felt by parents to be of particular value. The challenge is how to plan for and provide a variety of forms of parent support and education throughout all appropriate stages in a person's life and in particular the earlier stages in parenting.
- The trained parent in the role of facilitator is considered by both parents and facilitators to be the most appropriate person to facilitate parent education at community level. The training needs of parents in this role must be considered. Specific skills will be needed in the area of small group facilitation and in the use of training materials in order to provide effective facilitation. The support of parents in this role also needs to be considered in the form of local co-ordination and access to practical resources such as materials.
- While there are some excellent materials available, they are not always appropriate in the Irish context or relevant to different socio-economic groups. Furthermore, it is difficult for facilitators and those planning programmes to locate and access all the materials that are available. These factors serve to hinder and frustrate the development of programmes.
- Potential participants in parenting programmes may be dissuaded from attending because of perceived implications of failure or inadequacy. In order to encourage participation, parent education needs to be positively promoted in terms of content and value of such programmes, and practical facilities such as creche be provided.
- Personal development as a course module is considered by both parents and facilitators to be a positive addition to parenting programmes. This is an area that needs to be explored both in terms of an appropriate stage for inclusion in parenting programmes and also with regard to the development of appropriate materials.

4. CURRENT PROVISION

4.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The main findings from this section are as follows:

- * The main form of parent education at community level that was identified in this study is that of the structured parenting course for groups of parents (90%).
- * The main reason for the programme being offered is to assist and support parents in their role.
- * Over a third of the participants join themselves and almost a quarter of courses are requested by groups.
- * Two other forms of parent education were identified - antenatal and postnatal support groups (8%) and home visiting schemes (2%).
- * The key players in terms of provision at a nationwide level are schools and local parish structures. (This may not reflect the picture in specific geographical areas.)
- * Local co-ordination is limited to certain areas with much of the provision occurring in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner with little or no communication between courses and programmes.
- * The majority of the facilitators are volunteers and almost two thirds are non-professionals in the context of parenting courses.
- * Almost three quarters of these described some form of training, the most frequent being Leadership training, Family Caring Trust training and Counselling.
- * Teachers and nurses together make up almost three quarters of those facilitators with a relevant profession.

- * Participants are most often women and come from a range of socio-economic groups.
- * Programmes are most often directed at parents in general, with limited provision identified within this study for parents of children 0 - 5 or first time parents.
- * Almost a third of the funding comes from participant's fees with the other sources being described as government grants, local parish or school funds.
- * The cost for participants ranges from free to over £20.
- * Structured resource packs are the most frequently used materials. (All materials identified during the study are listed in Reference Section 2)
- * Some form of evaluation is included in almost three quarters of the programmes.
- * Some form of follow up is available in just over half of the programmes.

4.2 RESULTS - CURRENT PROVISION

Return Rate of questionnaires

A total of 380 questionnaires with stamped addressed envelopes were sent. A total of 186 were returned which represents a 49% return rate. This is considered an above average response to a postal questionnaire. Of those returned, 24 (6%) were returned uncompleted. 52 (14%) did not fulfil the criteria for inclusion in this section on Current Provision. (Of these 53% were courses held before or after the time period June '93 - June '94; 35% were from specialised services and 12% were from Northern Ireland.) A total of 110 (29%) of the questionnaires (Part 1) were used in the analysis.

Data Analysis

On receipt of the completed questionnaires open ended questions were analysed, categorised and coded on the basis of content, by two raters who consulted throughout the process. Closed questions were coded from the questionnaire. Frequency distributions were then prepared for each item. The Applemac Statview package was used for the data analysis.

Presentation of the Results

The results are presented in tabular form under the following headings:

- A. *The FACILITATORS***
- B. *The PARTICIPANTS***
- C. *The COURSE***
 - i) How and why the course is offered.*
 - ii) Practical details i.e. how many, how often, cost, hours, size of group.*
 - iii) Funding of course.*
 - iv) Connections with other organisations.*
 - v) Aims, content, model.*
 - vi) Materials, resources, methods used.*
 - vii) Evaluation and follow up.*

A.The FACILITATORS

(Q.4, Q.6 - Questionnaire Part 1)

Q.4 Facilitator's profession/qualifications (if appropriate) and/or relevant training and experience.

Table: 17a Facilitators - Training and/or Profession		
Total number of Facilitators:	Relevant Professions: (See Table 1b)	Relevant Training: (See Table 1c)
280	Yes: 35.7% (101) - of these > No: 64.3% (119) - of these >	52% (53) described training 72% (131)described training

Table: 17b Relevant Profession		Table: 17c Relevant Training	
Total number of relevant professions:	101	Total number for training:	184
Teacher	53%	Leadership training	25.4%
Nurse	20%	Family Caring Trust (F.C.T.)	11.8%
Social Worker	6.9%	Counselling	9.6%
Psychologist	4.9%	Family/Pastoral Ministry	6.0%
Antenatal/Breast feeding	1.9%	Personal development	5.7%
Counsellor/therapist	.9%	Group facilitation	4.3%
Community Worker	.9%	Marriage Guidance counselling	1.4%
Family Therapist	.9%	Attended parenting programme	1.4%
Doctor	.9%	Adult Education	.7%
Other	7.9%		

A total of 280 facilitators answered this question. Just over a third describe a relevant profession, with just under two thirds therefore described in this context as non-professionals. The nursing and teaching professions together represent almost three quarters of the professional qualifications described. With regard to training, Leadership training, Family Caring Trust training, Counselling and Family Ministry/Pastoral Ministry/Christian Family Studies together make up over half of the training described.

10.3% of the total number of facilitators were either a priest or a nun and 11.7% gave information that they were parents.

* Please note that throughout the numerical presentation of results, percentages are rounded off to the nearest decimal point and therefore totals do not always add exactly to 100%.

Q.6 In your role as a facilitator are you i) *self employed* ii) *volunteer* iii) *staff member*?

Table 18: In the role of Facilitator	
Total number of respondents	214
Volunteer	73.4%
Staff Member	18.2%
Self-employed	8.4%

Nearly three quarters of those who replied to this question are volunteers, almost a fifth are staff members and almost a tenth self-employed.

B. *The PARTICIPANTS*

(Q.9, Q.10, Q.11, Q.12)

Q.9 What is the target group ? i) *Parents of children aged 0 - 5*, ii) *Parents of children aged 6 - 12*, (iii) *Parents of children aged 13 - 18*, iv) *Parents in general*, v) *First time parents only*, vi) *other*.

Table: 19 Target Group	
Total number of respondents	108
General	41%
More than 1	29%
Parents of children 13 - 18	11.1%
Parents of children 6 - 12	6.5%
Parents of children 0 - 5	4.6%
First time parents	3.7%
Other	2.7%

The most common target group is parents in general with parents of children aged 13 - 18 the second most common target group. Almost a third describe more than one target group. First time parents and parents of children 0-5 are the least common target groups.

Q.10 Is this course attended by: *i) Women only, ii) men only, iii) half/half, iv) majority women, v) majority men*

Table 20a: Participants by sex	
Total number of respondents	107
Attended by a majority of women	63.5%
Attended by women only	31.8%
Attended by mix of men and women	3.7%
Attended by a majority of men	1.0%

The majority of courses were attended by women only or a majority of women. One only was attended by a majority of men.

Q.11 Are the participants from an area that is: *i) mainly working class, ii) mainly middle-class, iii) mixed?*

Table 20b: Participants by area	
Total number of respondents	106
From a mixed working class and middle class area	57.5%
From a working class area	23.6%
From a middle class area	18.9%

Over half of the participants come from an area that is mixed i.e. both working class and middle class. Almost a quarter are described as being from a mainly working class area and almost a fifth from a mainly middle class area.

Q.12 How do the participants join? i) referred by professional ii) self referred iii) already part of a group iv) other

Table 21: How participants join	
Total number of respondents	110
Self-referred	36.4%
More than 1	25.5%
other	24.5%
Already part of a group	10.0%
Referred by professional	3.6%

Over a third of participants are self referred, a tenth were already part of a group and a minority are referred by professionals. 'Other' refers to local advertising, personal contact by the facilitator and invited to attend by the school or parish.

3. The COURSE

(Q.7, Q.8, Q.5, Q.15, Q.16, Q.17,
Q.14, Q.13, Q.19, Q.20, Q.21, Q.22,
Q.23a,b,c, Q.24, Q.25, Q.26, Q.27)

Q.7 Was this course: i) initiated by you, ii) in response to a request from an already established group iii) in response to a need identified by a professional, iv) other, please specify?

Table 22: Course initiated by	
Total number of respondents	108
The facilitator	23.1%
More than 1	23.1%
Request by group	22.2%
Need identified by professional	19.4%
Other	12.0%

Almost a quarter of the courses were initiated by the facilitator and just over a fifth were requested by a group. In just less than a fifth of the courses, the need was identified by a professional.

Q.8 What were the reasons behind this course/programme being offered

Table 23: Reasons for course being offered:	
Total number of respondents	100
Reasons	
1. To assist and support via	66%
- group/community support	27.8%
- developing skills	17.2%
- information on children	5.2%
- empowering & building confidence	6.7%
- specific focus i.e.lone parents, family relationships, antenatal, teenagers	9.4%
2. Requested by parents	12.6%
3. Need identified by professionals	12.6%
4. To develop links between organisation and parents	6.7%
5. To train other facilitators	1.4%

The most frequent reason presented (almost two thirds) was to offer assistance and support.

Q.5 How many parenting courses have you facilitated between June '93 & June '92.

Table 24: Number of Courses from June'93 - June '94	
Total number of respondents	108
Total number of courses	410
80% (88) repeated	1 - 4 times : 148
19% (19) repeated	5 - 14 times: 162
1% (1) repeated	100 times: 100

The majority of courses were repeated between one and four times.

Q.16 What is the total number of hours for this course? (i) *under 10 hrs*, (ii) *10-20 hrs*, (iii) *over 20 hrs*

Table 25: Total number of hours	
Total number of respondents	108
Ten-twenty hours	80.5%
Over twenty hours	11.1%
Under ten hours	7.4%
Open	.9%

Over three quarters of the programmes are between 10 and 20 hours.

Q.17 What is the size of the group? (i) 0 - 5 (ii) 6-15 (iii) 16+

Table 26: Size of group	
Total number of respondents	109
Six - fifteen participants	89.9%
Zero-five participants	4.6%
Over sixteen	3.7%
Variety	1.8%

The most common size group is between 6 and 15 participants.

Q.18 What is the total cost of the course/programme?

(i) Free, ii) Under £5, iii) Between £5 - £19, iv) over £20

Table 27: Cost of the Course	
Number of Respondents	109
Between £5 - £19	34.8%
Under £5	31.1%
Free	26.6%
Over £20	7.3%
Fee Negotiable	37.0%

Over half of the courses are either free or cost under £5. The fee was negotiable in over a third of the course.

Q.14 How is this course funded? (i) Government/health board grant, ii) other grant, please specify, iii) participants fees, iv) voluntary body, v) other, please specify.

Table 28: Funding of course	
Total number of respondents	109
Participants fees	30.2%
More than one source/funding	22.9%
Other (ii) and (v)	21.9%
Government grant	15.5%
Voluntary body	9.1%

Participants fees fund nearly a third of the courses, with government grants (usually a Dept of Social Welfare grant) accounting for the funding of over a tenth of the courses and voluntary bodies accounting for under a tenth of the funding. 'Other' in this instance was a variety of funding sources including local parish and school funds.

Q.13 Which service/organisation (if any) is this connected to?

Table 29: Course connections	
Total number of respondents	102
Primary or secondary schools	27.1%
Local parish/diocese	26.1%
Non statutory/voluntary organisation	12.1%
Other	9.4%
Health Board	7.5%
Individual (no organisation/service connection)	7.5%
Community level group (not associated with parish)	5.6%
Maternity hospital	2.8%
V.E.C.	1.8%

Contacts with schools (including V.E.C.) and the local parish, represent well over half of the connections described. Under a tenth are connected with Health Board services, with just over a tenth connected with a non-statutory organisation.

Q.20 Please give an outline of the content of the course/programme.

Table 30: Content of Course	
Total number of respondents	107
Total number of responses	166
1. Family Caring Trust (or elements of)	51 %
2. Communication	40 %
3. Child Development	39 %
4. S.T.E.P. (or elements of)	18 %
5. Teenager issues	15 %
6. Other	46 %
7. Antenatal/breastfeeding	8 %

Family Caring Trust materials were used to describe content by a number of respondents. Over half of those who replied gave such a response. Communication and Child Development were noted by about four tenths of the respondents. 'Other', included a wide variety of subjects including nutrition, bullying, the rights of the child, parents needs, discipline, and play.

Q.21 Is the course based on a particular model/theory/philosophy?

Table 31a: Model/theory/philosophy	
Total Number	110
Yes	74 %
No/don't know/not answered	26 %

Q.22 If yes, please describe

Table 31b: Type of Model/Philosophy/theory	
Total number of respondents	82 (74% of total)
Total number of responses	100
1. Family Caring Trust	51%
2. Adlerian Psychology	15%
3. Empowerment of parents	11%
4. Christian values	8%
5. Communication	5%
6. Other	4%

The main model used in over half the courses/programmes in this sample is derived from Family Caring Trust materials. 'Other' in this instance refers to the model described as "parenting as a skill" and "the uniqueness of each child and family".

Q.23a Materials used in planning course/programme content: (eg Open University "The Preschool Child".) Please give title of material and author, where possible.

Q.23b Materials used during course (eg video by Penelope Leach "The Growing Child",) Please give title of material and author where possible.

Q.23c Were any other resources used, apart from the above? If yes, please describe

Table : 32 Materials used	
A. Facilitators	
Total number of respondents	120
Family Caring Trust Materials were used by	84%

The materials by Family Caring Trust were used by over four fifths of those who responded. A variety of other materials were also used. See Reference Section 2 for a full listing of all materials.

Q.24 Methods used: i) *formal presentation/lecture* ii) *small group discussion*, iii) *large group discussion*, iv) *roleplay*, v) *video presentation*, vi) *audio cassette presentation*, vii) *other, please specify*.

Table 33: Methods used	
Total number of respondents	110
Small group discussion	91%
Audio cassette presentation	62%
Role play	59%
Large group discussion	41%
Formal presentation/lecture	39%
Video	11%
Other	7%

A variety of methods are used. The small group discussion is used by majority of programmes, with audio cassette presentation being used by over two thirds and roleplay being used by just under two thirds.

Q.25 Do you carry out any evaluation procedures?

Table 34a: Evaluation	
Total number of respondents	109
Yes	76.0%
No	24.0%

Just over three quarters of programmes include an evaluation procedure.

Q.26 If yes, please describe.

Table 34b: Type of evaluation	
Total number of respondents	79 (72% of total)
1. Written evaluation form completed by participants	51.8% (37.2% of total)
2. Verbal feedback from participants	45.5% (32.7% of total)
3. Evaluation by facilitator	7.5% (1.8% of total)

Less than three quarters answered this question. Of these just over a half of the total sample use written evaluation with just under a third using verbal feedback.

Q.27 Is there any follow-up for participants? If so please describe

Table 35a: Follow up?	
Total number of respondents	109
Yes	53%
No	47%

Table 35b: Type of follow up	
Total number of respondents	61 (55% of total)
1. Other courses available	57.3% (31.8% of total)
2. One/occasional follow up meeting	22.9% (12.7% of total)
3. Support group available	19.6% (10.9% of total)

Slightly over a half responded to this question - of these less than a third offer other courses. Just over a tenth offer a once off meeting, and just over a tenth offer a support group.

Please note that the results from Q.28 and Q.29 are presented in the section Exploration of Needs.

4.3 DISCUSSION - CURRENT PROVISION

With regard to the interpretation of the results of this section it should be noted that they refer to a nationwide overview rather than the specific provision in different geographical area. Therefore, these results present a composite picture which may not reflect the structure or provision in specific local areas.

It is also important to note that while a 49% return rate of the questionnaire is considered to be an above average return rate in terms of general research it clearly means that the present results do not represent a fully comprehensive nationwide picture. However, as this is the first study of its nature in the Republic of Ireland, the results must be viewed as the most comprehensive picture currently available and as such provide a substantial amount of information for consideration.

The first finding of significance is that the structured parenting course represents 90% of those programmes identified in the study and the results which follow are therefore mainly applicable to this form of parenting programme.

The picture that emerges is of a dynamic 'grassroots' level social phenomenon which has developed as a response to parents' need for support in the parenting role. An approximate though conservative estimate of those who attended parenting courses during the period June '93 - June '94, is in the region of 8,000 (based on 410 courses x an average of 10 participants x 2, given a 49% return rate). While there is no information available on participation in previous years, it is evident that the concept of parent education in the form of parenting courses is a significant feature of contemporary Irish society and is likely to continue to be so in future years. With the gradual decline of traditional support structures in many areas, some local communities appear to have begun to create an alternative in the form of the parenting course.

Two other forms of parenting programme were identified within this study - home visiting schemes to new mothers (2%) and antenatal or postnatal support groups (8%).

The Facilitators

With regard to those who facilitate programmes, almost three quarters are volunteers and almost two thirds of these in a non-professional capacity in this context. Nearly two thirds described some form of relevant training. These facts bear witness to the high degree of commitment and energy at the level of local community, and point to a move away from direct professional/expert involvement in parenting courses at community level. Many view this as a welcome move as it is felt that such professional involvement can at times lead to the pathologising of what are essentially normal features of the parenting role and parent and child relationship. It has already been noted that the confidence of parents may actually be diminished, rather than enhanced by reliance on 'expert' help.

Over a third of facilitators described a relevant profession with teachers making up over half of this group, and nurses another fifth. With local school emerging as one of the key players in parent education in the country it is not altogether surprising that teachers have such a high representation in terms of facilitators.

The Participants

Participants are almost exclusively women with nearly a third of the programmes identified in this study attended by women only and almost two thirds attended by a majority of women. This raises the question of the involvement and participation of fathers. It appears that within the context of parenting programmes, the primary caretaker of children continues to be viewed as the mother. This result is not likely to surprise those who are working in the area of parent education and the stark figures will serve as confirmation. While the many sociological and historical reasons for this fact are beyond the brief of this study, there are clear implications for those planning courses in terms of the design, the focus and the relevance of the programme for men as parents.

Participants come from a range of socio-economic groups indicating that participation is not confined to any particular class or section of community. The need for support clearly does not discriminate in terms of socio-economic group.

The Course

The primary reason for programmes being offered is described as the need for assistance and support for parents in their childrearing roles. This need is recognised by those who are organising and facilitating programmes and also by parents themselves. Evidence for this comes from the fact that over a third of the participants initiate their own participation and almost a quarter of courses are requested by groups. So parents are actively seeking support in the form of parenting courses.

Almost a third of programmes are funded through participants' fees which range from under £5 to over £20 in some instances. Other sources of funding include Dept of Social Welfare grants to women's groups, V.E.C.grants and local parish grants. There appears to be little if any regular or statutory funding.

Parent education for parents of preschool children and first time parents is less available than that for the parents of older children or parents in general. This results reflect the high proportion of structured parenting courses within this study and the fact that to date these courses appear to have been directed at the parents of older children. This is in direct contrast to the needs expressed by parents and facilitators who both indicate that it should commence during the earlier stages of parenthood in order to better serve the interests of both children and parents.

At a nationwide level the local school and the local parish structure (which are likely to be connected) are the key players in terms of provision. Over half the programmes in this study are connected with primary, secondary schools, adult education programmes of the Vocational Educational Committee(V.E.C.), the local parish, or a non parish community level group. (This may not reflect the picture in specific geographical areas where there may be other and more prominent key players). Other programmes are provided by voluntary organisations, health boards and individuals. The connections between the parenting programme and other organisations or local services may be viewed from four different perspectives (i) *the venue*, ii) *the funding*, iii) *the initiation of the course* iv) *the facilitator*. However, the information from this study does not allow for such a detailed analysis.

With regard to the length of the course, over 80% last between 10 and 20 hours. This reflects the design of the average structured parenting course which usually consists of eight weekly meetings of two hours each.

The most popular method used is the small group discussion and audio-cassette presentation. Other methods that are used include roleplay, large group discussion, formal presentation/lecture and video. This is an encouraging feature since it has already been noted that for many parents, the group discussion is one of the most important components.

Evaluation of the course is included in just under three quarters of the courses with written evaluation at the end of the course being the preferred form. This is also an encouraging result since increasingly evaluation is considered an essential ingredient in any programmes or services offered to parents and their children. Results from an evaluation can be used to clarify whether the aims were achieved and can serve to refine the content by pinpointing strengths and weaknesses.

Follow up for participants after the course is available in just over half of the courses/programmes, with other courses such as personal development or other parenting courses being the most common option available. This raises the question of ongoing support and whether this can be maintained if necessary following participation in a programme.

The Materials

The materials of Family Caring Trust (see Reference Section 3) are one of the main resources used by facilitators. They are used in over half the programmes identified in this study. These materials in turn define the content, the model, the theory, some of the methods and the length of the course. Another parent training programme which is used by almost a fifth of the sample, is S.T.E.P., Systematic Training in Effective Parenting, which is based on Adlerian Psychology. In terms of content, communication skills and child development are the most often included, as are also issues to do with the teenage years. A variety of other materials are used including books, resource packs and

a limited use of video (See Reference Section 2).

Communication and Co-ordination

While this study did not set out to establish the extent of networking between courses, discussions with the advisory panel and others, and feedback from facilitators all point to lack of information about the existence of other programmes and facilitators, and also about the availability of materials. It is interesting to note that the very issues that parenting programmes seek to address i.e. isolation and lack of support, lack of information, development of skills, are some of the issues that affect the programmes themselves.

From returned questionnaires a number of programmes were identified which are co-ordinated at local level (see Reference Section 4). The remainder appear to be offered on an apparently ad hoc basis, throughout the country. While this approach has resulted in many courses being made available in specific areas, the ad hoc nature means that access by parents to programmes is often based on chance rather than need.

A more co-ordinated approach to the delivery of parenting programmes together with a networking facility for facilitators would serve to maximise the exchange of ideas and information, help raise the profile of parent education, and make more programmes more accessible to parents.

4.4 THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED - CURRENT PROVISION

- The most common form of parent education that has been identified within this study is that of the structured, time-limited group parenting course. While it clearly plays an important role, this form may not necessarily be appropriate to all parents or at all stages in parenthood.
- The participants in parenting programmes and courses are most likely to be mothers, with a minimal level of participation by fathers. Their needs as parents do not appear to be adequately addressed by the forms of parenting programmes identified. Further research will need to be undertaken to focus specifically on the needs of fathers in this context.
- The context of the programmes is an issue about which the study has raised more questions than it has answered. While the key players have been identified at a nationwide level as the school and the local parish structures, their relationship to the programme is unclear i.e. whether the connection is at the level of venue, provision of facilitators, funding, or initiation of the course. The connections between the different organisations and agencies offering parent education also remains unclear.
- Support and education for parents of preschool children and first time parents within this sample is limited. It is generally acknowledged that the parenting of preschool children and parenting for the first time are among the more stressful parenting experiences and therefore more provision and support needs to be directed towards these groups.
- With regard to materials, the most frequently used for the structured parenting course are those of the Family Caring Trust. There is however little generally available information about other training materials in parent education.
- Funding is always an important and significant issue. The nature, structure and

mode of delivery of funds needs to be considered. Clearly with such a high proportion of volunteers involved as facilitators, this grassroots movement relies largely on goodwill and community energy. Funding is an issue which also inhibits the broadening of the materials base, through purchasing or through the development of materials.

- The current adhoc and piecemeal approach to parent education militates against co-communication and participation. Co-ordination and networking both at local and national level would serve to bring together interested parties including both the "consumer" and the "provider". There are of course dangers and limitations to a highly co-ordinated and homogenised approach, not least the message that there is only one effective way to parent. While acknowledging this limitation, there are considerable advantages to co-ordination - local gaps in services can be more easily identified, the needs of specific groups can be more easily defined and participation can be more actively encouraged. A number of co-ordinated initiatives already operate successfully throughout the country (see Reference Section 4) and may serve to act as models to other initiatives. A network of those interested in the provision of parenting programmes would serve as a vehicle for the sharing of ideas and information, and would also serve as a forum within which to raise the pertinent issues.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this study was to ascertain the need for parent education and training materials. The results clearly indicate that there is such a need. With regard to parent education parents and facilitators responses point out that a variety of parenting programmes are necessary and in particular for the earlier stages of parenting. It seems that the many and rapid changes in the structure and values of our society have resulted in parents feeling deskilled in their role and isolated from traditional support structures. Consequently a programme which facilitates discussion and peer support is particularly valued by parents. Many parents are actively seeking such support as is evidenced by the growing demand experienced by such organisations as the National Children's Resource Centre, and facilitators on the ground.

The provision that was identified in the course of this study does not currently adequately match the needs identified in this study. The structured parenting course is the most commonly available programme, however while these courses meet the needs of many parents in the community they do not at present address specifically the needs of parents with young children. Furthermore although a group format with the opportunity for discussion and support is highly valued by most parents, for some attendance in a group may inhibit rather than encourage their participation. So a variety of forms of parenting programmes are necessary which will be available to parents at all stages and will offer education and support in a form which is appropriate to their needs. These may include home visiting schemes, informal support structures such as mother and toddler groups, Toy Libraries, as well as antenatal and postnatal support groups.

Structured parenting courses are most often facilitated by a parent. This is an encouraging and welcome development in the light of the responses of both parents and facilitators which indicate a clear preference that the facilitator should be a parent with relevant training, with the professionals in a supporting rather than a central role. This points to what many consider to be a welcome shift away from dependence on the expert and towards an acknowledgement of parent's own skills and expertise which can be

developed through self help peer support groups.

Training issues however need to be considered. At present there are a limited number of opportunities for parents to obtain the training they will need to undertake the role of facilitator. With what is likely to be a growing demand there will need to be further opportunities to obtain the relevant training throughout the country.

With regard to materials, there are a number of resource packs, books and videos available (see Reference Section 3). However facilitators have pointed out that it is difficult to access a variety of materials and also that some are not relevant to either an Irish audience or to different socio-economic groups. Materials are a valuable tool in terms of providing a structure for most forms of parenting programmes and consequently the content must be relevant to those to whom it is directed.

With regard to content, it appears that generally the content in currently available programmes appears to match parents' requirements. Personal development however is an area that is not included at present. In the light of the results of this study which indicate that the majority of both parents and facilitators favour the inclusion of personal development in parenting programmes, this is an area which needs further exploration.

The key players have been noted as schools and local parish structures, although this may not reflect the picture in specific geographical areas. In local areas there is often informal co-operation with the various organisations involved in parenting programmes. These include the adult education section of the V.E.C., Health Boards, mainly through Health Education Departments, local community or women's groups and voluntary organisations, as well as schools and local parish structures noted above. Co-operation may take the form of funding, providing venues, joint identification of needs or programme design.

However communication between programmes and information about programmes at a broader national level remains limited. This clearly militates against the sharing of ideas and exchange of information and re-enforces the isolation experienced by some

programmes.

Evaluation is a feature of about two thirds of the programmes which is a welcome finding in the study. By its nature, evaluation of parenting programmes is difficult to define and articulate and remains an area that merits further research which would help to identify appropriate and practical methods of evaluation.

The definition of parent must be considered in the light of the results. In the context of participation in parenting programmes, parent usually means 'mother'. If parent education in Ireland is to have any relevance or meaning for fathers, their needs must be identified and specifically addressed.

In relation to the results in the section **Current Provision**, it is obvious that one hundred and one programmes do not represent a fully comprehensive picture of current provision. However the composite picture derived from these results is the most detailed available to date and will serve as an excellent foundation to expand the database and to source further information of particular relevance to specific areas or target groups.

Implications for the design and planning of Parenting Programmes

The results explored in this study are of direct relevance for those involved in the planning and design of programmes. While few would argue that the consumer, in this case the parent, should be involved in defining his/her needs, this part of the process is not always included in planning. What is of particular interest and importance in this study therefore are the views of the parents.

It is not the intention of this writer to define what should or should not be included in a parenting programme. It has already been pointed out that there are a variety of forms of such programmes which are appropriate at different stages or with different parents. What follows are a number of questions to consider in the light of the results for those involved in planning and designing programmes at a community level.

- * What are the needs of the parents in this particular community and how can this be determined?

- * What form of parenting programme will be the most suitable?
- * How can parents be encouraged to undertake the role of facilitator?
- * What will their training needs be for this role?
- * What resources are available in terms of support for local facilitators?
- * How can peer support and discussion be encouraged within the programme.
- * Are there quality materials available that are relevant to the parents - in particular materials in the form of video?
- * How can personal development be included in the programme?
- * What venues are available that are convenient, informal, comfortable and neutral?
- * What practical facilities are there - transport, creche, tea and coffee making equipment?
- * How can parents be informed of the content, and practical details such as venue, cost, time?
- * How can the programme be evaluated?
- * Will the programme be time limited or ongoing? What follow up programmes will be available?
- * How can the needs of men as parents be addressed within the programme.

Further Research

As with most research each study undertaken inevitably raises further questions and this study is no exception. Areas that require further research include: the specific needs of fathers in parent education and the type and level of connections at local level between parenting programme and the different organisations involved in offering programmes - this information needs to be drawn together at local rather than nationwide level.

The design of this study did not allow for the consideration of the needs of specific groups such as lone parents, travellers, teenage parents. Identification of their needs will require further research which would aid the planning and design of parenting programmes directed at their needs.

Less formal support structures such as mother and toddler groups and support groups associated with community playgroups are not easily accessible via a postal questionnaire

and therefore have not featured in this study. Research undertaken at a local geographical level would be more suitable to identify this valuable form of parent support.

Recommendations

Arising from consideration of the results and issues raised, the following specific recommendations are made :

- *That a working group be established with representatives from the existing structures which facilitate parent education. The group should include representatives from schools, diocesan and parish structures and voluntary organisations together with relevant statutory organisations. Their brief would be to consider and plan a co-ordinated approach to the provision of the various community forms of parent education and support which are required throughout the life cycle of the parent.*
- *That a national network be established to create links between those interested in parent support and education. This would further facilitate the exchange of information and sharing of views and would provide a forum within which to raise and discuss relevant issues. The establishment of this network should be undertaken by the working group recommended above.*
- *That co-ordination of parenting courses be initiated and supported at a regional level, in areas where this does not currently exist. This would involve appointing regional co-ordinators whose role would be to identify local needs, design the appropriate programmes in partnership with parents and to co-ordinate the delivery and evaluation of the programmes.*
- *That training programmes for parents (and materials for same) to enable them to undertake the role as facilitator should be further developed and extended to all areas. On-going support for parents in the role of local*

community facilitators could be offered by the regional co-ordinator.

- *That materials for parent education are developed, which are specifically relevant to the Irish context and to different socio-economic groups be developed, including materials in the form of videos should be developed. Specific courses on personal development within the context of parenting programme should also be developed.*
- *That the library and information service of the National Children's Resource Centre (N.C.R.C.) be expanded to include all available materials and resources for parent education. The relevant database information currently held by the NCRC should be transferred to local information or resource centres for easier local access.*
- *That the needs of fathers in relation to childrearing are considered. In general the programmes currently available do not seem appear to meet their needs. What may be necessary is a parenting programme designed specifically to address issues relevant to men. Further research will need to be undertaken to identify both father's needs and the issues that are of relevance to them.*
- *That education and support be further developed and provided for parents of preschool children and first time parents. While some such provision already exists, this needs to be extended to adequately address the needs of these specific groups.*
- *That parenting programmes be promoted positively in terms of content and value. The use of the media should be considered for such promotion. This would serve to inform parents of the value, content and availability of programmes.*
- *That resources, including funding, be specifically directed to this*

important area of provision. Funding is particularly required for the promotion of parent education, training of facilitators, the development of materials, different forms of provision, and further research to identify the needs of specific groups or areas, and structures to facilitate co-ordination and communication..

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- Pugh, G. (Ed) (1980).** Preparation for Parenthood. National Children's Bureau, Great Britain: King Thorne and Stace (Litho) Ltd.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF THOSE INFORMED OF THE STUDY

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONTACTED

Adult Education Organisers, V.E.C.
A.O.N.T.A.S., National Association of Adult Education
Child Care Development Officers (or equivalent), Health Boards
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council
Combat Poverty Agency
Community Care Programme Managers, Health Boards
Community Information Centres, nationwide
Community Mothers Programme, E.H.B., Dublin
Community Worker's Co-operative
Council for the Status of Women
Cura
Diocesan and parish contacts
Dept. of Social Welfare
Family Caring Trust
Health Promotion Offices
Home School Liaison Scheme, Department of Education
Irish Preschool and Playgroups Association
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Lifestart
Maternity Hospitals, nationwide
Munster Parent and Teacher Network
Psychologists, members of Psychological Society of Ireland
National College of Industrial Relations
National Parents Council
National Schools, nationwide
Senior Social Workers, Community Care Programme, Health Boards
National Youth Council
National Social Services Board
Parents as Teachers Network, Belfast
Parenting Unit, E.H.B., Dublin
Senior Speech and Language Therapists, Health Boards
Superintendent P.H.N.'s, Health Boards

APPENDIX II

THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND THE ADVISORY PANEL

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Madeleine Clarke
Child Care Manager
National Children's Resource Centre
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8

Augusta McCabe
Social Worker Advisor
Child Care Policy Unit
Dept of Health
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2

Owen Metcalfe
Chief Education Officer
Health Promotion Unit
Dept of Health
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2

THE ADVISORY PANEL

1.	E.H.B. Area	Marilyn Rowntree Head Social Worker Eastern Health Board Old County Rd Crumlin Dublin 12	Jennifer Rylands Clinical Psychologist Barnardo's Christchurch Sq.D8 (Co-ordinator of Study)
2.	N.E.H.B. Area	Pat Donnelly Child Care Development Officer Lisdarn Cavan	Catherine O'Daly Family Support Worker I.S.P.C.C. Community Service Centre 15 Clanbrassil St Dundalk
3.	S.E.H.B. Area	Joe Smyth Senior Social Worker County Clinic Grogan's Road Wexford	Alan Delahunty Psychologist St Brigid's Family & Community Centre 37 Lr. Yellow Rd Waterford
4.	S.H.B. Area	Mr Aidan Warner Community Worker Abbeycourt House George's Quay Cork	Ms Joan Hussey Teacher Adult Education V.E.C. Aishling Laurel Court Oakpark Tralee, Co.Kerry
5.	M.W.H.B. Area	Mary Keane Ger Crowley, Acting Head Social Worker St Camillus Hospital Shelbourne Rd Limerick	Marie Stuart Community Worker Clarecare Community Office Town Centre Shannon Co.Clare

6.	W.H.B. Area	Kevin Fitzpatrick . Principal Psychologist St Anne's Children's Centre Taylor's Hill Galway	Jenny Barnard I.P.P.A. Cloona Westport Co.Mayo
7.	N.W.H.B. Area	Des Keaney Community Worker Markievicz House Sligo	Emily Whelan Front Street Ardagh Co.Donegal
8.	M.H.B. Area	Siobhan Keogh Child Care Development Officer County Clinic Arden Road Tullamore Co.Offaly	Sr Finbar Community Worker Family Centre Parish Centre Bishopgate Street Mullingar Co.Westmeath
9.		Marion Lyon Deirdre Shortall National Parent's Council Hogan House Hogan Place Dublin	

APPENDIX III

INFORMATION SHEET AND QUESTIONNAIRE PART 1 AND PART 11

A study of Parenting Programmes in Ireland - Current Provision and Exploration of Needs.

A nationwide study of parenting programmes in Ireland is being conducted by Barnardo's and the Department of Health. The particular sections involved are the National Children's Resource Centre of Barnardo's, with the Health Promotion Unit and the Child Care Policy Unit of the Department of Health.

The aim of the study is to ascertain the need for training/courses and training materials for parents, which will enable them to promote the healthy development of their children.

This information will be of considerable interest and value to both parents and professionals working with parents in a wide variety of contexts. It will help to inform decision making in relation to planning training and in the development of appropriate materials. It will serve to facilitate a further sharing of information and will also help to avoid the risk of duplication.

The overall aim includes establishing a database of information on parenting courses available throughout the country, which will give a broad overview of current provision. This information will be obtained through a questionnaire sent direct to courses. The primary aim, i.e. the analysis of needs for courses and materials will also be explored further through semi-structured interviews with a sample of professionals, and with a sample of parents. These interviews will be conducted by the co-ordinator and research assistants.

Obviously the more input and support that is available the more comprehensive the study will be, so we gladly welcome opinions and ideas from those interested.

In order to promote nationwide involvement, an advisory panel has been established, consisting of two nominees from each Health Board area, (one representing the statutory bodies and the other representing non statutory organisations). The function of the panel members is to discuss and advise on key issues, the questionnaire and interview design, and to identify organisations involved in parenting programmes, and the availability of such courses in their Health Board area.

Informal contact with a number of professionals with an interest in this area, including child care development officers (or equivalent), social workers, psychologists, health education officers, home liaison officers, etc., has generated a very favourable reaction to the study, with all agreeing this information will be both of interest and value to both parents and professionals.

For further details please contact: *Jennifer Rylands*, Co-ordinator of the study.

Address: National Children's Resource Centre
Barnardo's
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8
Phone: (01) 530355

A STUDY OF PARENTING PROGRAMMES IN IRELAND

- CURRENT PROVISION AND EXPLORATION OF NEEDS

To the Facilitator* of the course:

- * Please complete this questionnaire for courses/programmes** held or to be held between June 1993 and June 1994 and for courses which will continue beyond these dates.
- * "Parenting Programme" refers to any course/programme whose aim is to directly offer parents skills and knowledge which will enable them to promote their children's physical, emotional and intellectual development.
- * The questionnaire is in two parts - Part 1 which deals with the current level and nature of the provision of parenting programmes, and Part 11 which explores the need for training and materials. Both parts should be completed by the facilitator of the course/programme.
- * In the event that you have facilitated/facilitate more than one course, please complete Part 1 for every course. Part 11 can be completed just once. If you need extra copies of Part 1, please contact the address below.
- * Please return using the enclosed s.a.e. before 31 May '94 to:

*Jennifer Rylands
Barnardo's
National Children's Resource Centre
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8*

- * For further information or enquiries, phone: (01) 4549699
- * All questionnaires returned by 31 May will be entered into a draw for membership of the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's. Benefits of membership are outlined in the enclosed leaflet
- * Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

* For "Facilitator" read "course leader"; "trainer" etc. - i.e. the person/s involved in directly giving the course/programme.

QUESTIONNAIRE - PART 1
Parenting Programmes
- Current Provision

1. Name & Location (address) of course/programme:
.
.
.
2. Name(s) of facilitators(s)1.
2.
(If there are more than two facilitators, please use an extra sheet)
3. Address(es): 1.
.
2.
.
- Telephone/fax: 1.
2.
4. Facilitator's profession/qualifications (if appropriate) and/or relevant training and experience:
1.
2.
.
5. How many parenting courses/programmes have you facilitated between June '93 and June '94? ☐
6. In your role as a facilitator, are you

	Facilitator 1	Facilitator 2
i) self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) volunteer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) staff member; please name your organisation		

- ☐
- ☐
7. Was this course: (please tick as appropriate)
- i) initiated by you? ☐
- ii) in response to a request from an already established group? ☐
- Please name
- iii) in response to a need identified by a professional? ☐
- iv) other, please specify ☐
8. What were the reasons behind this course/programme being offered?
-
-
-
-
-
-
9. What is the target group? (Please tick the appropriate box)
- i) parents of children aged 0 - 5 ☐
- ii) parents of children aged 6 - 12 ☐
- iii) parents of children aged 13 - 18 ☐
- iv) parents in general ☐
- v) first-time parents only ☐
- vi) other, please specify ☐
10. Is this course/programme attended by:
- i) women only ☐
- ii) men only ☐
- iii) 50% women & 50% men ☐
- iv) a majority of women ☐
- v) a majority of men ☐
11. Are the participants from an area that is:

- i) mainly working class ☐
- ii) mainly middle class ☐
- iii) mixed ☐
12. How do participants join? (please tick as appropriate)
- i) referred by professional ☐
- ii) self-referred ☐
- iii) already part of a group ☐
- please name:
- iv) other, please specify ☐
13. What service/organisation (if any) is this course connected to?
Please name and describe
.
.
14. How is the course funded? (please tick all that apply)
- i) Government/Health Board grant ☐
- ii) other grant, please specify ☐
- iii) participants fees ☐
- iv) voluntary body, please specify ☐
- v) other, please specify ☐
15. How often is the course held per year?
- i) once off only ☐
- ii) ongoing ☐
- iii) more than once per year, please specify ☐
- iv) on demand, please give estimate ☐
16. What is the total number of hours for this course?
- i) under 10 hours ☐
- ii) 10 hours - 20 hours ☐
- iii) over 20 hours ☐

17. What is the size of the group?(please tick as appropriate)
- i) 0 - 5 ☐
- ii) 6 - 15 ☐
- iii) 16+ ☐
18. What is the total cost of the course/programme to each participant?
- i) Free ☐
- ii) Under £5 ☐
- iii) Between £5 - £19 ☐
- iv) over £20 ☐
19. What is the overall aim of the course/programme:
-
-
-
-
20. Please give an outline of the content of the course/programme:
-
-
-
-
-
21. Is the course/programme based on a particular model/theory/philosophy?
- i) Yes ☐
- ii) No ☐
- iii) Don't know ☐
22. If yes, please describe:
-
-

.....

23a. Materials used in planning course/programme content: (eg. Open University, "The Preschool Child".) Please give title of material and author, where possible.

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

v)

23b. Materials used during course (eg. video- Penelope Leach "The Growing Child"; Veritas.) Please give title of material and author where possible.

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

v)

23c. Were any other resources used, apart from the above? If yes, please describe

.....

.....

.....

24. Methods used: (please tick all that apply)

i) formal presentation/lecture ☐

ii) small group discussion ☐

iii) large group discussion ☐

iv) role play ☐

v) video presentation ☐

vi) audio cassette presentation ☐

vii) other, please specify

25. Do you carry out any evaluation procedures?:

Yes

☐

No

☐

26. If yes, please describe the procedure:

.
.

(Please enclose any relevant evaluation sheets etc)

27. Is there any follow up for participants? If so, please describe:

.
.
.
.
.
.

28. In your opinion, are there parents who would benefit from an existing parenting programme/course, but who do not to attend?

Yes

☐

No

☐

29. If yes, please outline some of the possible reasons that they do not attend.

.
.
.
.
.
.

QUESTIONNAIRE PART II

Parenting Programmes

- Exploration of the need for training and materials

1a. Do you believe there is a need for training/education/support for parents, in relation to childrearing?

i) Yes

☐

ii) No

☐

iii) Don't know

☐

1b. Please give at least one reason for your answers.

i).

ii).

iii).

2. What in your opinion are the most important skills and knowledge that parents need in order to enhance their children's development? (Please note at least one of each)

Skills

Knowledge

i)

i)

ii)

ii)

iii)

iii)

iv)

iv)

v)

v)

3. Which of the following forms of training/education/support for parents are most urgently needed? Please rank from 1 - 6, with 1 being the "most urgently needed" and 6 the "least urgently needed".

Rank from 1 - 6

i) Structured courses on parenting, available to all parents

☐

ii) Preparation for parenthood as part of school curriculum

☐

iii) Preparation for parenthood in maternity hospitals

☐

iv) Home visiting schemes to new mothers

☐

v) Informal support networks eg mother/toddler groups

☐

vi) Other, please describe ☐

4. In your opinion at what stage in a person's life should training/support for parenthood take place? Please rank from 1 - 5, with 1 being "most important" and 5 being "least important"

Rank from 1 - 5

- i) As part of school curriculum ☐
- ii) During pregnancy ☐
- iii) When their children are aged 0 - 4 ☐
- iv) When their children are aged 5 - 12 ☐
- v) When their children are aged 12 - 18 ☐

5. In the following list, who do you believe is the most appropriate person to facilitate support/training for parents? Please rank from 1 - 6 with 1 being "the most appropriate" and 6 being "the least appropriate".

Rank from 1 - 6

- i) Social worker ☐
- ii) Public health nurse ☐
- iii) Teacher ☐
- iv) Parent with relevant training ☐
- v) Psychologist ☐
- vi) Other, please state ☐

6. Apart from a course which is "part of school curriculum"; where should training/support for parenthood take place?

- i) In the home ☐
- ii) In the school building ☐
- iii) In local health centre ☐
- iv) In the hospital ☐
- v) Other - please state ☐

7. In your opinion, should a parenting course/programme contain specific modules on personal development for parents? (eg: assertiveness; self awareness; etc)

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. Do the training materials and resources you are currently using, meet the needs of the course/programme you are involved in? (Please name the specific material eg. Veritas Basic Parenting Skills; Penelope Leach "Baby and Toddler"; video; etc; and tick as appropriate)

	Yes	No	S/times
i)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. In your opinion what other training materials need to be developed, within an Irish context? (e.g. Irish made video on language development, Resource pack on communication skills for parents and their children, Book "Children's development made easy" etc)

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

10. In your role as facilitator, what do you believe is the most important message to communicate to parents in relation to childrearing?

.....

.....

.....

11. Please note any other relevant comments below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the stamped addressed envelope to return to the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.

APPENDIX IV

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Exploration of the need for training and materials

First Name:

No:

Date:

Location:

1a. Do you believe there is a need for training/education/support for parents, in relation to childrearing?

i) Yes

☐

ii) No

☐

iii) Don't know

☐

1b. Please give at least one reason for your answers.

i).

ii).

iii).

2. In your opinion what do parents need to know in order to enhance their children's development?

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

3. Which of the following forms of training/education/support for parents are most urgently needed? Please rank from 1 - 6, with 1 being the "most urgently needed" and 6 the "least urgently needed".

Rank from 1 - 6

i) Structured courses on parenting, available to all parents

☐

ii) Preparation for parenthood as part of school curriculum

☐

iii) Preparation for parenthood in maternity hospitals

☐

- iv) Home visiting schemes to new mothers ☐
- v) Informal support networks eg mother/toddler groups ☐
- vi) Other, please describe ☐
4. In your opinion at what stage in a person's life should training/support for parenthood take place? Please rank from 1 - 5, with 1 being "most important" and 5 being "least important"
Rank from 1 - 5
- i) As part of school curriculum ☐
- ii) During pregnancy ☐
- iii) When their children are aged 0 - 4 ☐
- iv) When their children are aged 5 - 12 ☐
- v) When their children are aged 12 - 18 ☐
- vi) other ☐
5. In the following list, who do you believe is the most appropriate person to facilitate support/training for parents? Please rank from 1 - 6 with 1 being "the most appropriate" and 6 being "the least appropriate".
Rank from 1 - 6
- i) Social worker ☐
- ii) Public health nurse ☐
- iii) Teacher ☐
- iv) Parent with relevant training ☐
- v) Psychologist ☐
- vi) Other, please state ☐
6. Apart from a course which is "part of school curriculum"; where should training/support for parenthood take place?
- i) In the home ☐
- ii) In the school building ☐
- iii) In local health centre ☐
- iv) In the hospital ☐
- v) Other - please state ☐

- 7a. In your opinion, should a parenting course/programme contain specific modules on personal development for parents? (eg: assertiveness; self awareness; etc)

Yes

☐

No

☐

- 7b. Please give the reasons for your answer

i.

ii.

iii.

8. Of the training materials used in the parenting course/s, which did you find most useful? (Please name)

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

v)

9. In your opinion what other training materials need to be developed, within an Irish context? (e.g. Irish made video on language development, Resource pack on communication skills for parents and their children, Book "Children's development made easy" etc)

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

10. On the course/programme what was the most important message that was given to you as a parent, in relation to childrearing?

.....

.....

.....

11. Which part of the course did you find most useful?
- i)
- ii)
- iii)
12. What other aspects of childrearing would you have liked to have been included in the course?
- i)
- ii)
- iii)
- 13a In your opinion, are there parents who would benefit from an existing parenting programme/course, but who do not attend?
- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- 13b If yes, please outline some of the possible reasons that they do not attend.
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
14. Please note any other relevant comments below.
-
-
-
-

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the stamped addressed envelope to return to the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.

REFERENCE SECTION

- 1. Database of Parenting Programmes**
- 2. Choosing Parent Education - Guidelines for parents**
- 3. Parenting Programme Materials**
- 4. Useful Addresses**

1. DATABASE OF PARENTING PROGRAMMES

The information on the parenting programmes which was gathered during this study is currently available on a **Computer Database** in the Information Service of the National Children's Resource Centre. The design of the database allows for the sophisticated retrieval of information. One can access the database in various ways, for example, by the title of the programme or by health board area. It will include information on the materials used, the size of the group, the cost (if any), the time commitment and will also indicate if the course is "open" to the general public or closed to a specific group. The current technology will make possible the electronic networking of the database to other organisations and agencies. Enquiries are welcome.

For further information contact:

**National Children's Resource Centre
Barnardo's
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8
Phone : 4549699**

2. CHOOSING PARENT EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Programmes which offer parent education, training and support will differ to some extent in terms of their aims, their ethos and their design. It is important that the one you choose will match your own needs and requirements. However in some areas, there may not be a choice available and in this instance it may be worth availing of whatever programme is being offered.

The following are a number of points for parents to consider when looking for parent education or support.

- * Do you want information, advice, an opportunity to discuss a specific issue, to learn new skills, support or all of these?
- * Does your child have special needs?
- * Are there any national or local organisations which could offer you information about his/her needs?
- * Would you prefer to be in a group or on a one-to-one situation?
- * If the programme is offered in a group is it mixed or single sex?
- * Do you prefer a formal type lecture approach or an approach based on group discussion?
- * What organisations, if any, are involved in offering the programme?
- * What materials are used? What are they based on?
- * What training has the facilitator received?
- * How long is the course? What commitment will be required of you?
- * What is the full (if any) cost to participants?
- * Are there practical facilities available such as a creche or transport?

Places to enquire:

- * National Children Resource Centre, Barnardo's, Dublin - Database of parenting programmes (see Reference Section 1)
- * Local Health Centre or Health Board Office
- * Local schools, primary or second level

- * The Adult Education Organiser of the Vocational Education Committee (V.E.C.)
- * Community centres
- * Organisations such as Barnardo's, I.S.P.C.C. I.P.P.A., Clarecare (if there is a centre in your area)
- * Ask in the neighbourhood about mother and toddler groups, Toy Library, Women's groups.
- * Check local church notice boards or with the parish priest

3. PARENTING PROGRAMME MATERIALS

BOOKS

Birth to Three: a parent's guide to child development by C.Jessell: London, Bloomsbury, 1990.

Child Care & Health for Nursery Nurses by Brian and D.Martin, 1989.

Child Development and Personality by Mussen, Conger and Kagan, 7th edition, 1990.

Childhood and Adolescence: a psychology of the growing person by Stone and Church, 1973.

Coping Alone: a handbook for single parents by C.Clark, 1990.

Discipline: a positive guide for parents by Martin Herbert, 1989.

Happy Children (Children: the Challenge) by R.Dreikers and V.Soltz, England, Fontana, 1972.

Parenting: a handbook for parents by M.Gaffney in association with the Gay Byrne Show, 1991.

Parental involvement in Primary Schools by R.Cyster, P.Clift and S.Battle.

Parents as Partners in Education - the School and the home working together by E.H.Berger, England, Merrill, 1987.

Patterns of Brief Therapy by S.Deshazer, U.S., Gilford Publishers, 1982.

Playtime, by C.Molloy, Dublin, Fontana.

Open Family Living; a new approach for enriching your life together by T.C.McGinnis and J.U.Ayres, 1976.

Winning Teenagers Over by F.X.Walton.

Your Child's Development from Birth to Adolescence by R.Lansdown and M.Walker, 1991.

Your Growing Child by Dunn and Hargitt.

RESOURCE PACKS

Family Communication and Self Esteem - long term prevention of drug and alcohol misuse. Tutor's manual by The Department of Health, Cork Social and Health Education Project and the Southern Health Board, 1994.

Family Caring Trust provides simple, practical resource packs (including books, audiotapes and notes) for self-help parent groups. The trust also provides training and ongoing support to groups using its materials. The following materials are available:

Assertiveness for Teenagers.

Married Listening.

Parenting and Sex.

Parenting Skills Programme.

Parents as Educators.

Parents Assertiveness Programme.

Praying with Scripture Programme.

Teen Parenting Programme.

Contact: Bernie Magill
Family Caring Trust
44 Rathfriland Road
Newry, Co.Down BT34 1LD
Phone: 080693 64174

Parents and Teenagers by The Open University in association with the Health Education Council and the Scottish Health Education Group; London, Harper and Row, 1982.

Parents in Education, Resource Manual, National College of Industrial Relations, Dublin.

Stay Safe Programme by Child Abuse Prevention Programme; Dublin, Health Promotion Unit and Department of Health, 1991.

Systematic Training for Effective Parents (S.T.E.P.) by D.Duckmeyer and G.McKay; Minnesota, American Guidance Centre.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens (S.T.E.P.) by D.Duckmeyer and G.McKay; Minnesota, American Guidance Centre

Your Pre-school Child by the Open University in association with the Health Education Council and the Scottish Health Education Group; London, Harper and Row.

VIDEOS

Baby to Toddler: living together, learning together by Penelope Leach; London, Lifetime Productions, 1987.

Sex Education for Boys by Angela McNamara

LEAFLETS

Listening to your Child by Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC); Dublin

Tips to Beat Stress by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC); Dublin

For more detailed information on the above resources, contact:

National Children's Resource Centre

Barnardo's

Christchurch Square

Dublin 8

Phone: 4549699

**The N.C.R.C. also stocks a variety of other resources
relating to parenting issues which will be of interest
to parents and facilitators.**

4. USEFUL ADDRESSES

During the course of the study contacts were made and information received from a wide variety of individuals, groups and organisations involved in offering parenting programmes.

The following is a list of programmes which are organised by a local co-ordinator or offered through a voluntary organisation. Also included are a number of programmes which train parents as leaders or facilitators and other useful addresses. This is not presented as a comprehensive list of initiatives, however it is hoped that it will serve as the basis for such a list. It would also serve as the foundation for the development of a national network for those interested at all levels in parenting programmes.

1. **Primary, Second level schools and Vocational Education Committee**

(i) **Vocational Educational Committee (V.E.C.)**

There are thirty eight V.E.C.'s throughout the country. A variety of adult education programmes are offered, including parenting programmes.

For further information contact: The Adult Education Organiser of the local V.E.C.

(ii) **The Home School Community Liaison (H.S.C.L.) scheme of the Department of Health operates in schools in designated areas of disadvantage in cities throughout the country. One aspect of the H.S.C.L. is identifying and meeting the expressed needs of parents. The need for support in their role as parents is one such need. Co-ordinators meet this particular need through organising parenting courses in which they act as facilitators or through involving other trained personnel to do so. Courses focus on dealing with the developmental stages of the young child and also on the parenting of teenage children.**

For further information contact: The Dept of Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Phone: (01) 8734700, Fax: (01) 8729553.

(iii) **Douglas Community School, Cork - Adult and Community Education.**

Courses are offered for the parents of teenagers and preteens free of charge. Programmes are based on the Family Caring Trust materials.

For further information contact Bernard Morgan, Co-ordinator. Phone: (021) 294201.

- (iv) St Mary's College, Parent support group, Dundalk, Co.Louth.

This group of parents and teachers began in 1991 and currently offers parenting courses using Family Caring Trust materials. Information nights on topics relevant to parents are also organised.

For further information contact Fr Cormac McNamee, Marist Fathers, Nicholas Street, Dundalk, Co.Louth. Phone: (042) 34019.

2. Parish and Diocesan Initiatives

- (i) Cork & Ross Diocesan Family Ministry Offices, Enniskeane, Co.Cork.

The Family Ministry offers a variety of parenting programmes based on the materials produced by the Family Caring Trust. Almost all of their 4,000 plus facilitators are community volunteers who have attended a basic leadership training course, entitled "Orientation towards Leadership", which was designed by the Family Ministry.

For further information contact: Lynda Irwin, Co-ordinator. Phone: (023) 47755.

- (ii) Diocesan Adult Religious Education Office, St Patrick's College, Carlow.

This office offers materials and training of leaders for parenting programmes.

For further information contact: Sr Anne Scully. Phone: (0503) 40944.

- (iii) Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Newtownsmith, Galway

This centre focuses on the welfare of families in the diocese of Galway. Parenting courses are offered throughout the year, using the materials of the Family Caring Trust.

For further information contact: Sr Helen Hyland. Phone: (091) 65066.

- (iv) Family Life Centre, Boyle, Co.Roscommon

This centre offers a range of parenting education and support programmes to all parents in the area including specific programmes for lone parents. A variety of training materials are used including Family Caring Trust materials and a resource library is maintained.

For further information contact: Marie Paul or Padraic Greene. Phone: (079) 62012 or (079) 63000.

- (v) Family Ministry, Tullow Presbytery, Tullow, Co.Carlow.

The parish renewal group offers parenting courses to young, single parents in the community. Programmes are based on the Family Caring Trust materials.

For further information contact Therese Moran. Phone: (0503) 51422, (0503) 51277.

- (vi) First Steps, Sacred Heart Church, Seamus Quirke Road, Galway.

This programme aims to support the parents of children aged 0 - 3 years. It is a home based programme, with nine voluntary home visitors and one co-ordinator. Materials have been developed within the programme.

For further information contact: Pauline Bree, c/o Sacred Heart Church, Seamus Quirke Road, Galway. Phone: (091) 24305

- (vii) St Conleth's Parish, Newbridge, Co.Kildare

Parenting programmes are offered in the parish in association with local schools and the Diocesan adult education office. The materials of the Family Caring Trust are used.

For further information contact: The Parish Centre. Phone: (045) 31121 or (045) 34069.

- (viii) Vita House, Abbey Street, Roscommon,

Vita House offers a variety of parenting programmes as well as a professional counselling service. Some of the programmes are based on the Family Caring Trust materials, while others have been compiled by the co-ordinator.

For further information contact: Sr Mary Lee, Co-ordinator and Family Therapist. Phone: (0903) 25898.

3. Voluntary organisations

(i) Clarecare, Harmony Row, Ennis, Co.Clare

Clarecare is a voluntary organisation working in partnership with the Mid Western Health Board. A range of parenting programmes are offered in association with the Health Education Committee of the M.W.H.B. These include STEP programmes, STEP teen programme, Know your child course, Know yourself course and the IPPA Introductory course.

For further information contact: Ger Neylon, Preschool Playgroup Organiser, Clarecare, Harmony Row, Ennis, Co.Clare. Phone: (065) 28178

(ii) Irish Preschool Playgroups Association.

I.P.P.A. is a voluntary national organisation promoting quality early childhood services. It has a nationwide adult education network of tutors/facilitators who provide a variety of courses for parents and playleaders. The most widely used course is the Practical Introductory Playgroup course.

A new course entitled "Parenting through Play" is currently being piloted. It has been developed in collaboration with the Marino Institute. It is planned that this will in the future be offered to parents throughout the country.

For further information contact: Your Regional Advisor or the I.P.P.A. Resource Centre, 19 Innscourt, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8. Phone: (01) 6719245.

(iii) Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The ISPCC offers parenting courses through their local centres throughout the country. The focus is on 'building bridges' between children and their parents, particularly through the use of play sensory work and behaviour management.

For further information contact: Paul Gilligan, Director of Services, 20 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. Phone: (01) 6794944.

(iv) Parenting Skills Unit, Eastern Health Board, Rathdown, Dublin 7.

The Parenting Skills Unit aims to provide guidelines for teaching and improving parenting skills for parents with children with special needs. These include Parenting Skills programme, for parents with children with a disability, available in a number

of centres in the community and are subject to demand.

For further information contact: The Parenting Skills Unit. Phone: (01) 8385844.

- (v) **National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.**
The purpose of the N.C.R.C. is to provide information and training relevant to the welfare of children in response to current issues and likely future developments in child care in Ireland. Through the training section, high quality and expert training on all aspects of child care can be provided to professionals in voluntary and statutory agencies and parents throughout the country.
For further information contact: The Training Officer, N.C.R.C. Phone: (01) 4549699.

4 Health Boards - Health Education Department

- (i) **Health Promotion Unit, Mid Western Health Board, Central Offices, P.O.Box 41, 31/33 Catherine Street, Limerick.**
The Health Promotion Union, M.W.H.B. provides a variety of parenting programmes based on the following materials; "Know your Child", S.T.E.P., Family Caring Trust materials. The unit trains facilitators to implement such programmes and supports facilitators throughout.
For further information contact: Frances Clifford, Co-ordinator. Phone: (061) 316655 ext 3215.
- (ii) **Health Promotion Unit, North Western Health Board, Tirconail Street, Donegal.**
Parent Support Training Programme
The Health Promotion Department of the N.W.H.B. began piloting a Parent Support Training Programme in June 1994. The aim of the training programme is to provide a pool of skilled facilitators in the North West region who will be available in the community to support parents with young children. The support offered by the facilitators will be in the form of parent support programmes provided mainly through interested primary schools.
For further information contact: Majella Mulkeen, Co-ordinator. Phone (073) 21506/22130.

- (iii) **The Cork Social and Health Education Project, S.H.B., Grattan Street, Cork.**

This pilot project was developed to help parents improve their family communication and self esteem and in this way to lessen the risks of alcohol and drug misuse. A specially trained panel is available through the course and a tutor's manual and course materials have been developed. The project was funded by the Health Promotion Unit of the Dept of Health and the D.G.V. European Commission.

For further information contact: The Project Officer, Southern Health Board, Grattan Street, Phone: (021) 273088.

5. Home visiting schemes.

- (i) **Community Mothers, Eastern Health Board, Park Hse, Nth Circular Rd. Dublin 7.**
Community Mothers is a support group for first and second time parents with infants in the 0 - 1 age span, in areas of social and economic disadvantage. It aims to give power to parents to develop their latent skills and restore confidence and self esteem, so that they tackle their own problems in their own way. Services include home visits by Community Mothers and Family Development Nurses and the organisation of parent and child groups. The emphasis of the programme is on health care, nutritional improvement and the overall development of the child.

For further information contact: Community Mothers Programme. Phone: (01) 8387122.

- (ii) **The Lifestart Foundation**

This foundation offers a parenting programme for parents of children aged 0 - 5. It involves a system of bimonthly family visitations which are based on age appropriate and culturally adapted information sheets.

For further information contact: The Director, Dr Sean O'Chonchur, 26 Sea Road, Galway. (091) 587208.

6. Antenatal and Postnatal Education.

- (i) **La Leche League, Ireland**

This organisation offers mother to mother breast feeding help and information through monthly meetings and countrywide 24 hour telephone helpline.

For further information consult: Your local telephone directory under La Leche League Ireland.

(ii) **Maternity Hospitals**

Most maternity hospitals throughout the country provide antenatal classes for parents. For further information contact: The local maternity hospital.

7. Other support structures

(i) **Irish Childbirth Trust - Cuidiu**

This national voluntary organisation offers support to families through the various stages of parenthood, in the form of breast feeding counselling, mother and toddler groups, post-natal and ante-natal support, parenting support.

For further information contact: Orla Hastings. Phone: (01) 4935969.

(ii) **Toy Library Group, Ireland.**

Toy Libraries provide social contact for parents and children as well as encouraging the development of parents groups, where parenting issues may be explored. Membership is open to those running Toy Libraries, parents who use Toy Libraries and other interested bodies whose aims are consistent with those of Toy Libraries. For further information contact: Toy Library Group Ireland, c/o Millbrook Nursery, Millbrook Health Centre, St Dominic's Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24. (letters only).

(iii) **Parentline, Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.**

Parentline aims to break the cycle of family unhappiness and child abuse by enabling parents to share the difficulties of bringing up children. It supports parents who are concerned about their feelings towards their children. A telephone service is available daily 10.00am - 4.00pm and 7.30pm - 9.30pm. Parentline also runs parent support groups.

For further information contact: Parentline. Phone: (01) 8733500.

8. Training programmes for parents as facilitators or leaders

(i) **Marino Institute For Education, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.**

The Marino Institute provides courses for parents in leadership skills which encompass personal, spiritual and faith development. The course explores the role of parents as leaders. These parents are encouraged to initiate courses in their local areas in co-operation with parish and schools.

For further information contact: Brother Martin O'Flaherty, Family Studies Dépt..
Phone: (01) 8335111.

- (ii) Parents in Education Programme, National College of Industrial Relations, Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

This programme has been initiated by the National College of Industrial Relations in association with the Dept of Education. The primary aim is to set up a working partnership between schools and parents. Parents are selected to attend the training courses via the Home School Liaison Service.

For further information contact: The N.C.I.R. Phone: (01) 4972917.

- (iii) see also the M.W.H.B., N.W.H.B., Health Education Departments.

10. Parents' organisations

- (i) National Parents' Council, Primary.

The N.P.C., primary is an elected voluntary organisation recognised by the government as representing the views of the parents of primary school children. There is a branch in every county and the membership includes special schools, minority religion schools and Irish schools. It provides a variety of parent education programmes and operates a Helpline for parents from 10.00 - 12.00 Monday to Friday.

For further information contact: Hogan House, Hogan Place, Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2. Phone: (01) 6613022 Fax (01) 6613130

- (ii) National Parents' Council, Post primary.

The N.P.C.post primary is an umbrella council recognised by the Department of Education, which represents the parents of children attending all types of second level school in Ireland. It is planned that a number of seminars and training of relevance

to parents will be offered during the coming year.

For further information contact: National Parents' Council, Post Primary, Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Ave., Dublin 9. Phone: (01) 8570522.

11. Other useful addresses

(i) Adlerian Society of Ireland - Parent Education Section

This is a parent support and education network based on Adlerian principles. Courses in parent education are offered principally in the Munster area.

For further information contact: Eileen Graham, Rathloose, Powerstown, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.

(ii) Aspiration group on Parenting, c/o Bryson House, 28 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7FE.

A group of organisations and individuals meet regularly to bring together people working on the educational aspects of parenting. Membership of the group is open to anyone interested in this area. A library of relevant materials is being collated.

For further information contact: Andrew McDaniel, Development Officer, Phone: Belfast 325835, Fax: Belfast 439156.

(iii) National Association for Parent Support.

This association works to provide help and support for parents and students in the educational sphere.

For further information contact: Elizabeth Quinn, Capoley, Portlaoise. Phone: (0502) 20598.