

Parents and carers - have your say report March 2008



Parents and carers - have your say!

Contents

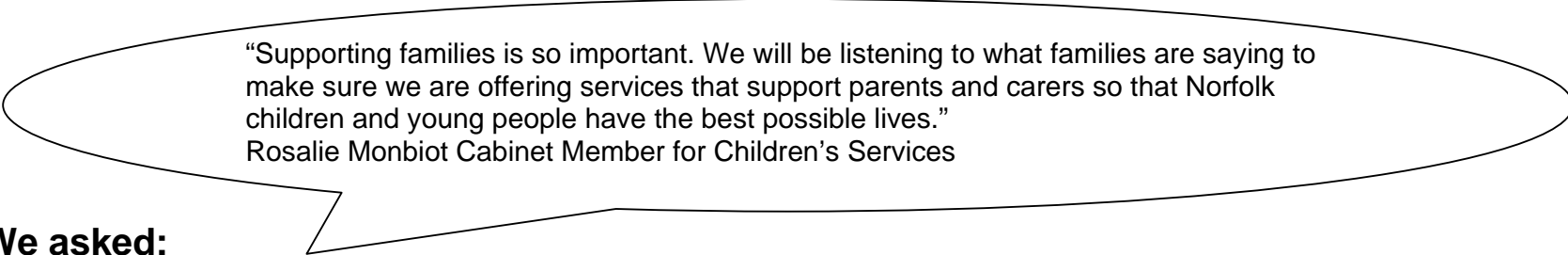
Page 3	About the findings
Page 4	What parents and carers said - summary of key messages
Page 5	Children and young people being healthy
Page 6	Children and young people staying safe
Page 7	Children and young people enjoying and achieving
Page 8	Children and young people making a positive contribution
Page 9	Children and young people's economic well being
Page 10	Anything else we need to consider as part of our vision for children and young people
Page 11	How supported do you feel?
Page 12	Information advice and support – what is helpful?
Page 18	Parenting Support Strategy draft principles
Page 19	Involving parents and carers
Page 20	What we are doing
Page 21	Who we asked, how we asked and challenges
Page 26	The prize draw
Page 26	Acknowledgments and further information
Page 27	Involvement registration sheet

Parents and carers have your say!

About the findings

These findings have been produced on behalf of the Norfolk Children and Young People's Partnership Trust (CYPPT) so that the views of Norfolk parents and carers can be taken into account in the Norfolk Children and Young People's Plan, the Parenting Support Strategy and when involving parents and carers in decision making across the county. The majority of the messages in the report are direct quotations, as well as the quotes in speech bubbles. The survey and this report have been structured around the Every Child Matters outcomes for children, and the survey questions had input from the Parenting Support Strategy parents and carers focus group. Our vision for Norfolk children, based on what children and young people have told us is important to them is:

In Norfolk we believe that all children and young people have the right to be **healthy, happy and safe**; to be **loved, valued and respected**; and to have **high aspirations** for their future. For more information go to www.everynorfolkchildmatters.org



"Supporting families is so important. We will be listening to what families are saying to make sure we are offering services that support parents and carers so that Norfolk children and young people have the best possible lives."

Rosalie Monbiot Cabinet Member for Children's Services

We asked:

- What can the CYPPT do and how can parents and carers be supported to improve the lives and futures of Norfolk's children and young people?
- What kinds of information, support and advice do you think is most helpful when bringing up children from birth to over 16 and what do you think about the draft principles for the Norfolk Parenting Support Strategy?
- How supported do you feel?
- What else can we do to involve parents and carers?

What parents and carers said – summary of key messages from participants:

- Make sure parents and carers important role in children and young people reaching their potential is recognised and provide us with better support
- We want free and accessible information, guidance, support, courses and parenting classes for mums and dads and carers with children of all ages about all aspects of bringing up children including: all aspects of health and education; knowing what to expect from children at different stages - not just when they are little, but up to and beyond 16; appropriate boundaries, risk taking behaviour and opportunities. Also better use of schools as a “community hub”
- We want to be able to talk to well informed family and friends, and other parents in support groups as well as having accessible universal and consistent information and support services provided by experienced and knowledgeable professionals families can build a relationship with to deliver on what they promise
- Improve communication between parents and carers and services for children, young people and families, including schools (primary and secondary) - keep us informed more regularly and in more detail of progress and any difficulties our children may be experiencing including being bullied or bullying, and encourage and value the child’s achievements outside of school
- Address inclusion, diversity and equality of opportunity – value difference and take special and additional needs of family members, parents and carers and children and young people, into account and consider rural and transport issues
- Make sure all services treat family members with respect, involve parents and carers, listen to us, act, and then let us know. Recruit parents to take the message out to communities and have a requirement for schools to pass on information
- More prevention and early intervention, quality provision which is timely, accessible and ‘joined up’ and address child poverty through action on family poverty
- Whilst approximately 65% of participants felt they get some support, are quite well or very well supported as parents, around a third don’t feel supported at all and around 5% of participants said they didn’t really know what support was available.

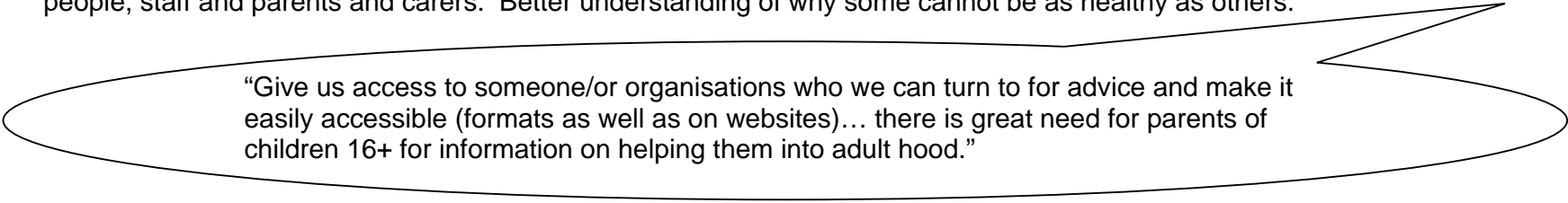
Children and young people being healthy - what can the CYPPT do?

Messages:

Consider how to make sure health messages at home and school are positive and well informed - education should begin as early as possible and should start with the education of 'parents to be' and continue with the child from birth - at home and at school.

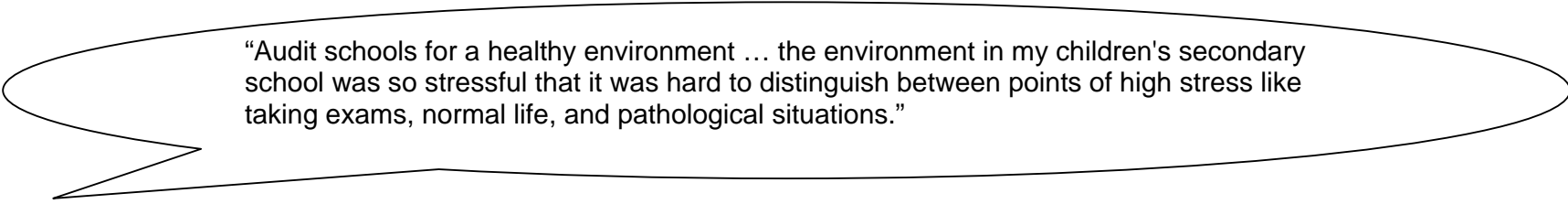
Free and easily available parenting classes for mums AND dads with new children and as children get older. Provide guidance and information about healthy eating and living and healthy relationships for young people including sexuality. Put mechanisms in place for children to reach higher levels of self-esteem, increased confidence etc. recognising the need earlier and ensuring action is taken involving family members. Have healthy school and college canteens and more affordable exercise facilities. Use local schools fully - opening the doors to parents and carers.

Help children and young people to make choices and understand consequences through work on personal and social responsibilities, looking at risk taking and teaching programmes like protective behaviours across the county to children, young people, staff and parents and carers. Better understanding of why some cannot be as healthy as others.



"Give us access to someone/or organisations who we can turn to for advice and make it easily accessible (formats as well as on websites)... there is great need for parents of children 16+ for information on helping them into adult hood."

Consider the 'price' of health by addressing the high cost of exercise facilities and transport to facilities and subsidise healthy food if necessary.



"Audit schools for a healthy environment ... the environment in my children's secondary school was so stressful that it was hard to distinguish between points of high stress like taking exams, normal life, and pathological situations."

Children and young people staying safe - what can the CYPPT do?

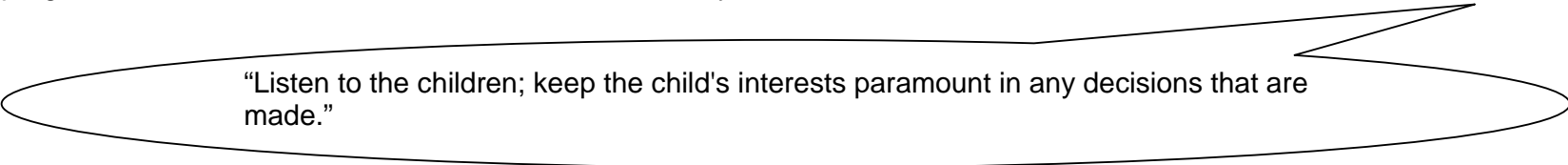
Messages:

Bullying and peer pressure is perceived as a problem. Keep up strong anti-bullying campaigns and ensure schools are properly resourced and staff trained to look after all children including disabled children. School staff (not just teachers), parents and carers, children and agencies should be educated, including about cyber bullying and text bullying and discrimination.

Peer mentors in school, drugs awareness, sexual health awareness and appropriate behaviour and sexual activity, alcohol awareness, road safety awareness, and helping children feel confident to say if they don't feel comfortable with something are all seen as important. Good information in schools and the same information and support for parents and carers. Support for disabled / long term illness adults to be able to have these discussions with their children. Good communication between families and schools should continue to be encouraged and supported including over issues of safety.

Safe places for children to meet and socialise that are seen as "cool" and having opportunities for "adventure" as well as having someone to talk to on the streets (youth workers and the Matthew Project Bus were mentioned) are seen as valuable. Pay more attention to the social connections in villages and town neighbourhoods. Better transport solutions in rural areas.

Support parents in providing appropriate boundaries for their children at different ages and helping them stick to these. Help children mature, communicate and understand emotions through work on personal and social responsibilities, risk taking and programmes like Protective Behaviours across the county.



"Listen to the children; keep the child's interests paramount in any decisions that are made."

Services need to be "more honest and accountable and ready to admit to failures" and learn from mistakes.

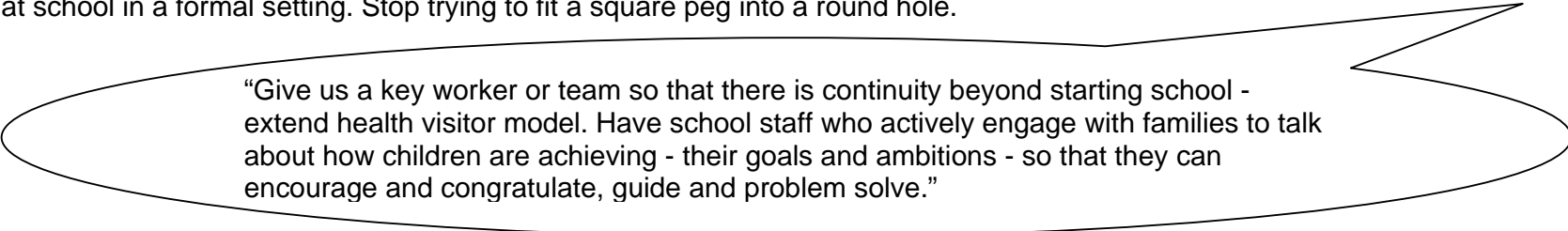
Sufficient respite for disabled children so families are not stretched to breaking point – don't just manage a crisis - come in earlier.

Children and young people enjoying and achieving - what can the CYPPT do?

Messages:

Make sure they are safe happy and secure, and that parents and carers have support to deal with difficulties and behavioural issues with more training or courses for parents in parenting, caring for children, coping, self development, practical support etc.

Share good practice - make sure school structures and staff are always positive, enabling and encourage young people - even if they have made mistakes in the past. More time one to one with children, young people and their families identifying ambitions/aspirations/goals, both big and small, and routes to achieving them. Recognise that all children have different abilities, strengths and weaknesses and cater for that. Recognise that education takes different forms, not necessarily all in the classroom or at school in a formal setting. Stop trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.



“Give us a key worker or team so that there is continuity beyond starting school - extend health visitor model. Have school staff who actively engage with families to talk about how children are achieving - their goals and ambitions - so that they can encourage and congratulate, guide and problem solve.”

Schools and other services should communicate regularly with parents and carers to ensure that we have full opportunity to support our children - information from schools about homework/projects, GCSE, A level choices and what's next and other opportunities from other services. More opportunities in communities for young people and more support to access them for those who need it. Support for children of all ages and abilities - out of school clubs and youth clubs with trained youth workers for mainstream, special needs and mixed provision. Good holiday clubs offering a wide range of activities for all ages of school children and also for children with special needs with one to one support if necessary. Better sports provision. Work experience for disabled young people. Consider the needs of rural families.

When parents are struggling to manage their child's behaviour, there should be support to ensure that crisis intervention is not needed. Greater understanding and early recognition of disorders such as autism, asperger's syndrome, ADHD and dyslexia etc, to ensure that all children have the best opportunities for success in life.



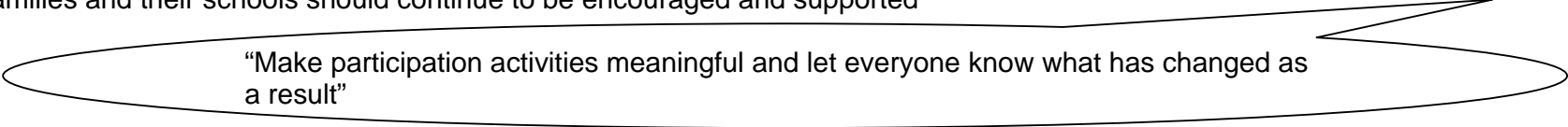
“Ensure that young people are respected and that their strengths are highlighted”

Children and young people making a positive contribution - what can the CYPPT do?

Messages:

More planning and provision (prevention and early intervention work) needs to be put in place to prevent so many children being taken from their families.

Support schools and parents and carers to teach children right from wrong, provide boundaries and educate parents and carers about their influence over issues such as crime and anti social behaviour. Combine this with giving young people their own space in a village/town/community. Encourage volunteering in the local community/environment. Carefully consider the interests of children and young people and any special or additional needs when planning provision and services. Good communication between families and their schools should continue to be encouraged and supported

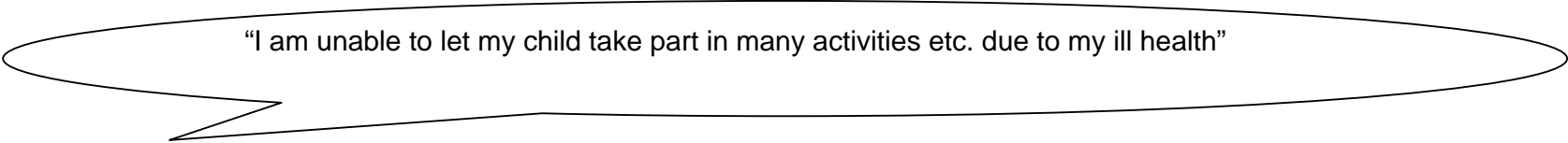


“Make participation activities meaningful and let everyone know what has changed as a result”

Let everyone have a voice, not just the ones that shout the loudest, and are most popular who get on the school councils. Better inclusion in general and more support for those who find it difficult to participate in activities or speak out, including representation from children and young people with learning difficulties.

Invite parents and carers to work with children and young people in any community projects. Give more support to parents who want to arrange activities. Let us know about opportunities.

Consider and address the needs of families where there is a disabled parent, particularly if there is a young carer in the family.



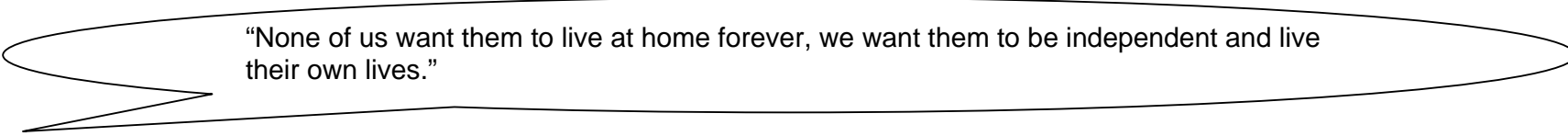
“I am unable to let my child take part in many activities etc. due to my ill health”

Children and young people achieving economic well being - what can the CYPPT do?

Messages:

Education and transport are seen to be key factors as well as raising expectations at the same time as having realistic goals. Make sure schools and parents have high ambitions and aspirations for children and young people. Encourage them to work and learn at college and give families as information and support. "Educate us; we want to know!". To encourage all do jobs like babysitting, shopping and gardening and all have jobs in the home and help with cooking, cleaning and earning pocket money. Training for volunteering. Better transport links, cheaper transport, especially in rural communities and free school transport post 16.

Parents with children who live in deprived areas or where there are difficulties should have support at the outset and always before crisis intervention is needed. They should have access to competent, non-judgemental professionals who can assist and guide them through all stages of their child's development, with advice on housekeeping, parenting and lifestyles and budgeting. Address child poverty through action on family poverty by making sure all support includes addressing child poverty - information and support to maximise benefit take up and income, help with forms and paying bills, referrals to job centre plus - supporting parents to break cycles of deprivation. Not all parents feel confident about accessing services and need support from volunteers and organisations - it's especially challenging for those with special needs. Encourage parents to take part in after school activities too, regarding food/money etc. There should be more services and activities in rural areas, which are not deemed as deprived and adequate and affordable housing for poorer families.



"None of us want them to live at home forever, we want them to be independent and live their own lives."

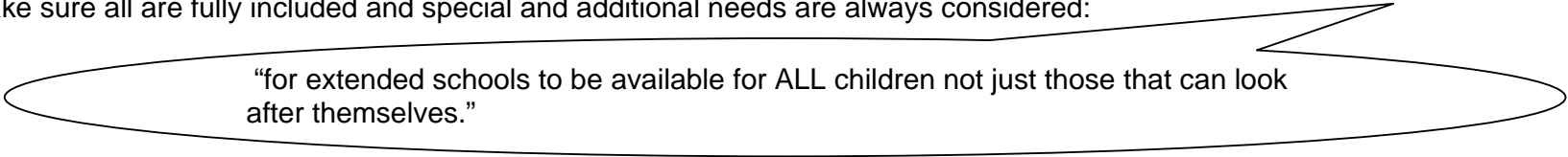
Ensure that good job opportunities and economic development are promoted for this area. Ensure that there are jobs/training/housing/careers advice and jobs fairs available locally. "It doesn't have to be university" approach may be better for some. Make sure housing providers and local businesses are all part of planning services for children, young people and families. Provide the opportunities for learning and achieving. Set achievable goals and raise expectations for all children including those with special needs. Low levels of expectation lead to low levels of achievement.

Is there anything else we need to consider as part of our vision for children and young people at different age stages, or anything else you would like us to know?

Parents and carers said:

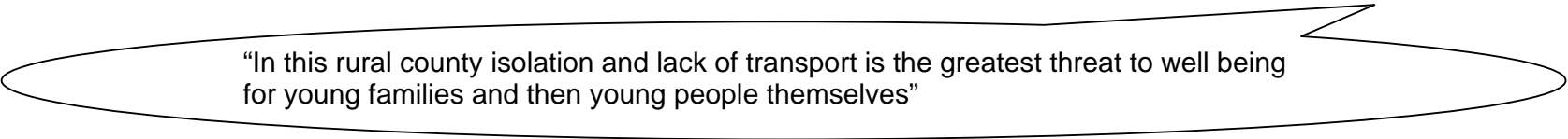
Never take anything for granted where children and young people are concerned, every child and young person is an individual. To help children achieve their full potential make sure parents and carers are better supported, that children are respected and have a good sense of social responsibility and self-discipline, respect for the law, the environment, property and other people and positively value difference and diversity, “not have their lives blighted by limited life opportunities or far too low expectations”.

Make sure all are fully included and special and additional needs are always considered:



“for extended schools to be available for ALL children not just those that can look after themselves.”

Reduce the need for foster carers, by giving families early and adequate support, so that children can remain with their biological parents as much as possible. Offer holistic services with lower thresholds which link with housing and have a 'crisis response' facility e.g. when families with children are threatened with homelessness. More accessible activities for young people and somewhere they can go to talk to someone without being judged.

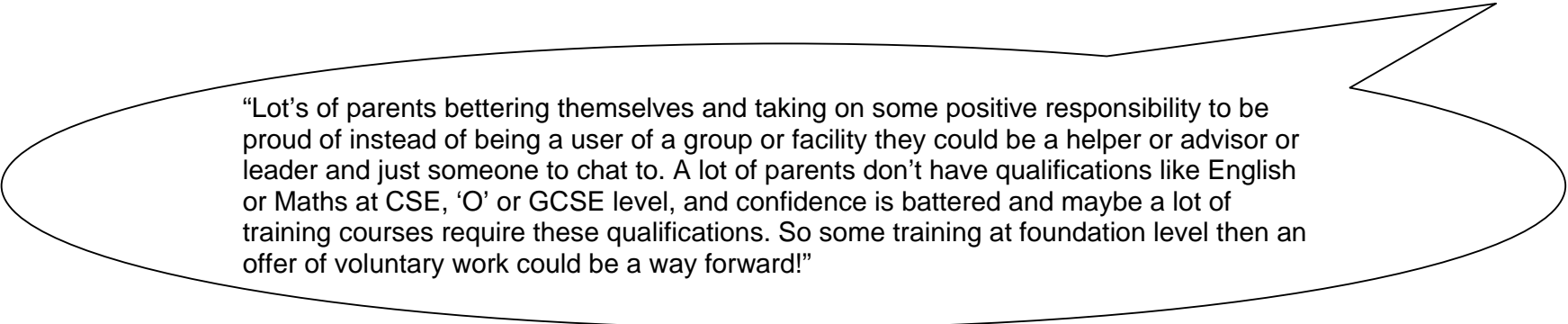


“In this rural county isolation and lack of transport is the greatest threat to well being for young families and then young people themselves”

Parents and carers also said it is important to include having a good relationship with both mum and dad, even if they are not together and for children and young people to have a fulfilling spiritual existence.

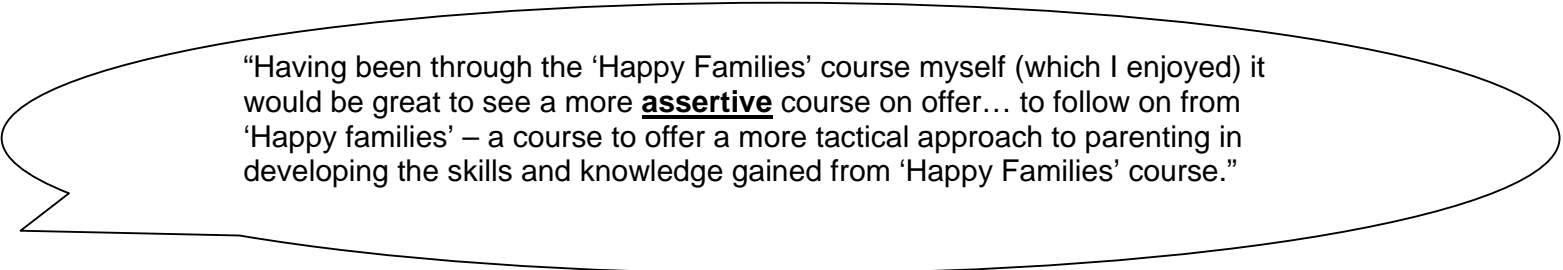
There were representations from parents for making sure that interventions to protect children are handled in a way that explores all ways to support the family, listens to concerns and has the child at the centre, and makes appropriate early diagnosis, doesn't “destroy family life” and decisions taken are based on “concrete evidence”.

There were requests for opportunities for parents to be trained to run groups for their communities and also train others, a 'Parents forum' or meetings for each area in each town/city so that parents can bounce problems or ideas off each other.



"Lot's of parents bettering themselves and taking on some positive responsibility to be proud of instead of being a user of a group or facility they could be a helper or advisor or leader and just someone to chat to. A lot of parents don't have qualifications like English or Maths at CSE, 'O' or GCSE level, and confidence is battered and maybe a lot of training courses require these qualifications. So some training at foundation level then an offer of voluntary work could be a way forward!"

A resource bus for parents to visit different areas during the day and in the evenings for parents who work. Resources for young people e.g. Connexions buses could be used for parents also.



"Having been through the 'Happy Families' course myself (which I enjoyed) it would be great to see a more **assertive** course on offer... to follow on from 'Happy families' – a course to offer a more tactical approach to parenting in developing the skills and knowledge gained from 'Happy Families' course."

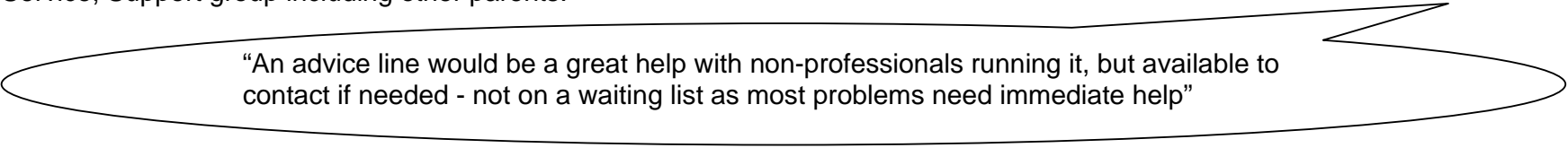
One participant suggested a group or groups for young people to raise issues with regards to the parenting they receive.

How supported do you feel?

Whilst approximately 65% of participants felt they get some support, are quite well or very well supported as parents, just over 30% don't feel supported at all and around 5% of participants said they didn't really know what support was available.

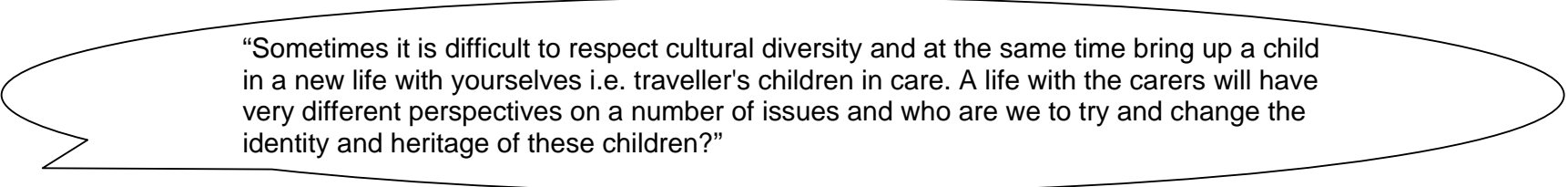
Information, advice and support

Parents and carers preferences for where to go for information, advice and support was fairly evenly spread amongst the choices across the age ranges, but there was a clear indication that people want to be able to talk to well informed family and friends, and other parents in support groups. Friends and family were rated as the most preferred alongside the choices provided, which were: GP, Health Visitor, School, Sure Start or Children's Centre, Community Centre, Telephone Helpline, Internet, Local Signposting Service, Support group including other parents.



“An advice line would be a great help with non-professionals running it, but available to contact if needed - not on a waiting list as most problems need immediate help”

Participants described universal and consistent support services provided without prejudice, and for them to deliver on what they promise, with more general knowledge and information about diversity, including children with disabilities widely available. 24/7 support available through the Internet and/or a telephone help line able to answer questions on a wide range of topics.



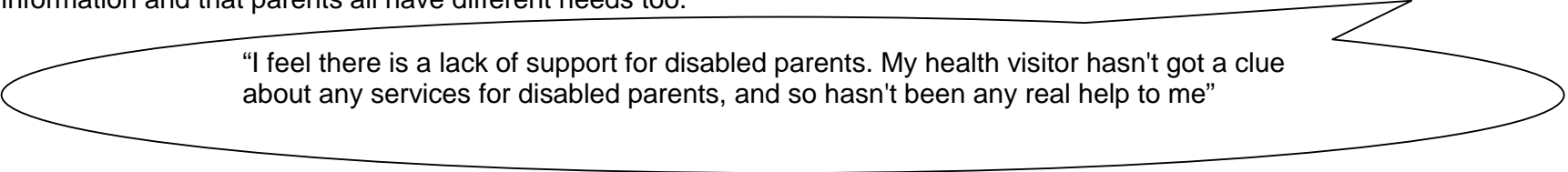
“Sometimes it is difficult to respect cultural diversity and at the same time bring up a child in a new life with yourselves i.e. traveller's children in care. A life with the carers will have very different perspectives on a number of issues and who are we to try and change the identity and heritage of these children?”

When the numbers are combined for people preferring to use the Internet for information and support the numbers of people preferring to use the internet takes on more significance. This may be because half of the participants completed the survey online. However, we are a relatively well-connected county, with over 60% of our population having internet access, and national research has found that there is a desire to use the internet to get information and support about parenting. Men who participated in this survey showed a preference for using the Internet to access information and support in parenting their children. A technical error in the electronic survey meant that the Health visitor option was included across all age ranges. This was an option which was chosen along with other options across the age ranges and comments indicated that there is a desire for a health visiting model – a long

term relationship with a trusted health professional who visits the home as well as being available to answer questions, sign post and give support.

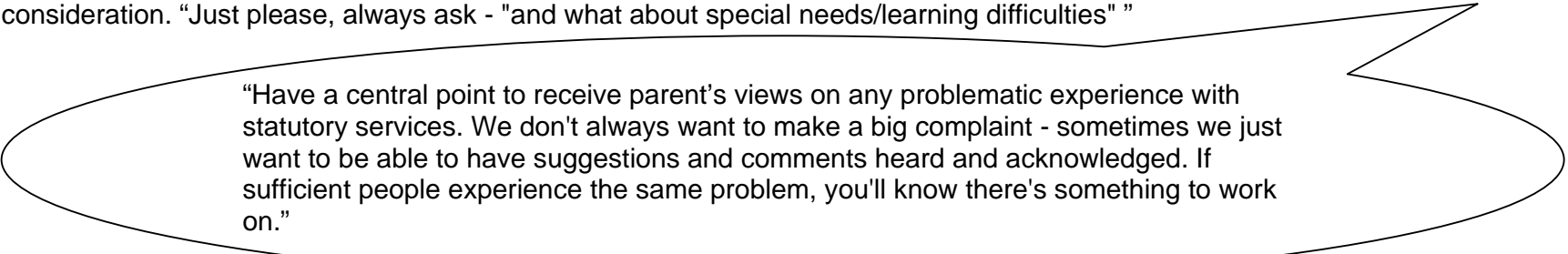
More flexible and accessible support and information is needed and we need to ensure that parents feel they are listened to, supported, and that their views are valued. Face to face outreach sessions for those parents who have difficulty accessing information were suggested, along with more support for fathers, and grandparents as carers was requested (the MAP young fathers group was mentioned).

Ensure services are truly holistic and universal irrespective of location; make them proactive not reactive. Take into consideration that some families do not have access to the intranet, do not have good literacy skills and/or prefer face to face meetings to get information and that parents all have different needs too.

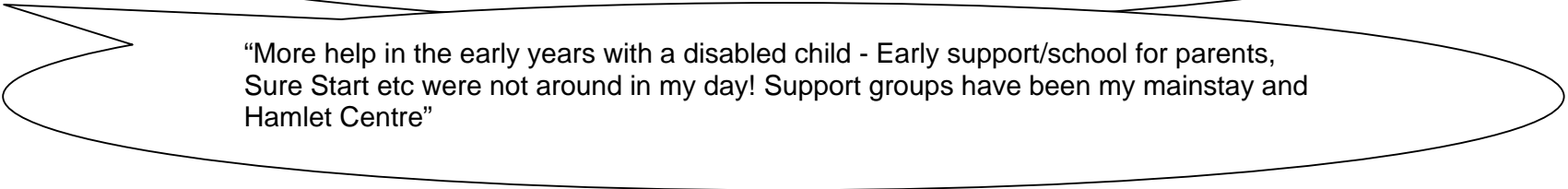


"I feel there is a lack of support for disabled parents. My health visitor hasn't got a clue about any services for disabled parents, and so hasn't been any real help to me"

Encourage recognition and celebration of individuality in our children and young people. Offer early and adequate support to allow children to stay with their biological parents where possible. Take the needs of families with children with SEN or disabilities into consideration. "Just please, always ask - "and what about special needs/learning difficulties" "



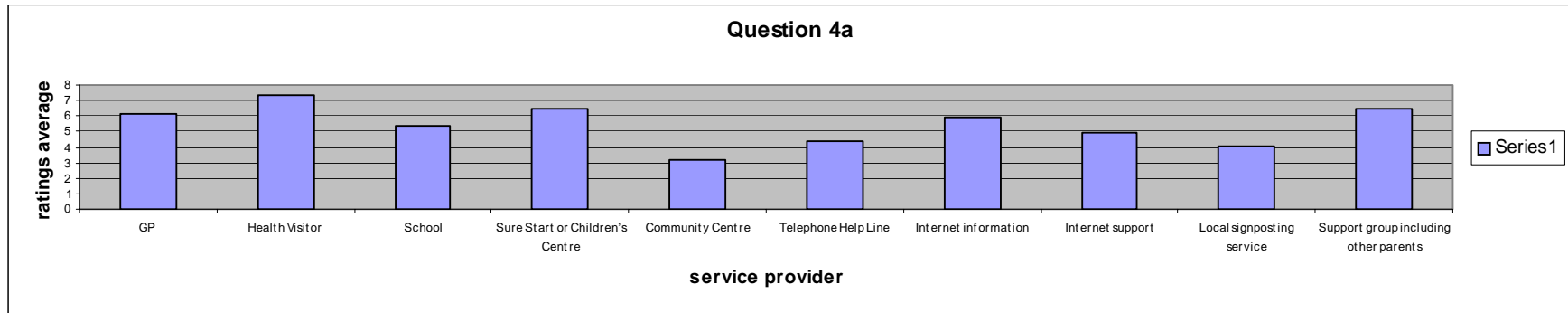
"Have a central point to receive parent's views on any problematic experience with statutory services. We don't always want to make a big complaint - sometimes we just want to be able to have suggestions and comments heard and acknowledged. If sufficient people experience the same problem, you'll know there's something to work on."



"More help in the early years with a disabled child - Early support/school for parents, Sure Start etc were not around in my day! Support groups have been my mainstay and Hamlet Centre"

What parents and carers said about information, advice and support for parenting children of different ages when asked to rate services and/or suggest an alternative:

Please say which of these you would prefer to go to for advice, information and support for parenting 0-4 year olds



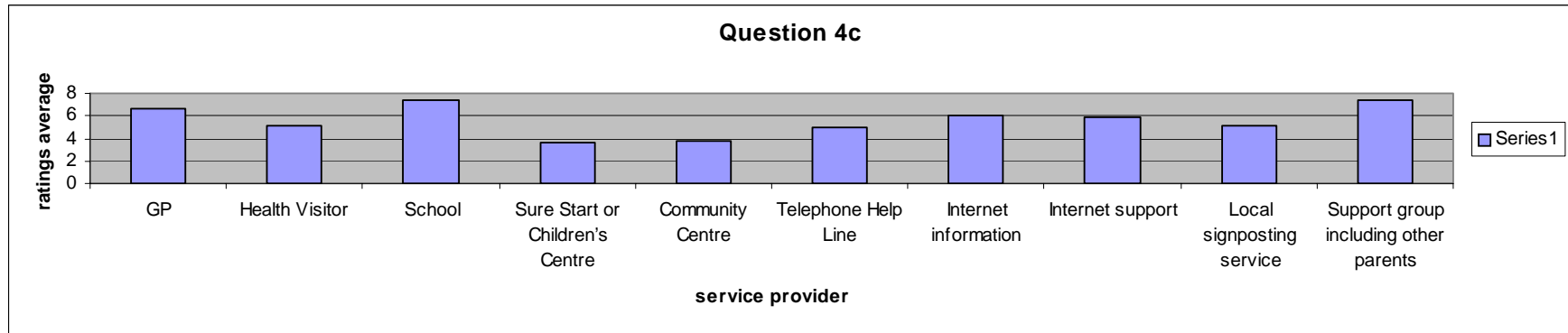
Messages:

A strong preference for going to family and friends was stated as well as preferences being fairly evenly distributed across the choices given. When Internet support and information is added together preference for using the Internet becomes more significant. An experienced and knowledgeable professional you can build a relationship with (health visitors were mentioned by many, and work often in people's homes) who is readily accessible and increased community capacity. The kind of impartial information and advice people think is most helpful is on general health issues, boundaries, sleep, stages of development, and bonding/building a relationship with children.

"Portage is INVALUABLE"

"A supportive health visitor, friends, nursery or pre school groups"

Please say which of these you would prefer to go to for advice, information and support for parenting 5-11 year olds



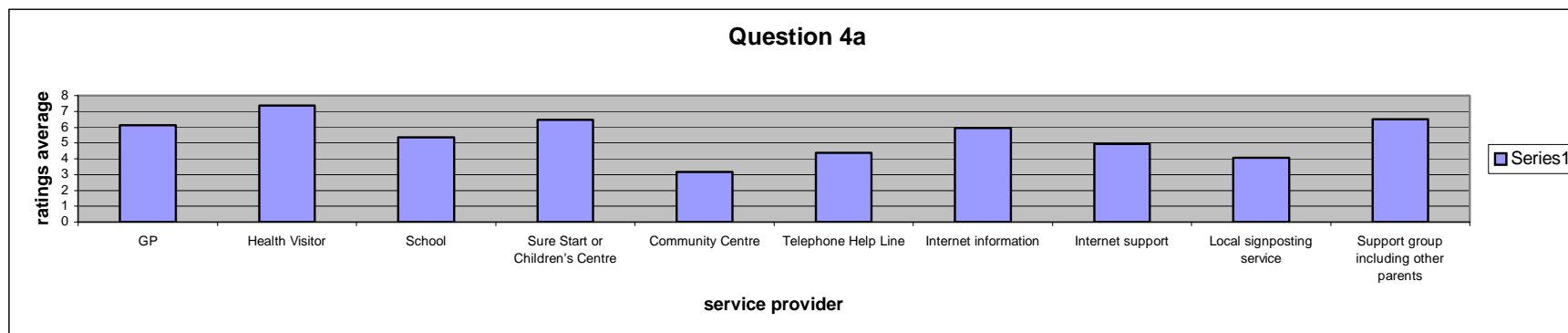
Messages:

Support from friends and family is a strong preference as well as getting support from other parents/parents groups with professional backup and schools. When Internet support and information is added together preference for using the Internet becomes more significant. The kind of support and advice considered most helpful is around starting school and changes at school behaviour, setting boundaries, sleep and healthy eating/exercise and early independence. Parent Support Advisers were mentioned. A technical error meant that health visitors were a choice on the electronic survey for the 5-11 age range, and were chosen by parents and carers indicating that this model would be welcomed by those with older children.

“Think advice around schools- not just on education is very good - use them as a community hub”

“Common sense and talking to other parents. No matter what the social services offer it is not going to match proper parental experience”

Please say which of these you would prefer to go to for advice, information and support for parenting 12-16 year olds



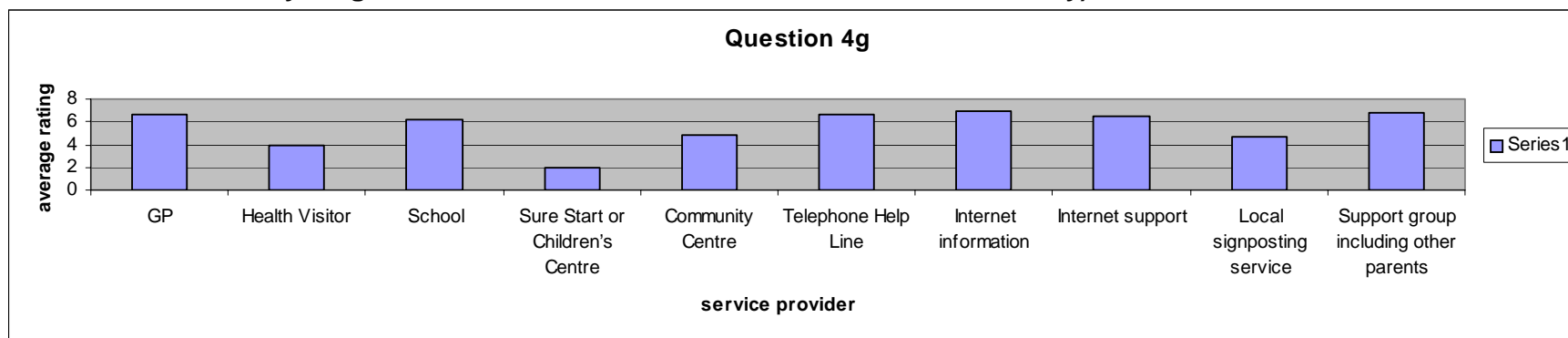
Messages:

Friends and family are again rated as the most important support alongside the service providers listed. A technical error meant that health visitors were a choice on the electronic survey this age range, and were chosen as a preference by a significant proportion of participants, indicating that those with older children would welcome this model. Also participants mentioned a Family Support Worker or Social Worker.

When asked what would be most helpful parents asked for advice on substance misuse, sexual health, bullying, relationships, and depression and targeted, age appropriate health and well being advice, more parental involvement at High School level and realistic careers advice. Peer support groups for children and parents were also suggested.

“More parent involvement at High School”

Please say which of these you would prefer to go to for advice, information and support for parenting over 16 year olds (up to 19 for most, up to 25 in certain circumstances including some young adults with learning difficulties and disabilities and some young adults who have been in the care of the local authority)



Messages

Support from friends and family again scored highly, but also support from organisations - the Voluntary and Community Sector was particularly mentioned for special and additional needs children - and statutory services – social services and Family Support Workers along with Connexions and careers advice. A technical error meant that health visitors were a choice on the electronic survey for over 16 year olds, and were chosen as a preference by a proportion of parents and carers indicating that this model would be welcomed by those with older children. Also participants mentioned a Family Support Worker or Social Worker. A family support service was a stated preference for one participant.

“Someone with a wide understanding of teenage issues.”

Information on and support with life skills and independent living, including drugs, alcohol and sex education as well as careers, financial and advice about young parenting. Again talking with peers and professionals with experience of teenage issues about parenting.

“Alcohol and drugs, and independence”

Parenting Support Strategy Draft Principles

“Principles seem very good, it is important to focus on supporting and educating parents - they are the ones who ultimately have a huge influence on their children” Norfolk parent

The majority of parents agreed with all of the draft principles and didn't consider that anything needed adding. Some participants also made suggestions and comments including:

- How will the impact be measured?
- All adults in the parenting role should be treated equally More recognition and support for non-resident parents
- State a commitment to make information available locally - libraries, schools, resource centres
- Add young people – don't just talk about children
- Don't promise what cant be delivered
- Difficult to understand language used
- Perhaps the involvement of opinions of children might be helpful
- Respect between all parties. Reassure those parents experiencing difficulties with their children that they will not be taken from them and placed with strangers.
- Involve parent/carers and young people with learning difficulties more in the process. More training for health visitors in working with disabled parents and add something about providing specialist support to parents with Learning Disabilities and/or Mental Health problems.
- Peers can be a great help – provide opportunities to meet with other parents - peer support, networking, drop-ins
- Make sure good service user involvement in all family support services and recognise and emphasise families strengths
- More for age 5-8 more stuff for dads
- Respect parents views on the services that are needed for their child; I refer to the invisible service that is speech and language therapy.

We asked what else could we do to involve parents and carers, as well as:

- Information in the local media – papers and radio
- Information and links on websites
- Surveys and consultation events
- Develop networks with groups of parents and carers that already meet
- Develop new networks and groups to look at particular issues
- Newsletter available through schools and on websites
- Representatives of parents and carers involved in decision-making
- Opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in lots of different ways

Comments and suggestions included:

- Make sure all the different services listen to families and report back what they do
- To make sure parents and carers feel they are important and to involve them and most important of all listen and carry out the things that are promised
- Make contacts with other settings and recruit parents to take the message out into the community. “Less giving the so-called experts the say”
- “Sending information to schools does not ensure they pass it on to parents. Perhaps that should be made compulsory?”
- “Face to face sessions are often the best as not all households in Norfolk have access to a computer, let alone the internet; and not all parents/carers can read.”
- Offer training for involving parents and carers
- “An advice line would be a great help with non-professionals running it, but available to contact if needed - not on a waiting list as most problems need immediate help”
- “Support local centres like young fathers groups MAP”
- Nothing else, just listen to the parents/carers and children

“Have a central point that can receive parent’s views on any problematic experience with statutory services. We don’t always want to make a big complaint - sometimes we just want to be able to have suggestions and comments heard and acknowledged. Then if sufficient people experience the same problem, you’ll know there’s something to work on.”

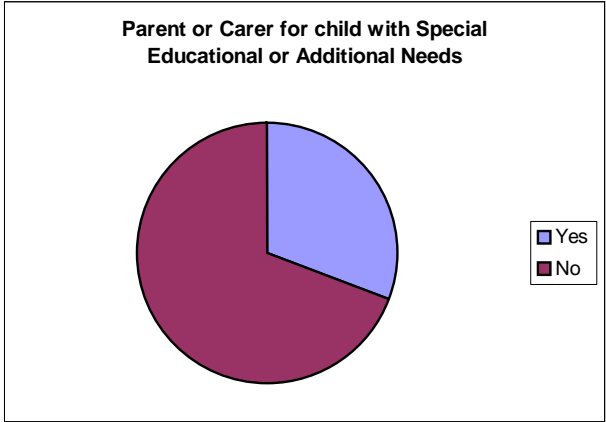
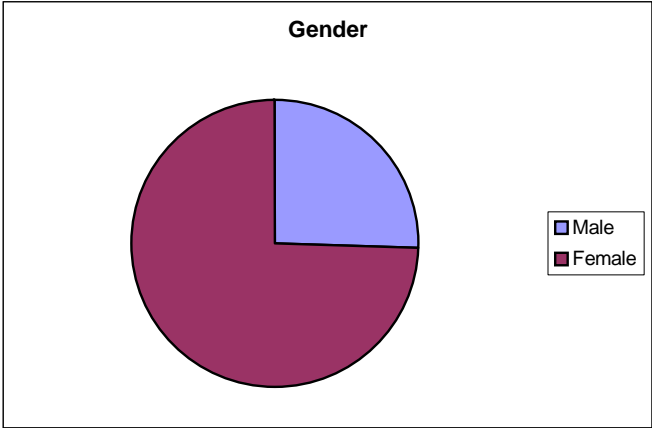
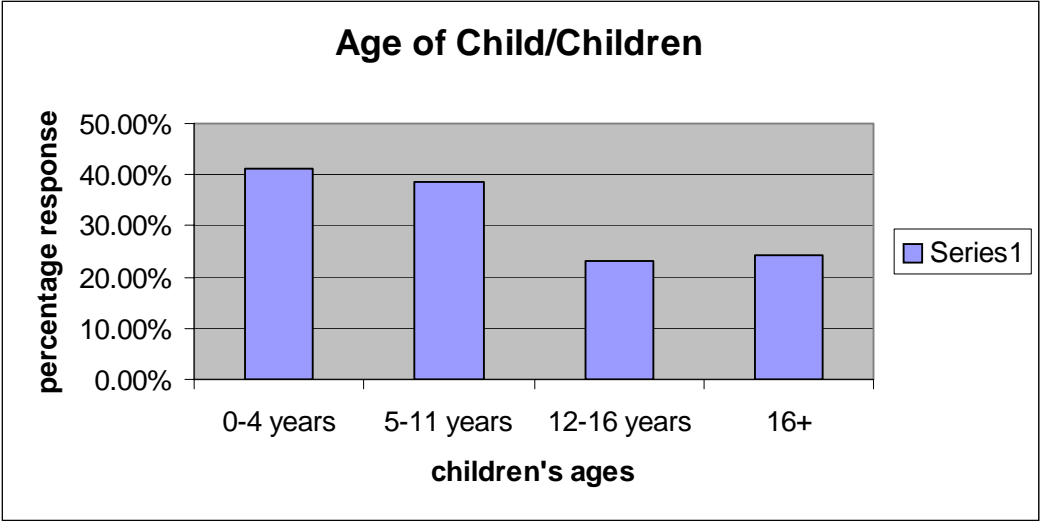
What we are doing

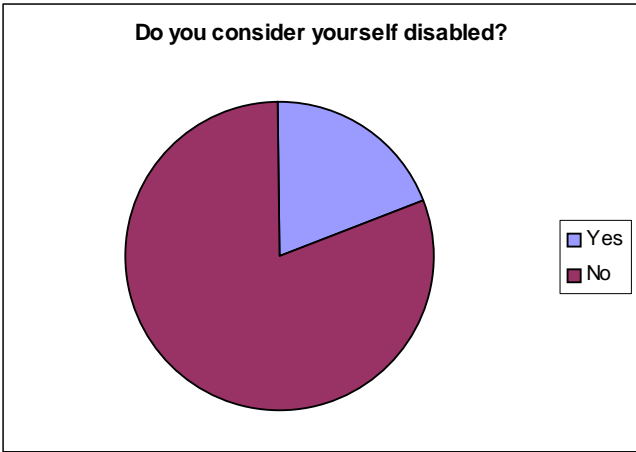
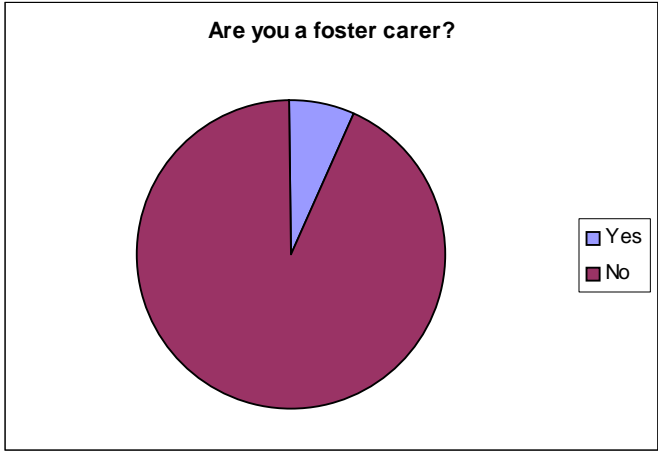
- These findings are informing the refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan, and have strengthened the messages about the importance of parents in the lives of children and young people. Any commissioning and action plans for each of the 5 outcomes will draw on the findings from this piece of work as well as other findings from children and young people. A specific action plan will be drawn up as a response to the messages from parents and carer.
- The Norfolk Parenting Support Strategy is being developed with reference to parents and carers views and comments through the input of the parents and carers focus group and the results of this survey
- The involvement of parents and carers in decision making will be further developed in response to the findings, including making sure all services are supported to involve parents and carers, with a toolkit. Peer Action Researchers (parents and carers who will do consultations in their own communities) are being recruited and there are various proposals that have been drafted as a result of the messages from parents including a proposal for supporting parents and carers in communities to set up more peer information and support services, particularly in areas where there are less services
- The feedback about better information about sex education has been considered as supporting evidence for a local campaign about sex education aimed at encouraging family members to talk more openly and sign posting to agencies, which has been funded and co-ordinated by the NSPCC
- In Norfolk we have a new Family Group Conference service to place the family at the centre of decision making when there are concerns about children and young people
- The development of a new Families Information Service in Norfolk will draw on the report
- Norfolk has submitted a bid to the DCSF for a Family Pathfinder partly as a result of staff being inspired by the call for more flexible services to support the most vulnerable families at risk of losing their children and/or their homes

- Norfolk Connexions service has a group of people looking at developing work with parents and carers
- The Building Schools For the Future and Primary Capital Programme team who are considering future developments in Norfolk schools are using the results of the survey to inform their proposals and also to inform further consultations of parents and carers
- The Healthy Schools team are promoting health in schools across the county
- The Norfolk DAAT is planning a response to the requests for more support and information for parents and carers to prevent young people misusing substances
- The Raising Aspirations team are looking at ways to address low expectations across the County
- The results of the survey will be further considered and as much of the learning as possible will be incorporated into future plans for the Children and Young People's Partnership Trust including looking at prevention and early intervention work across the county. There will be updates on what else we will be doing on www.everynorfolkchildmatters.org and there are themes which will be looked at more closely using different methods to make sure we take into account the views of diverse families
- The findings, what we are going to be asking next and what changes as a result of this survey and other consultations with children and young people and parents and carers and staff across the Children and Young People's Partnership Trust will be updated on the www.everynorfolkchildmatters.org website and produced as a report as part of the review of the 3 year Norfolk Children and Young People's Plan, due in Spring 2009.

Who we asked

50 participants with various life experience responded to the survey. They ranged from parents and carers who work in early years, education, voluntary sector, health and youth work settings and some parents who work with vulnerable young people and parents as well as those who attend support projects and grandparents.





Participants were diverse in many ways, however despite our community becoming increasingly diverse more than half of the participants were from the same racial background and described themselves as white British with their first language being English. Nearly half of the participants chose not to state their ethnicity or first language, with only one participant describing themselves as white other.

How we asked

An electronic on-line survey ran during the consultation period October – December 2007.

Links to the online survey as well as publicity material (flyers and posters) and electronic copies along with an offer of support to undertake group consultations or make the survey accessible to particular client groups were sent to a wide range of professionals within Children's Services and across the Children and Young People's Partnership Trust (CYPPT) for them to take part in, pass on, or support parents and carers to complete. Newsletters and websites advertised the survey, including the Norfolk Parent Partnership and Foster Carers newsletters and news items were profiled on the Childrens Services intranet and www.everynorfolkchildmatters.org . Some voluntary and community sector organisations supported parents to take part.

The County Council Consultation telephone line was advertised and had paper copies of the survey to send out to people who enquired.

Key professionals, including PSA's and teaching staff were briefed by the Parent Involvement Support worker face to face and provided with hard copies of a shorter, more accessible questionnaire.

There was a press release, and promotion of the survey in various forums including the voluntary and community sector, Children and Young People's Partnership Trust Operational Group and the Norfolk Disabled Parents Alliance AGM.

Groups, including those for young mothers and fathers were visited by the Parent Involvement Support Worker who worked one to one to interview and support parents to take part in the survey.

Challenges

- The views of over 50 parents and carers, (including the Parenting Support Strategy parents and carers focus group) from across the County gives an indication of themes that matter to families and raise issues that can be looked into further, however the sample of parents is not of a significant enough size to be considered statistically robust
- A participant asked a question about the cost of the survey. Staff time, travel and photocopying costs were the only costs related to this survey, as they were the only resources available at the time it was planned. Since this consultation process began the involvement of parents and carers in the further development of the Parenting Support Strategy has been supported by a Local Area Agreement Grant which will ensure that lots of different views are sought and listened to
- The involvement of parents and carers through distributing the survey to staff within Children's Services and across the CYPPT raised challenges. Many thanks to those staff who did ensure their client group had a say, however distribution routes did not appear to generate much response, and no enquiries were made about making the survey more accessible for particular client groups and there was a perceived conflict of interest with one organisation, which was reluctant to give out the survey offering a prize draw, as they wanted their clients to complete their own questionnaire
- There is under representation of people from Black, Minority and Ethnic backgrounds and newly emerging communities in this survey. The 'Let's Meet' event organised by the Norfolk County Council Public Involvement Group in March 2008 has helped support addressing this in future public involvement activity

The prize draw

£50 of shopping vouchers were won by a father from Great Yarmouth, who received the vouchers and was congratulated in person by Rosalie Monbiot, cabinet member for Children's Services, at a small award ceremony at county hall, which he attended with his daughter, (pictured below). He has moved into the area and feels that he is lucky to live in the East as the Great Yarmouth Parenting Support Strategy means "people talk to each other and know what support there is ". He is pleased that there are plans to make sure that lots of families views from different backgrounds are going to be taken into account in the future.



Acknowledgments and further information

Many thanks to all parents and carers who took part, the Norfolk Parenting Support Strategy Parents and Carers Focus Group who had input to the questions and to staff and projects across the Norfolk Children and Young People's Partnership Trust who supported this consultation, particularly the Parent Involvement Support Worker. Thanks also to the Great Yarmouth project Just 4 Dads who provided the picture on the front cover.

Please see www.everynorfolkchildmatters.org for public involvement resources or contact Norfolk County Council Children's Services Partnership and Participation team for support in involving children and young people and parents and carers in decision making, and Norfolk County Council Children's Services Parent and Carer Involvement Officer through our Children's Services customer service help line 0844 800 8001 if you want to know more about this consultation and others involving parents and carers, or if you would like to join the growing network of parents and carers who are registered to take part in decision making, including future surveys, consultations and focus groups.

To reference this document:

Francis, Kirsten (2008). *Parents and Carers Have Your Say Report 2008*: Norfolk County Council Children's Services



Parents and carers - have your say about things that affect your children and family



This could be:



At meetings



By post or over the telephone



Using computers – Email, online surveys or online chat rooms



Doing creative things like making a short film

Provide your details if you would like to help us improve services

Name

Address

Telephone number/s

Email address



I am happy to pass on consultations and information to people I know



I would like to know more about being a Peer Action Researcher

Please return to **Kirsten Francis**, Norfolk County Council Children's Services
Parent and Carer Involvement Officer, Commissioning and Performance,
County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL
email kirsten.francis@norfolk.gov.uk call or text **07769 742621**