

**An evaluation of Family Links
training in the
Nurturing Programme**

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Executive Summary

Much of the research in the parenting field has concentrated on the content of parenting programmes, with little consideration given to the training of the practitioners who will be expected to deliver it in the real world. As Moran et al (2004) highlighted in “What Works in Parenting Support”, a critical factor in the success of parenting groups lies in the quality of parent group facilitators. Family Links viewed that they, and commissioners of services, need to use an effective programme plus provide training that will equip parent workers with the skills and confidence they need to deliver the programme. Family Links therefore commissioned Young People in Focus to examine the quality of their training and its impact on trainees.

The aim of this research was to evaluate the Nurturing Programme Parent Group Leader training run by Family Links, from the perspective of the trainees. The focus was on understanding trainees’ hopes and expectations for the course, the knowledge and skills that they gain from it, levels of confidence in running parenting programmes before and after the training, and key ‘take away’ messages for their work with parents.

All those undertaking Nurturing Programme training over a three month period between January 2011 and March 2011 were invited to take part in the research. Trainees could opt out of the research if they did not wish to take part. Three rounds of data collection were undertaken – before the training, immediately after the training, and 2-4 months later. 14 of the follow-up questionnaires were undertaken as telephone interviews. In total 258 trainees completed pre-course questionnaires, 257 completed post-course questionnaires, and 132 completed follow-up questionnaires. Question formats were both quantitative (for example yes/no and 1-5 scales) and qualitative (write-in answers).

The main findings from the research were as follows:

➤ Pre-course questionnaires:

- The majority of trainees were experienced family workers, with 75.7% having 1.1-10 years experience in the field
- Although the trainees were experienced in working with families, only a third (38.8%) had run a parenting course before
- Participants attended the training for five main reasons, with most participants mentioning two or three of these:
 - for career progression / to improve their CV
 - because training and professional development is a good thing, and a way to improve their practice

- to develop specific knowledge and skills
 - because the Nurturing Programme has a positive reputation
 - they were told to attend by their manager / organisation
- Trainees were looking to get a variety of things from the training, including:
 - a qualification / training certificate
 - evidence and research information in relation to parenting support
 - new ideas, 'hints and tips' in relation to running parenting groups
 - greater personal awareness and understanding
 - learning how to run a parenting group for those who have never run one, or learning how to run them better for more experienced practitioners
 - a holistic, whole family approach
 - Levels of confidence in running parenting programmes, and addressing particular issues with parents, were low-medium prior to the start of the course – ranging from 2.6 – 3.4 on a 1-5 scale where 5 was 'extremely confident'

➤ **Post-course questionnaires:**

- Trainees rated the Nurturing Programme training very highly overall – 80.1% rated it 10, on a scale of 1-10 where 10 was 'extremely useful'. The average for all participants was 9.7.
- Trainees reported gaining a range of knowledge and skills from the training, as follows:
 - knowledge of: specific techniques and ways of working with parents; the importance of self-esteem and valuing people; knowledge about evidence and 'what works'; and 'hints and tips' in parenting work
 - skills in: specific methods and techniques (such as group dynamics, time management); empathy and interpersonal skills; using a nurturing and holistic approach; self-awareness and personal development.
- In response to a question on whether the training met expectations, all 247 trainees (ie 100%) said that it had. Many added that the training surpassed their expectations, was 'life-changing', 'transforming', and the best training they had ever attended.
- Participants' confidence in different aspects of running parenting programmes increased between the start and end of the training, with

- Participants considered the course facilitators to be extremely good modellers of how to run courses for parents – 94.4% rated the facilitators as 5 (on a scale of 1-5 where 5 was 'extremely effective')
- Participants compared the Nurturing Programme favourably with other training they had attended. It was described by many as much better than other training because of:
 - the focus on the family rather than individuals, ie a more holistic approach
 - the emphasis on reasons behind behaviour, and on understanding human behaviour
 - the focus on emotions and well-being, of parents, carers, and children
 - the fact that it is evidence-based.

A small number of participants felt that it compared less well to other training because of an insufficient attention to issues of culture/race, and the impact of class and poverty on parenting.

- Trainees reported using the learning from the course in other areas of their work and personal lives. This included:
 - in one-to-one work and casework
 - in the practitioner's general approach to their work, and with their colleagues
 - in other group-based work
 - in their personal lives and relationships.
- Just under three-quarters (72.1%) of trainees expected to run a Nurturing Programme course in the next six months
- All the trainees said that they would recommend the Nurturing training to others who were working with parents.

➤ **Follow-up questionnaires and comparisons between time points:**

- Participants assessed the training as have been very useful to them at the follow-up point, 2-4 months after the training. 81.9% of trainees rated it as 9 or 10, on a 1-10 scale where 10 is 'extremely useful'. The average was 9.3.

- A quarter of the sample had run or were currently running a Nurturing Programme course, since the completion of their training. Of the remainder, most expected to run a course in the next six months.
- Trainees reported having used the learning from the Nurturing Programme in other areas of their lives, including in one-to-one work, with colleagues, in other group-based work, and in their personal lives.
- Levels of confidence in running parenting programmes had increased, from pre-course to follow-up. Changes in mean scores were as follows between these two time points (on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is 'no confidence' and 5 is 'very confident'):
 - confidence in running a parenting programme in the next few weeks: 2.6 to 4.2
 - confidence in supporting parents with difficulties or issues with their children: 3.4 to 4.3
 - confidence in supporting parents with their family relationships: 3.1 to 4.3
 - confidence in promoting the emotional health of children and parents: 3.1 to 4.4.

Overall, the four day Nurturing Programme training is considered to have met its objectives, and to have a very positive impact on the knowledge and skills of parenting practitioners, enabling them in turn to support parents and families.

1.0 Background, methods, and sample

1.1 Background and aims of the project

This evaluation was commissioned by Family Links. Family Links is a national charity promoting the emotional health of parents and children, through the use of the Nurturing Programme. The programme was originally developed in the USA and brought to the UK in 1992. Family Links was established in 1997 and has the exclusive license to train practitioners in the UK. Over 5000 Parent Group Leaders have been trained to deliver the Nurturing Programme for parents. The core concept of the Nurturing Programme is that feelings drive behaviour. By enabling parents and children to understand and manage their own feelings, the Nurturing Programme aims to enhance parenting skills, and improve behaviour and learning in children.

Much of the research in the parenting field has concentrated on the content of parenting programmes, with little consideration given to the training of the practitioners who will be expected to deliver it in the real world. As Moran et al (2004) highlighted in “What Works in Parenting Support”, a critical factor in the success of parenting groups lies in the quality of parent group facilitators. Family Links viewed that they, and commissioners of services, need to use an effective programme plus provide training that will equip parent workers with the skills and confidence they need to deliver the programme. Family Links therefore commissioned Young People in Focus to examine the quality of their training and its impact on trainees.

The aim of the project was therefore to evaluate the effectiveness of the four day Parent Group Leader training from the perspective of trainees, focussing on the extent to which the training achieved its aims. In addition, the aim was to explore whether the training was used more broadly by participants in other areas of their work, for example in their one-to-one work.

1.2 Research design, methods, and sample

The sample for the evaluation was every person who undertook the Nurturing Programme Parent Group Leader training between January 2011 and March 2011. These courses took place across England and Wales and involved approximately 270 people during this period.

The aim was to invite all those who participated in training during this period to get involved in the evaluation. It was decided to collect data from this group at three time points – before the four-day training course, immediately after the four days training, and a follow-up 2-4 months after the training.

Questionnaires were used to collect the majority of the data, with some telephone interviews also conducted with a sub-sample. Further information about the methods are given below, with copies of the three versions of the questionnaire included in the appendix.

All 270 people enrolled on courses in the three month period concerned received a letter from Family Links, explaining the purpose and structure of the evaluation. At this point participants could opt out of the evaluation, and take no further part in it. Only two participants did so. Participants were reminded that if they did choose to take part in the evaluation, they could still opt out at any point. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their data, and that it would be destroyed once the evaluation was completed.

The three questionnaires were drafted, and piloted with four trainees who had recently attended Nurturing Programme training. A number of changes were made as a result and final versions produced. The three questionnaires – described in this report as ‘pre-course’, ‘post-course’ and ‘follow-up’ - collected the following information:

Pre-course questionnaire: trainees’ background and experience, demographic information, reasons for attending the training, expectations for the training, and current levels of confidence in relation to running group-based parenting programmes.

Post-course questionnaire: trainees’ overall assessment of the value of the training, what knowledge and skills they took from it, whether they have used the learning from the course in other aspects of their work, whether they plan to run a course themselves (and if so when), and their levels of confidence in relation to running group-based parenting programmes.

Follow-up questionnaire: trainees’ overall assessment of the value of the training, whether they are running or plan to run a course, and their levels of confidence in relation to running group-based parenting programmes.

Questions were asked in both quantitative formats (for example asking respondents to respond on a 1-5 scale) and qualitative formats (where participants wrote in the answers). Copies of the questionnaires are included in the appendix.

Most participants completed the pre-course questionnaire in the first hour of the training course, and the post-course questionnaire in the final hour at the end of the training. Completed questionnaires were put into envelopes which were sealed and sent directly to the author at YPF. The follow-up questionnaire was emailed directly to participants from YPF, with a follow-up reminder sent 10-14 days later for non-responders. By this point, some participants had left their jobs

and/or changed their email address, and so could not be contacted. This is therefore reflected in the lower response rate for the follow-up questionnaire described later in this section. Note also that 15 people on one course were only sent the follow-up questionnaire, and are included in the data below.

Participants attending two courses were asked to complete the follow-up questionnaire over the phone, in order to get more detailed information about their experiences of their course. Out of the 28 people on these two courses, 14 completed a telephone interview. Of the remainder, four participants opted to complete the written questionnaire without doing a telephone interview. The telephone interviews lasted between 15 and 35 minutes.

In order to encourage participants to complete all three rounds of the evaluation, an incentive was offered. Trainees were told that any person who completed all three questionnaires (and/or telephone interviews) would be entered into a prize draw. Three prizes of £50 worth of Family Links materials were offered. The winners were selected randomly from the list of all those with three rounds of data.

1.3 Analysis of the data and structure of the report

All the quantitative data were entered onto a database. Statistical analyses were undertaken as appropriate, for example averages were calculated for responses on a 1-5 and 1-10 scale. The qualitative data were analysed thematically, identifying the main themes and issues that were given to the questions. Where percentages are presented, these are valid per cent for that question. Any significant amounts of missing data (more than 10%) are noted on each question.

The data is presented below. First, section 1.4 details the characteristics of the sample, including gender, ethnicity etc. Section 2.1 then describes the results of the pre-course questionnaire, section 2.2 the post-course results, and section 2.3 details the results from the follow-up questionnaires including comparisons with previous questionnaires. Note that in order to maintain confidentiality, the results are presented for the sample as a whole, without reference to any individuals or individual courses.

1.4 Sample numbers and characteristics

The numbers returning questionnaires and completing telephone interviews across the three time points were as follows:

Table 1: Participant numbers across the three time points

| | Pre-course questionnaires | Post-course questionnaires | Follow-up questionnaires |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Numbers of questionnaires completed | 258 | 257 | 132 (including 14 questionnaires completed over the telephone) |

As can be seen from this table, 132 of the 258 people who completed pre-course questionnaires provided follow-up data. This is a follow-up rate of 51.1%, which is a very good level of response given that people were asked to provide data over three time points. Also, it should be noted that by the third data collection point, some participants had left their jobs and so were not able to be contacted to provide a post-course questionnaire. In total, 112 trainees had completed questionnaires or telephone interviews at all three time points.

In terms of gender, there were 24 male respondents and 224 female respondents. Ten people did not state their gender, or it was unclear.

In terms of ethnicity, the sample was as follows:

Table 2: Sample ethnicity

| Self-assessed ethnicity | White | Black / Asian / Caribbean | Mixed / dual heritage | Other or missing |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Number and % | 192 (74.4%) | 43 (16.6%) | 14 (5.4%) | 9 (3.5%) |

As these figures show, a fifth of the trainees were from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the sample was White females, which reflects the composition of the parenting field nationally.

Further information relating to the trainees' current job roles, parenting qualifications and parenting experience is detailed in section 2.1.

2.0 Results

The results from the evaluation are presented below for the pre-course (2.1), post-course (2.2), and follow-up questionnaires (2.3). Comparisons between the time points are made where appropriate in section 2.3.

2.1 Pre-course questions

The responses in this section are detailed for the 258 people who completed pre-course questionnaires.

Participants' main job role / title

The majority of trainees were currently working in the parenting field, and/or with young people and families more broadly. A small number (12 participants) stated that they were currently unemployed or waiting to hear about a new job. Participants had a variety of job roles, including Parent Support Advisor, School-home Liaison Officer, YOT Parenting Worker and Social Worker. Others had a variety of roles in the charity and voluntary sector. Some stated that they had two or more part-time jobs, mainly covering these roles.

Number of years participants have been working with parents

The trainees included those who had many years experience of working with parents, and those who were newer to the field. This is represented in the table below:

Table 3: Trainees' years of experience in working with parents

| Years of experience in parenting | Less than one year | 1.1 – 5 years | 5.1 – 10 years | 10 years or more |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| Numbers and % | 15 (6.0%) | 98 (39.5%) | 90 (36.2%) | 45 (18.1%) |

As this table shows, the majority of those who attended the training had experience of working with parents. In total, 75.7% of the participants on the training had between 1.1 and 10 years experience in working with parents.

Participants’ highest level of qualification, in general

Participants had a range of qualifications in general. One fifth of the participants left this section blank. Of the remainder, participants listed the following qualifications, grouped into broad categories:

Table 4: Trainees highest level of qualification

| Qualification level | HND / NVQ / NNEB | Certificate / Diploma | Degree | Masters / Postgraduate |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Number and % | 58 (27.8%) | 56 (26.9%) | 94 (45.1%) | 22 (10.5%) |

As this table shows, the participants on the training had a high level of education. Over half of the sample had a degree or postgraduate qualification.

Whether participants have any qualifications in working with parents, and if so at what level

The majority of participants did not have any qualifications in working with parents. In total, 82 (33.1%) said that they had a qualification in parenting. However, trainees’ comments in this section suggest some confusion between having *attended a training course* in working with parents, and having a *qualification* in working with parents. Thus it is possible that this figure over-represents the number of people who had a qualification in working with parents. The qualifications that the 82 trainees said that they had included:

- OCN 3 Facilitating Parent Education
- Open University qualification
- Social work degree / qualification
- City and Guilds Working With Parents
- Triple P accredited training
- CWDC approved course/s.

Whether participants have undertaken training in any other parenting programmes

The trainees were asked whether they had undertaken training in other parenting programmes, and if so what. The majority of participants mentioned at least one training they had attended, accounting for 80.8% of the respondents. The training that they had attended is given in the table below – note that most people named more than one programme.

Table 5: Other parenting courses trainees had attended

| Course / training attended | Number | % |
|---|--------|-------|
| Triple P | 44 | 23.0% |
| Escape | 34 | 17.8% |
| Incredible Years | 15 | 7.9% |
| Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities | 35 | 18.3% |
| Families and Schools Together (FAST) | 6 | 3.1% |
| Mellow Parenting | 18 | 9.1% |
| Parenting Positively | 17 | 8.9% |
| Strengthening Families 10-14 | 22 | 11.5% |
| Solihull Approach (group training) | 53 | 27.7% |
| Other (included courses/training provided by Local Authorities and local charities) | 64 | 33.5% |

As this table shows, the participants had attended a range of courses. The most popular trainings attended were Triple P, the Solihull approach, and Strengthening Families. In addition, a number of people had attended courses in their local area, provided by Local Authorities and charities. Some participants added a note to this section, to say that the latter courses were often quite short, ie a half day or one day training course provided by the Local Authority or a local organisation.

Whether participants have experience of running parenting groups

The majority of the trainees had not run parenting groups before – 95 (38.8%) had run them compared with 150 (61.2%) who had not. Of those who had run them, they had run between one and 25. The participants had used a range of training programmes and models in the courses that they had run, including all those listed in the previous question. Many added that they did not use any single models or approaches, but used a ‘pick and mix’ approach. For example:

“My organisation offers different courses – Triple P, Incredible Years mainly. It depends who’s running it and what training they’ve done”

“I don’t use a single approach. I pick and mix, a bit of this training, a bit of that. It seems to work”

“It depends who I’m working with, what suits those clients. Often I use different bits of different courses”

Why participants signed up for the Nurturing Programme training

The trainees gave a wide range of reasons for deciding to undertake Nurturing Programme training. These were classified into the following five categories, with examples given:

➤ Career / CV:

“I want to progress, so it’s good for my CV. I’m ambitious”

“My career is important to me. I’m trying to get as many qualifications as possible”

“To get ahead you need as many qualifications / certificates as possible”

“I want to ‘move up the ladder’, so I need to train widely, and get qualifications in recognised programmes”

➤ Training and CPD is always ‘a good thing’:

“I believe we should always be learning. I try to do as much professional development as possible”

“I want to develop my skills and knowledge, to do my job as well as I can”

“We can all get stale in our work. I want to keep learning”

➤ Specific knowledge or skills that people wanted to develop:

“I’m new to working with parents. I want to learn how to run parenting courses, and how to work with them”

“Group work, interpersonal skills, dealing with issues and difficulties”

“I want hints and tips from more experienced people”

“The confidence to run courses for parents. Learning how to do what I do better”

➤ Positive view of Nurturing Programme training:

“My colleague has done this training, and was very positive about it, so I wanted to do it too”

“The focus on emotional health in families isn’t addressed in other courses. That’s why I signed up”

“The whole approach, holistic. A lot of training is patchy, skills based. I wanted to work with the whole parent, the whole family”

➤ Required to by manager / organisation:

“I have to say I don’t know much about it. I was told to go on it by my manager, but it looks very useful. I’m looking forward to it”

“We were looking for parenting training in our area, and this one came up. So I didn’t really choose it, it chose me”

“I was told to attend. My organisation thought it would be good if someone went”

It should be noted that most people gave more than one reason for attending the training, with many people giving three or four.

What participants hope to get from the Nurturing training, in general

This question asked about hopes for the training in general, while the following two questions asked about the specific knowledge and information, and skills, that participants wanted to gain. Some respondents indicated that their answer to one of these questions was addressed in another, or put their whole response under the ‘general’ question. The analysis of this section therefore extracted, as far as possible, the general and the specific hopes for the training. However, it should be acknowledged that there was inevitably some overlap in these areas.

The trainees were looking to get a variety of things, in general, from the Nurturing Programme training. These included the following, with examples:

➤ A qualification:

“To have a certificate, to say I’m trained in this programme”

“Knowledge that advances my career, a new qualification”

➤ Evidence and research:

“Evidence about the effectiveness of their [Nurturing Programme’s] approach”

“Why certain things work and what doesn’t, what’s the evidence”

“Research about what works in supporting families. I don’t want just anecdotes and opinions”

➤ New ideas and perspectives:

“Meeting others and learning from them, what they’ve tried”

“Hints and tips”

“Ideas from the tutors. Things I can try, new things”

➤ Greater personal awareness and understanding:

“Learning about myself, my strengths and weaknesses”

“I’d like some transferable knowledge and skills to use in my own parenting and relationships”

“Understanding myself more”

“Managing myself + the emotions parenting work raises”

➤ Learning how to run a parenting group / run one better:

“I’m new to parenting, I want to learn how to run groups properly”

“Hints and tips about running a course for parents, doing it better”

- A holistic approach:

“It did attract me, the holistic approach, looking at families in the round, not just symptoms”

“Understanding families and how to work with them. Thinking about the whole family system”

“Family Links promotes a holistic approach – that’s what I want”

What *knowledge/information* participants particularly want to get from the course

The main responses to this question were categorised as follows, with examples:

- How to support families effectively:

“Up to date knowledge and research. What works”

“Current thinking in family work”

“I need to refresh my knowledge in this area”

“What works in work with parents and carers”

- Good practice in running parenting groups:

“I want to run my groups better, best practice info”

“Hints, tips, new ideas about running group-based programmes”

“Modelling. See what the tutors do and copy that if it’s good”

“Ideas for dealing with difficult issues (and people) in groups”

- New ideas and perspectives:

“Meeting others and learning from them, what they’ve tried”

“Hints and tips”

“Ideas from the tutors. Things I can try, new things”

- Evidence and current knowledge:

“The latest research and evidence”

“Evidence-based practice ideas. Theories”

“I trained in social work 20 years ago, I need up to date knowledge and research”

What *skills* participants would you like to develop as a result of doing the course

The main responses to this question were categorised as follows, with examples:

- Dealing with difficult issues and people:

“Managing the really difficult issues that come up – non-engagement, people hogging time, inappropriate comments”

“How to manage the difficult people you can get on courses. I’ve worked in this field for a long time but I still find this difficult”

“Ideas for how to manage the many issues that arise on courses”

“Group management – timings, endings, when people get upset”

- The realities of running a group for people new to this field:

“I am daunted by it [running a group]. I want to know everything!”

“Things to avoid, the things that experienced people know”

“Everything! How to recruit parents, good practice in groups, hints and tips”

- Personal knowledge and understanding:

“Understanding myself more. You can’t support others without understanding yourself”

“Dealing with my emotions, what parenting work raises for you”

“Personal growth”

“My own beliefs, what I bring and it’s impact on my work”

- Interpersonal skills:

“Active listening. Proper active listening and how to do it”

“Reflective practise, reflecting on my own work and my organisation’s”

“Dealing with conflict in groups – what’s my role”

“Being assertive, dealing with things properly. Taking charge”

➤ Implementing research evidence:

“Having the skill of putting evidence into practise”

“Moving on from ‘knowing’ – what to do”

“Being able to implement new learning and good practise effectively”

Current levels of confidence in running parenting programmes

Four questions were asked at all three time points, to assess the level of confidence that trainees felt in addressing different aspects of running a parenting group. The results are given here:

How confident would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks?

Table 6: Level of confidence in running parenting courses, pre-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Response | 34 (13.1%) | 73 (28.6%) | 103 (40.3%) | 37 (14.5%) | 8 (3.1%) |

The average on this question was 2.6, indicating most participants had a low level of confidence in their ability to run a parenting course prior to the training.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children?

Table 7: Level of confidence in supporting parents, pre-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Response | 7 (2.7%) | 31 (12.1%) | 91 (35.4%) | 103 (40.1%) | 25 (9.7%) |

The average on this question was 3.4, indicating a medium level of confidence in supporting families in difficulty prior to the course.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships?

Table 8: Level of confidence in supporting family relationships, pre-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Response | 11 (4.3%) | 50 (19.6%) | 108 (42.1%) | 75 (29.3%) | 12 (4.7%) |

The average on this question was 3.1, indicating a medium level of confidence in supporting family relationships pre-course.

How confident do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents?

Table 9: Level of confidence in promoting emotional health, pre-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Response | 6 (2.4%) | 52 (20.5%) | 109 (42.9%) | 70 (27.6%) | 17 (6.7%) |

The average on this question was 3.1, indicating a medium level of confidence in promoting emotional health in families.

As these four tables show, participants had a low to medium level of confidence in running parenting programmes at the start of the training.

Other comments about any aspect of your experience in the parenting field, or training in the Nurturing Programme

Relatively few participants made any additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. Of those that did, they fell into the following two themes, with examples:

- Enthusiasm and excitement about the course:

“I’m very excited about doing this course. Content looks excellent”

“I’m hoping I’m going to learn a lot, it looks fab”

“I have high expectations of this course, my colleague said it was great”

- Concerns and/or anxieties about the training:

“I am a bit anxious about this training. I’m new to the parenting field, and I hope I can keep up!”

“Four days is a lot out of my working time. Hoping I can concentrate on the course and attend the whole thing”

“It’s a big investment, four days, hope it’s worth it by the end”

“I don’t know much about the training, and what it covers. I hope I enjoy it”

2.2 Post-course questions

The responses in this section are based on the 257 people who completed post-course questionnaires.

Overall, how useful the course was to participants

The responses on this question were listed on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was ‘not at all useful’ and 10 was ‘extremely useful’. The responses were as follows – note that no one scored the course as lower than six:

Table 10: overall assessment of usefulness of course

| Score | 6 and under | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Numbers and % | 1 (0.4%) | 2 (0.8%) | 21 (8.4%) | 26 (10.4%) | 201 (80.1%) |

The average score on this question was 9.7. As this shows, the participants rated the course very highly. In total over 80% of the participants rated it 10 out of 10.

What *knowledge/information* participants gained from the course

As noted above in section 2.1, many participants combined their responses to this question with answers to the one below. The analysis therefore separated out the responses to these questions where possible. The knowledge and information that participants said that they gained from the course were categorised as follows, with examples:

- Specific techniques and ways of working:

“Using the reward charts, and rewards generally. Very useful, I’ve used them a lot since”

“The ‘I statements’, very powerful. They really work”

“Stressing consequences alongside choices. It really works. Parents understand it and use it in my experience”

“The four constructs really help. Very useful for working with parents”

“Being clear about intent, ie what parents want children to do, where they want to get to. It’s essential to help parents with this. I now feel able to do this”

➤ Understanding the importance of self-esteem and valuing people:

“I think I never really realised the importance of this [self-esteem]. Parents need to help their children to value themselves, and know they are valued, unconditionally”

“That everyone is important because they exist, because they are who they are. That was a very powerful message from the training for me, and parents must learn that too”

“Some parents have no confidence in their parenting. We need to help them to be confident in what they do, and pass that confidence to their children”

“Respect is a part of self-esteem, I learnt that. A lot of parents don’t respect children, and children don’t respect parent. I need to teach that to the parents I work with. That respect is the core of self-esteem and value”

➤ Knowledge about evidence and ‘what works’:

“I found the research evidence presented excellent. What’s effective, what’s not. That was excellent for me”

“The comment on research and evidence were very good. The references to theory were good. Understanding why we’re doing what we’re doing”

“The attachment information, the theories, the research summaries. Very good”

➤ 'Hints and tips':

"I learnt lots of things from the other people on the course. Hints and tips, ideas, suggestions. Very useful"

"The tutors modelling different things – doing exercises, answering questions, I learnt a lot"

"Different ways of dealing with issues, different ideas and perspectives. I learnt so much"

What skills participants gained from the course

The skills that participants said that they gained from the course were as follows:

➤ Confidence in running parenting programmes / Nurturing Programme

"I feel able to tackle a parenting course now. I haven't run one before, but I do have the confidence to run my first one"

"A lot of skills, mainly confidence that I can run the Programme and make it useful to parents"

"I feel confident in my abilities, much more confident than I did. The training was very affirming"

➤ Specific skills and techniques in running parenting programmes:

"Loads of ideas, hints and tips, suggestions. I got so much from it"

"Managing group dynamics, splitting up groups, general groupwork skills"

"Time management on courses. Really important but very difficult. I learnt a lot"

"Key messages to get across, and focussing on that in all activities. I will be more focussed in my work in future"

➤ Empathy and interpersonal skills

"Definitely [I gained] interpersonal skills – empathy, active listening. Very useful"

"I would say I'm now more genuinely empathic to parents. I find I listen first and try to understand, and then decide what approach to take, not the other way round"

"Active listening, understanding, empathy"

"The tutors modelled all the key interpersonal skills you need on courses really well"

- Understanding and using a 'nurturing' and holistic approach:

"I understand the ethos of the course, and can have a go at implementing it now"

"I wanted a more holistic approach in my work, and this training has really given me this. I feel more skilled in taking a holistic approach with my families"

"Nurturing people, valuing them, how important that is"

- Self-awareness and personal development

"I'm much more aware now of what I bring emotionally to my work, and my own values. That helps me approach people more openly and honestly"

"I'm more skilled in understanding myself and why I react/respond to parents in the way I do. That's key to effective work with families. Essential"

"I understand my own emotions and parents more. Really good"

Whether the training met participant expectations

All those who responded to this question (247) answered 'yes', ie a 100% positive response rate. A small number of people said that they were not sure what to expect, or that they didn't have any particularly high expectations, but had still answered yes to this question. Another group stated, simply, that they had got what they wanted to from the course. For example:

"Definitely, yes. I wanted to learn more about groupwork, and running the Nurturing programme for parents, and I have"

"My expectations were met. The course was well run and I feel I've learnt a lot about how to run this programme"

Many people were particularly positive in their responses, stating that in many ways the training they attended had exceeded their expectations:

“I’ve worked in the parenting field for 15 years, and this was the best training I’ve ever attended. It surpassed my expectations”

“Much much better than I expected. I learnt so much”

“It definitely met my expectations, and more. 11 out of 10!”

“Definitely met, and surpassed, my expectations. The best training I’ve been to, ever, and I’ve been to a lot!”

Current levels of confidence in running parenting programmes

The participants responses to the confidence questions are detailed in the four tables below:

How confident would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks?

Table 11: Level of confidence in running parenting programmes, post-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | 4 | 50 | 139 | 54 |
| | --- | (1.6%) | (20.2%) | (56.2%) | (21.9%) |

The average on this question was 4.0, indicating a good level of confidence if the trainee was asked to run a course in the next few weeks.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children?

Table 12: Level of confidence in supporting parents experiencing difficulties, post-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | 2 | 19 | 130 | 97 |
| | --- | (0.8%) | (7.7%) | (52.4%) | (39.1%) |

The average on this question was 4.3, indicating a good level of confidence in supporting parents who have difficulties with their children, by the end of the course.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships?

Table 13: Level of confidence in supporting parents' family relationships, post-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | 2 | 31 | 134 | 92 |
| | --- | (0.8%) | (12.4%) | (53.8%) | (36.9%) |

The average on this question was 4.1, indicating a good level of confidence amongst trainees, on completing the course, in supporting parents' family relationships.

How confident do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents?

Table 14: Level of confidence in promoting emotional health, post-course

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | --- | 23 (9.2%) | 134 (53.8%) | 92 (36.9%) |

The average on this question was 4.3, indicating a good level of confidence amongst trainees, on completing the course, in promoting emotional health.

As these four tables show, the trainees were much more confident in their abilities to run parenting courses and address issues of emotional health, by the end of the training. In section 2.3 there is a comparison on this question between the first and final data collection time points.

The three key messages that participants took away from the training, ie *the main messages they want to get across to parents* in the Nurturing Programme

The responses to this question were classified as follows:

- Realising your own personal power
- A lot of communication is non-verbal
- All choices have consequences *
- The importance and value of praise *
- Look after / nurture yourself
- Genuine empathy is essential *
- Lead by example – ie parents / partners are role models to children
- Parenting is difficult – everyone finds it difficult at times
- It is ok to express feelings to children and others.

The three responses with * above were mentioned most often.

Effectiveness of the trainers in modelling the way to run a course with parents

The responses on this question were as follows:

Table 15: Effectiveness of trainer modelling

| Effectiveness | 1 (not effective) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (extremely effective) |
|---------------|----------------------|-----|-------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Number and % | --- | --- | 1 (0.4%) | 13 (5.2%) | 237 (94.4%) |

The average on this question was 4.9, indicating that participants rated the trainers extremely highly, in terms of their modelling of how to work with parents.

Comparisons with training in other parenting programmes

The majority of participants had undertaken training to deliver other parenting programmes (see section 2.1). Respondents who had completed other training (208 people) were asked what the differences were between the other training they had attended and the Family Links training approach. If there were differences, they were asked to say what was helpful and unhelpful about this.

A small minority felt that there were some aspects of the Nurturing Programme training which were poorer and less positive than other training they had attended. This accounted for 22 (10.6%) of the total respondents to this question. These respondents most commonly mentioned coverage of cultural issues as being addressed less well on the Nurturing Programme training. For example:

“Other training addresses cultural issues better. As a Black woman I felt there were far too many generalisations about ‘parents’. My heritage and expertise was ignored”

“The training felt very white, and didn’t reflect the diversity I experience every day in my work”

“Cultural and BME issues weren’t acknowledged or explored as much as they could be. Do Family Links have Black trainers and consultants to advise them?”

This group also often mentioned class and poverty-related issues as not being as well addressed in the Nurturing training as it is elsewhere:

“The trainers were good, but it all felt very middle class, very safe. My families are chaotic, not literate often, poor. At times it felt other-worldly”

“There’s a lot to learn from this programme, but it is very middle class. I will have to adapt a lot for my parents and carers”

“The impact of poverty, REAL poverty wasn’t addressed well on the course. On other training I’ve been on, that’s the starting point, where poor parents ARE”

It should be noted that most of this small group of participants also had positive comments about the Nurturing Programme training, and how it compared to other training they had attended. For example:

“However, apart from that [one of the comments above] it was still an excellent course. Good trainers, useful exercises”

As a result, some of these participants are also included in the section below, ie those who made positive comparisons.

The majority of participants who had attended other training considered that the Nurturing Programme training compared very well to other training. In total 192 (92.3%) of those who answered this question made positive comparisons. For example:

“For me, it’s the best training I’ve ever had, head and shoulders above other things”

“Much better than other training. Very focussed, very real, holistic. Excellent”

“This had more of a focus on the reasons behind behaviour, why parents and kids behave the way they do. That’s important, otherwise it’s all just responding”

“The tutors took a relaxed calm approach on the course, modelling how we should work with parents. Other courses rush through, ‘we need to cover all the exercises and activities’ sort of thing”

“The focus on emotions, on wellbeing. Not well covered on Strengthening Families, or other training. So much better I think”

“Better in many ways. The Nurturing Programme training is very practical, but evidence-based too. Some parenting programmes are really only about what the trainer or organisation think should be done”

Whether learning from the training has been used in other ways, such as one-to-one work

The majority of trainees said that they had used the learning from the Nurturing Programme training in other work. They described using the learning in the following main ways:

- In one to one and casework:

“Definitely, yes I use it a lot. The I statements, getting parents to think about why their children behave the way they do, not just reacting”

“I use the training a lot with individual parents. I now focus more on helping parents to respond appropriately, calmly. It is making a difference”

“Praising is something I use a lot more now. I praise the parents I work with, often just small things, but it makes a difference”

“I praise more – parents, colleagues, and myself! It helps”

“The choices and consequences stuff is very useful in casework. I use that a lot now. Parents understand it, it makes sense”

- In the practitioner’s own approach to their work:

“I think more about what approach I’m taking with a parent. Where am I trying to get to, what the evidence for working in a particular way?”

“I’m definitely more empathic and reflective in all the work I do, with all groups, and colleagues”

“I’d say I am (or try to be!) calmer in my work with parents, more reflective too”

“I’m definitely more reflective and thoughtful now”

- In other group-based work:

“We run a lot of different courses here, using a pick and mix approach. I’ve added in the consequences stuff we learnt, that was useful”

“The general hints and tips, working with groups, managing group dynamics, that’s all been helpful”

“I use a lot of the exercises that the tutors used. They work well”

“I’m calmer now when I run groups. I focus on the process, not getting through all the activities we said we’d do”

In addition, many trainees commented how they had used the learning from the course in their personal lives. As these trainees describe it:

“I am better with my own children. Clearer. It’s made a real difference”

“I talked about a lot of it with my partner. We’ve changed the way we do some things”

“I realised I don’t praise enough, and now I do more with everyone. It’s really nice”

When participants plan to run a Nurturing course

Trainees were asked whether they planned to run a Nurturing Programme course. 18 people left this question blank. Of those who did expect to run a course, their responses were as follows:

Table 16: When trainees plan to run a course

| When trainees will run a course | 1-3 months | 4-6 months | 7-9 months | 10-12 months | Unsure/ Longer than 12 months |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Numbers and % | 94 (39.2%) | 79 (32.9%) | 37 (15.4%) | 7 (2.9%) | 7 (2.9%) |

As this table shows, most of the participants thought that they would be running a course soon – in total 72.1% of the trainees expected to run a course in the next six months.

Whether participants would recommend the training to other people who are (or who are planning to) work with parents?

All the trainees who responded to this question (246 people) said that they would recommend the Nurturing training to other people who were working with parents. The reasons that participants gave for this positive response were as follows:

“I already have! It’s excellent, you learn so much”

“Yes I would recommend it. It is the best training I’ve done”

“I will – I think everyone in parenting should do this training – and every parent”

“Some colleagues are signing up for it based on my experience. It is really good, a great approach”

“As I said, it was life-changing for me. My practice will never be the same again. Thank you Family Links!!!”

“It’s improved my relationship with my partner and children, so I would recommend it for that alone”

“It is a transforming programme, which all in the field should do”

Other comments about any aspect of your experience in the parenting field, or training in the Nurturing Programme

Very few participants added any comments at the end of the second questionnaire. Some added that they had said everything that they wanted to in the questionnaire. Where people did add comments, they were generally of two kinds, as follows:

- Suggestions for improvement to the training:

“As I said before, it didn’t address cultural issues enough. Black, Asian, White parents all parent differently”

“Issues of racism and institutional racism in Britain not addressed. THIS MUST BE INCLUDED”

“It did feel very middle class. I would like to see issues of parenting in poverty addressed more”

“Four days is not long enough to cover all the topics properly. It did feel rushed at times. I would suggest six days”

“Too much content packed in, needs to be more reflection and discussion time”

➤ Positive concluding comments:

“Best training I’ve ever done. Thank you so much”

“This training was life changing, professionally and personally”

“Best course I’ve ever done”

“I can’t praise this course highly enough. Really transforming”

“Brilliant course. Everyone should do it who works with parents”

“Great tutors, so skilled. I felt humbled to watch them at work”

2.3 Follow up questions and change over time

This questionnaire was completed 2-4 months after the training. Some of these were completed over the phone with the author. In total 132 people provided data at the follow-up.

Looking back on the Nurturing training, how useful was it to you?

This question was asked using a 1-10 scale, with 1 as ‘no use’ and 10 as ‘extremely useful’. Note that none of the trainees answered five or less to this question. The responses were as follows:

Table 17: Overall assessment of the training

| Rating | 6 and under | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Number and % | 1 (0.9%) | 5 (4.3%) | 15 (12.9%) | 27 (23.3%) | 68 (58.6%) |

The average for this question was 9.3, indicating that participants rated the training very highly in terms of its usefulness to them.

Have you run a Nurturing course since the training (or are you currently running one)?

Those who had run, or were currently running, a Nurturing Programme accounted for 30 (24.2%) of the sample. The remaining trainees (94 people) were asked when they thought they might run a course. 26 did not say. Of the remainder, the results were as follows:

Table 18: When trainees plan to run a course

| When trainees will run a course | 1-3 months | 4-6 months | 7-9 months | 10-12 months | Unsure/ Longer than 12 months |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Numbers and % | 26 (38.2%) | 26 (38.2%) | 6 (8.8%) | 1 (1.5%) | 9 (13.2%) |

As this table shows, most of these 68 participants thought that they would be running a course soon – 72.4% of this group expected to run a course in the next six months.

These figures show that those who were *currently* running a course, or who *planned* to run one in the next six months, accounted for 82 of those who responded to this question, ie 83.7%.

Whether learning from the training has been used in other ways, such as one-to-one work

The majority of trainees said that they had used the learning from the Nurturing Programme training in other work. Twelve people did not answer this question. Of the remaining 120 participants, 102 (85%) described at least one way in which they used the training in other areas of their work, or more broadly. These comments reflected those that they made in the post-course questionnaire, with many listing several way in which they were using the learning. They described using the learning in the following main ways:

- In one to one and casework:

“It’s worked very well in my one to one work. I use ‘I’ statements a lot. Parents understand it”

“The choices and consequences approach. Very useful”

“I get parents to praise more, even for little things. And it works”

“I tell parents about valuing their children for who they are, for being them. It’s very moving for some parents”

“I praise a lot more, often just for small achievements that parents make. It helps to model this behaviour for them, to use with their children”

- In the practitioner’s own approach to their work:

“I am more focussed, on where I want to get to with a family”

“I use the evidence a lot with colleagues, and my manager. Explaining why I’m doing what I’m doing”

- In other group-based work:

“I’ve used the techniques that the trainers used, for getting people into groups, for getting feedback, this has been very useful”

“I’m calmer in the courses I run. Less rushing through things. My pace is better”

“I do address emotions more with parents – theirs and their children. It’s very important”

In addition, many trainees commented how they had used the learning from the course in their personal lives. As these trainees describe it:

“I listen to my children more, real active listening”

“My partner has said I’m calmer with the children. I think he’s right”

“My children say I talk to them more”

“I never realised how much I criticised... now I use praise a lot”

“I praise my kids a lot more now, and they’ve noticed”

How confident do you feel at the moment...?

How confident would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks?

Table 19: Level of confidence in running parenting courses, follow-up

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Response | 2 (1.8%) | 4 (3.7%) | 17 (15.6%) | 29 (26.7%) | 57 (52.3%) |

The average on this question was 4.2, suggesting a good level of confidence in running parenting programmes.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children?

Table 20: Level of confidence in supporting parents with difficulties, follow-up

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | 3 | 12 | 42 | 48 |
| | --- | (2.9%) | (11.4%) | (40.0%) | (45.7%) |

The average on this question was 4.3, suggesting a good level of confidence in supporting those with difficulties.

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships?

Table 21: Level of confidence in supporting family relationships, follow-up

| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Response | --- | 1 | 17 | 37 | 53 |
| | --- | (0.9%) | (15.7%) | (34.3%) | (49.0%) |

The average on this question was 4.3, suggesting a good level of confidence in supporting family relationships.

How confident do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents?

Table 22: Level of confidence in promoting emotional health, follow-up

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Level of confidence | 1 (not at all confident) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very confident) |
| Response | --- | 3 (2.7%) | 10 (8.8%) | 41 (36.3) | 62 (54.9%) |

The average on this question was 4.4, demonstrating a good level of confidence in promoting emotional health in families.

It is also useful to compare the results on these questions from before the course, with the follow-up. These showed as follows:

Table 23: Comparisons of confidence levels pre-course and follow-up:

How confident would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks?

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Level of confidence | Pre-course | Follow-up |
| Mean | 2.6 | 4.2 |

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children?

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Level of confidence | Pre-course | Follow-up |
| Mean | 3.4 | 4.3 |

How confident do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships?

| Level of confidence | Pre-course | Follow-up |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Mean | 3.1 | 4.3 |

How confident do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents?

| Level of confidence | Pre-course | Follow-up |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Mean | 3.1 | 4.4 |

As this table shows, participants increased in confidence on all four of the areas above, from before they started the training until 2-4 months after the training. In particular, participants felt much more confident if they were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks – from 2.6 on the 1-5 scale, to 4.2. These figures demonstrate that the Nurturing Programme training had a very positive impact on people’s perceptions of their own ability to manage different aspects of working with parents.

3.0 Conclusions

The background to this research lies in current knowledge and evidence about parenting support. Family Links were aware that much previous research in the parenting field has concentrated on the content of parenting programmes, with less consideration given to the training of the practitioners who will deliver it. As Moran et al (2004) highlighted in “What Works in Parenting Support”, a critical factor in the success of parenting groups lies in the quality of parent group facilitators. Family Links therefore viewed that they, and commissioners of services, need to use effective programmes plus provide training that will equip parent workers with the skills and confidence they need to deliver the programme. Family Links therefore commissioned Young People in Focus to examine the quality of their training and its impact on trainees.

The aim of this research was to evaluate the Nurturing Programme Parent Group Leader training run by Family Links, from the perspective of the trainees. The focus was on understanding trainees’ hopes and expectations for the course, the knowledge and skills that they gain from it, levels of confidence in running parenting programmes before and after the training, and key ‘take away’ messages for their work with parents.

All those undertaking Nurturing Programme training over a six month period between January 2011 and March 2011 were invited to take part in the research. Trainees could opt out of the research if they did not wish to take part. Three rounds of data collection were undertaken – before the training, immediately after the training, and 2-4 months later. 14 of the follow-up questionnaires were undertaken as telephone interviews. In total 258 trainees completed pre-course questionnaires, 257 completed post-course questionnaires, and 132 completed follow-up questionnaires. Question formats were both quantitative (for example yes/no and 1-5 scales) and qualitative (write-in answers).

The main findings from the research were as follows:

➤ Pre-course questionnaires:

- The majority of trainees were experienced family workers, with 75.7% having 1.1-10 years experience in the field
- Although the trainees were experienced in working with families, only a third (38.8%) had run a parenting course before
- Participants attended the training for five main reasons, with most participants mentioning two or three of these:
 - for career progression / to improve their CV

- because training and professional develop is a good thing, and a way to improve their practice
 - to develop specific knowledge and skills
 - because the Nurturing Programme has a positive reputation
 - they were told to attend by their manager / organisation
- Trainees were looking to get a variety of things from the training, including:
 - a qualification / training certificate
 - evidence and research information in relation to parenting support
 - new ideas, 'hints and tips' in relation to running parenting groups
 - greater personal awareness and understanding
 - learning how to run a parenting group for those who have never run one, or learning how to run them better for more experienced practitioners
 - a holistic, whole family approach
 - Levels of confidence in running parenting programmes, and addressing particular issues with parents, were low-medium prior to the start of the course – ranging from 2.6 – 3.4 on a 1-5 scale where 5 was 'extremely confident'

➤ **Post-course questionnaires:**

- Trainees rated the Nurturing Programme training very highly overall – 80.1% rated it 10, on a scale of 1-10 where 10 was 'extremely useful'. The average for all participants was 9.7.
- Trainees reported gaining a range of knowledge and skills from the training, as follows:
 - knowledge of: specific techniques and ways of working with parents; the importance of self-esteem and valuing people; knowledge about evidence and 'what works'; and 'hints and tips' in parenting work
 - skills in: specific methods and techniques (such as group dynamics, time management); empathy and interpersonal skills; using a nurturing and holistic approach; self-awareness and personal development.
- In response to a question on whether the training met expectations, all 247 trainees (ie 100%) said that it had. Many added that the training surpassed their expectations, was 'life-changing', 'transforming', and the best training they had ever attended.

- Participants' confidence in different aspects of running parenting programmes increased between the start and end of the training, with end of course averages on four questions ranging from 4.0 to 4.3 (on a scale of 1-5 where 5 was 'extremely confident').
- Participants considered the course facilitators to be extremely good modellers of how to run courses for parents – 94.4% rated the facilitators as 5 (on a scale of 1-5 where 5 was 'extremely effective')
- Participants compared the Nurturing Programme favourably with other training they had attended. It was described by many as much better than other training because of:
 - the focus on the family rather than individuals, ie a more holistic approach
 - the emphasis on reasons behind behaviour, and on understanding human behaviour
 - the focus on emotions and well-being, of parents, carers, and children
 - the fact that it is evidence-based.

A small number of participants felt that it compared less well to other training because of an insufficient attention to issues of culture/racism, and the impact of class and poverty on parenting.

- Trainees reported using the learning from the course in other areas of their work and personal lives. This included:
 - in one-to-one work and casework
 - in the practitioner's general approach to their work, and with their colleagues
 - in other group-based work
 - in their personal lives and relationships.
- Just under three-quarters (72.1%) of trainees expected to run a Nurturing Programme course in the next six months
- All the trainees said that they would recommend the Nurturing training to others who were working with parents.

➤ **Follow-up questionnaires and comparisons between time points:**

- Participants assessed the training as have been very useful to them at the follow-up point. 81.9% of trainees rated it as 9 or 10, on a 1-10 scale where 10 is 'extremely useful'. The average was 9.3.

- A quarter of the sample had run or were currently running a Nurturing Programme course, since the completion of their training. Of the remainder, most expected to run a course in the next six months.
- Trainees reported having used the learning from the Nurturing Programme in other areas of their lives, including in one-to-one work, with colleagues, in other group-based work, and in their personal lives.
- Levels of confidence in running parenting programmes had increased, from pre-course to follow-up. Changes in mean scores were as follows between these two time points (on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is 'no confidence' and 5 is 'very confident'):
 - confidence in running a parenting programme in the next few weeks: 2.6 to 4.2
 - confidence in supporting parents with difficulties or issues with their children: 3.4 to 4.3
 - confidence in supporting parents with their family relationships: 3.1 to 4.3
 - confidence in promoting the emotional health of children and parents: 3.1 to 4.4.

As these results show, the vast majority of trainees were extremely positive about the Nurturing Programme training. They considered it to be well-researched and theoretically sound, and an extremely useful course to run with parents facing difficulties. Many described their experiences on the course as 'life-changing' and 'transforming'. They also considered the trainers to be very skilled and excellent at modelling how the training should be undertaken.

Relatively few trainees had run the Nurturing Programme for parents at the time of the follow-up, but those that had run a course considered that their courses had gone well, and they had received very positive feedback from parents. The majority of trainees also stated that they had used the learning from the training in other areas, both in their personal lives and in other areas of their work. Most commonly the participants used the training in their one-to-one work.

Prior to concluding this evaluation, it is important to note two things. First, the context for parenting work changed notably during the course of the research. Cuts to central government and local government funding were being announced, and indeed taking place, during late 2010 and into 2011. This was reflected in the responses of the trainees during the research. It should be noted that some of the respondents were made redundant shortly after completing their training, or were redeployed by their organisation to work in a different area. As a result, some participants considered that they might never use the learning from the training in a formal way, in terms of being able to run courses on an ongoing

basis. However, most were very positive about the learning from the training, and felt they would still use that learning in a number of different ways.

Second, there are a number of limitations to this research, which need to be acknowledged in interpreting the results. These include (i) in order to track the questionnaires, trainees were required to add their names – this may have led some people to be more reticent, as they were concerned about confidentiality; (ii) almost 50% of people did not return a questionnaire at the follow-up point. It is known that some of these had been made unemployed and could not be contacted. However, some may have been less positive about the training, and decided not to return a questionnaire; (iii) finally, and crucially – the data collected was only participant perceptions of the training and their confidence levels. No assessment was made of participants actual performance and skills in running the Nurturing Programme training, so this is a limitation of the study. Despite these limitations, however, it is considered that the research collected a good amount of accurate and useful information.

In conclusion, the four day Nurturing Programme training is considered to have met its objectives, and to have a very positive impact on the knowledge, skills and confidence of parenting practitioners, enabling them in turn to support parents and families.

Appendix

Contents:

- First round questionnaire ('pre-course')
- Second round questionnaire ('post-course')
- Third (and final) questionnaire ('follow up')

Evaluation of Family Links Parent Group Leader training: Questionnaire for BEFORE the course

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire, which is part of the evaluation of the Family Links Parent Group Leader training. The evaluation is being undertaken by Dr Debi Roker of the charity Young People in Focus (YPF). No one outside of YPF will see the completed questionnaires. The results will be written up for all those who undertake the training in January, February, and March 2011– no individual person or course will be identified in the final report.

As you know, this is the first questionnaire – I will be in touch again with a second questionnaire after the course, to see how it went! That is why you need to give your name, so that we can match the two questionnaires up.

What is your name? (please print)

How would you describe your ethnic background?

Where are you doing your course? (town/city)

What is your main job role / title?

How many years have you been been working with parents? years

What is your highest level of qualification, in general?

Do you have any qualifications in working with parents? Yes / No

If yes, at what level?

Have you done training in any other parenting programmes? Please indicate which ones you have trained in, by ticking or typing 'yes' next to them:

- Triple P
- Escape
- Incredible Years
- Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities
- Families and Schools Together (FAST)
- Mellow Parenting
- Parenting Positively

- Strengthening Families 10-14
- Solihull Approach (group training)
- Other (? which)

Have you already run parenting groups? Yes / No
(if yes, approximately how many have you run

... and which model/s did you use in these

Why did you sign up to the Nurturing Programme training?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

What do you hope to get from it, in general?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

What *knowledge/information* do you particularly want to get from the course?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

What *skills* would you like to develop as a result of doing the course?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

How confident do you feel at the moment...? See the four questions below, and give each one a number on the 1-5 scale....

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Not at all confident | | | | | Very confident |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

How confident ...

a) ... would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks? *(choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above)* Answer =

b) do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children? *(choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above)* *(choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above)* Answer =

c) ... do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships? *(choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above)* Answer =

d) ... do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents? *(choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above)* Answer =

Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about any aspect of your experience in the parenting field, or training in the Nurturing Programme? (if so, please write it here or on the back)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire – it will be very helpful in the evaluation. I will be in touch at the end of your training to ask you to complete a follow-up questionnaire. And remember, there's a prize draw at the end!

Please return the questionnaire by email or post (see below) or your course tutor will have an envelope to put them in – which will be sealed before it is returned to me.

Debi Roker (Dr)
Young People in Focus, 23 New Road, Brighton, BN1 1WZ
droker@youngpeopleinfocus.org.uk
01273 - 647342

Evaluation of Family Links Parent Group Leader training: Questionnaire for AFTER the course

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire, which is part of the evaluation of the Family Links Parent Group leader training. The evaluation is being undertaken by Dr Debi Roker of the charity Young People in Focus (YPF). No one outside of YPF will see the completed questionnaires. The results will be written up for all those who undertake the training in January, February, and March 2011 – no individual person or course will be identified in the final report.

As you know, this is the second questionnaire – please complete it at the end of the course, either at the end of day 4 if you have time, or within a few days afterwards.

What is your name? (please print)

Overall, how useful has the course been to you? (please say on a scale of 1-10, with 1 as 'no use' and 10 as 'extremely useful'). Answer: _____

What *knowledge/information* did you get from the course?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

What *skills* did you develop as a result of doing the course?
(please write in your answer, with as much detail as possible)

Did the training meet your expectations, in general? Yes / No (please explain)

How confident do you feel at the moment...? See the four questions below, and give each one a number on the 1-5 scale....

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Not at all confident | | | | | Very confident |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

How confident ...

a) ... would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks? (choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above) Answer =

b) do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children? (choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above) (choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above) Answer =

c) ... do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships? (choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above) Answer =

d) ... do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents? (choose a number from 1-5 from the scale above) Answer =

What are the three key messages that you will take away from the training, ie the main messages that you want to get across to parents when you run your Nurturing Programme for parents?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

On a scale of 1-5, how effective was the trainer at modelling the way to run a course with parents? (where 1 is 'not very effective' and 5 is 'very effective') Answer: _____

Please explain your answer:

Have you completed training to deliver other parenting programmes? Yes / No

If yes, what were the differences in the Family Links training approach, and in what ways was this helpful or unhelpful?

Will you use any of the things that you learnt on the training in other areas of your work, for example in one-to-one work? Yes / No

If yes, in what ways:

When do you think you will run a Nurturing course?

(put an x next to one of the following responses)

1-3 months

4-6 months

7-9 months

10-12 months

Longer than 12 months

Never

Would you recommend this training to other people who are (or who are planning to) work with parents? Yes / No

... please explain your answer

Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about any aspect of your experience in the parenting field, or your training in the Nurturing Programme?

(if so, please write it here)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire – it will be very helpful in the evaluation. I will be in touch in around 3-4 months with a final follow-up questionnaire. And remember, there's a prize draw at the end, if you complete all three rounds of the research!

Please return the questionnaire by email or post (see below) or your course facilitator will have an envelope to put them in – which will be sealed before it is returned to me.

**Debi Roker (Dr)
Young People in Focus**

**23 New Road, Brighton, BN1 1WZ
droker@youngpeopleinfocus.org.uk
01273 - 647342**

Evaluation of Family Links Parent Group Leader training: Questionnaire for 3-4 months AFTER the course

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire, which is part of the evaluation of the Family Links Parent Group leader training. The evaluation is being undertaken by Dr Debi Roker of the charity Young People in Focus (YPF). Dona Crisfield at YPF is managing the data. No one outside of YPF will see the completed questionnaires. The results will be written up for all those who undertake the training in January, February, and March 2011 – no individual person or course will be identified in the final report.

As you know, this is the third and final questionnaire – please complete it ASAP and return it by email or post to Dona at YPF – details at the end.

What is your name?

Where did you do your course (ie town/city)?

Looking back on the Nurturing training, how useful was it to you? (please say on a scale of 1-10, with 1 as 'no use' and 10 as 'extremely useful'). Answer:

Have you run a Nurturing course since the training (or are you are you currently running one)? Yes / No

[If no, when do you think you will run a Nurturing course?]
(put an x next to one of the following responses)

1-3 months

4-6 months

7-9 months

10-12 months

Longer than 12 months

Never

(and if 'never' please say why

.....

Have you used any of the learning from the Nurturing training in your other work, for example your one-to-one work? Yes / No

If yes, please say in what way

How confident do you feel at the moment...? Please give a number for each of the questions below, using a 1-5 scale where 1 is 'not at all' confident' and 5 is 'very confident'.

How confident ...

a) ... would you feel if you were asked to run a parenting course in the next few weeks? Answer =

b) do you feel at the moment in supporting parents who have issues or difficulties with their children? Answer =

c) ... do you feel at the moment in supporting parents in terms of their family relationships? Answer =

d) ... do you feel in promoting the emotional health of children and parents? Answer =

Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about your training in the Nurturing Programme?

(if so, please write it here)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire – it will be very helpful in the evaluation. And remember, there's a prize draw at the end for all those who complete all three questionnaires!

Please return the questionnaire by email to Dona Crisfield (dcrisfield@youngpeopleinfocus.org.uk) or by post to Dona Crisfield, YPF, 23 New Road, Brighton, BN1 1WZ