



supporting families to support children



**PARENT INFORMATION POINT PILOT
EVALUATION REPORT
MARCH 2007
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Parenting Across Scotland

Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) is a multi-agency voluntary sector partnership funded by the Scottish Executive to provide a focus for issues and concerns affecting parents in Scotland.

PAS work focuses on

- sharing good practice on supporting parents;
- researching the issues and concerns of parents;
- sharing information on supportive services and developing ways they can work together;
- providing information to families to help parents bring up children; and
- representing the views of parents to policy-makers.

In 2006, PAS, with the support of the Scottish Executive, piloted Parent Information Points. These were based on the model developed by the National Family and Parenting Institute in England. The key aim of the PIPs was to *'deliver a universal service, accessed quickly and easily, ensuring that the sessions were packaged in a user-friendly, non-stigmatising, non-threatening way'*. They did this by providing a single two hour session in a school which focused on one of the three transitional stages. Parents were given an open invitation to attend. A local coordinator was identified in each area to pull together the session.

The main features of a PIP session were

- a marketplace of representatives of local support agencies;
- a 'ten top tips' presentation about child development at the relevant transitional stage; and
- presentations or workshops from other agencies on subjects relevant to the age group.

The pilot ran from May to November 2006. The evaluation occurred between May and February 2007.

Five PIPs were provided four focused on High Schools (2 in Edinburgh and 2 in Glasgow) and one focused on a pre-school project in Edinburgh.

Recommendations

1. When planning any parent information event

- Involve parents in shaping it.
- Know why you are involving other agencies and groups: do they meet the needs of the parents you are wanting to reach? Is there anyone missing?
- Involve children/young people in organising it.
- Engage the relevant schools, consider who from the school is most appropriate to involve - the headteacher? The guidance team? The Janitor?
- Link the event into a longer term programme of parent support.
- Time it to link-in with, or piggy-back on, other events that attract parents, such as parent evenings.
- Provide very clear details of what will happen at the event, at what times and where.
- Consider how parents will have the opportunity to talk to workers on a one-to one basis.
- Consider how you will know how successful the event has been.

2. Work to clarify and develop the role of PAS in supporting the development of partnerships between organisations and agencies to better develop parent information support.

3. Catch the focus and energy of the PIP pilot working groups to explore how best parent information support can be provided and developed at local community level.

4. Work to embed the provision of parent information support within a wider and deeper fabric of parent support that is part of a process of local community involvement which aims to develop a community of support for parents.

Key findings

The PIPs

- It is difficult to attract parents to Parent Information Points 16 parents, on average attended each PIP (the pilot provided five PIPs, to which 79 parents came). It is particular difficult to attract the parents of teenagers to parents events.
- Parents and agencies thought that PIP was a good idea, but the idea wasn't clear, a fifth of agencies (20%) thought it would be like a parents evening, and a third of parents who attended (23%) did so even though they had no idea what it was about.
- The market place was the most successful aspect of the PIP format, with 100% of parents finding it helpful. Some parents thought that the market place was more useful to their teenage children than to themselves.
- 81% of parents who attended the PIP found it helpful/interesting/informative with 58% of parents saying that the information available at the PIP was best part of it.
- The workshops were the second most successful aspect of the PIPs for parents, with two thirds (66%) finding them helpful and enjoyable, and 13% saying that they were the best aspect of the PIP.
- Just over a tenth (13%) of parents said that the best thing about the PIP was meeting other parents.
- 100% of parents who attended would recommend the PIP to a friend. Some parents had already passed information gathered at the PIP onto friends.
- Seventeen agencies, on average, participated in each PIP (85 overall).
- Just over a quarter of agencies (28%) anticipated low numbers of parents with a similar number of agencies (26%) anticipating a much higher turnout of parents.
- 48% of agencies thought that the PIPs were 'good' with 61% of agencies considering that the best thing about the PIP was the opportunity to network with other agencies.

- 25% of agencies thought that the opportunity to engage with parents was the best aspect of the PIP.
- The presentations were not the most popular aspect of the PIP pilot, with 26% of agencies saying that they were the worst aspect, and the two latter PIPs did not including a 'ten top tips' presentation in the programme at all. 23% of parents, however, found the presentations helpful.
- Participants in general (parents, agencies, pupil helpers) thought there was a good range of information (78%), with 60% saying that the PIP was 'useful', 55% saying that it was helpful and 48% saying that they would come again. 86% felt better informed about support services available to families, with 70% saying that they were likely to use services they found out about at the PIP and 78% of participants in general also felt better informed about the teenage years, with 66% saying that they felt more confident about parenting.

The PIP model

- Although PAS provided an outline structure (based on the NFPI PIP model), this was used flexibly with one PIP not focused on a school at all, two not including a 'top ten tips' presentation, and one on staging a young peoples drama performance.
- The timetabled structure of the PIP was problematic, especially as this wasn't clear to parents in advance of the event, 13% of parents said that the timing was the worst aspect of the PIP.
- 20% of agencies, if responsible for running a future PIP would use a drop-in rather than a timetabled structure.

Organisation and planning

The working group

- Four out of five PIPs involved the establishment of a working group, comprising representatives of local agencies and the appointment of a coordinator.
- The pre-school did not involve a working group, and PAS together with the pre-school project organised the event.
- Working groups were established approximately 5 months before the PIP and it became good practice for the working group to review the PIP approximately one month after the PIP.

The coordinator

PAS provided resourcing to appoint a coordinator. None of the coordinators was employed by the school. The coordinators role was not clear in advance to the coordinators and it involved a lot of administration.

The school

- The role of the school was very significant in the PIPs that were focused on the teenage years. This was led by the headteacher or the principal of the New Learning Community (NLC).
- Guidance/pastoral care teachers were not significantly involved in the PIP pilot.
- The PIPs provided schools with a network of contacts for parent support.
- The PIPs strengthened the relationship between the schools and the local community, especially those local agencies/groups that were involved in the PIP.
- School janitors played a key role in helping the PIP to go smoothly.
- Three quarters (74%) parents found out about the PIP through the school, although schools experienced administrative problems in sending out invitations.

Parenting Across Scotland

Was centrally and operationally involved in all of the PIPs this raised issues relating to

- The role of the coordinator.
- The nature of partnership with local agencies.
- PAS's strategic role in working with local authorities to enable and facilitate the role of schools in engaging in parent support work.

Conclusions

- It is very difficult to 'deliver a universal service, accessed quickly and easily, ensuring that the sessions were packaged in a user-friendly, non-stigmatising, non-threatening way' (the aim of PIP).
- Events, such as PIPs, which provide parents with information about support services are seen as a good idea.
- Parents who found their way into a PIP liked the provision of lots of different kinds of information in one place at one time.
- Single one-off events may not be as successful in providing parents with information as a longer term strategy to embed the provision of parent information within other more established (such as parents evenings) or generic (such as library) provision.
- The PIPs provided a valuable opportunity for agencies to network.
- The establishment of PIP working groups had provided a focus and impetus for the development of local inter-agency parent support work.
- The PIPs have provided an opportunity for schools to develop more effective relationships with their local community, including providing the school with a network of relevant contacts.
- The role of PAS in providing PIPs was unclear, and often confused with the role of the local PIP coordinator.



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Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) is a multi-agency voluntary sector partnership funded by the Scottish Executive to provide a focus for issues and concerns affecting parents in Scotland.

PAS partners:

- Aberlour Childcare Trust
- Capability Scotland
- CHILDREN 1ST
- Relate Scotland
- Family Mediation Scotland
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Scottish Adoption
- Scottish Marriage Care
- Stepfamily Scotland

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