



Mind in Croydon Parenting Advocacy Service

18 - 24 months



Volunteer Peer
Advocacy Service

April - October 2013

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Advocacy



Quality Services

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Current Delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service

The Parenting Advocacy Service is now 24 months into a 3 year project. This report outlines the development of the service throughout the 18-24 month period. This period runs from 1st April 2013 to 17th October 2013.

This report will focus largely on the Volunteer Peer Advocates (VPAs) and the Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service, through which we deliver drop-in surgeries at Children's Centres across the borough of Croydon.

The Parenting Advocacy Service is funded for 3 years by Comic Relief.

The 4th part of this report has been compiled by Emma Turner Advocacy Service Manager, Nichola Harris, Parenting Advocate and a Volunteer Peer Advocate.

Referrals

Between April 2013 and October 2013 we received 27 referrals to the service and provided advocacy to 11 new parents, a combination of both self-referrals and agency referrals. The number of parents to whom we have provided 1:1 advocacy has been lower in comparison to previous quarters. A proportion of referrals usually received by the service were picked up by the new Family Navigator Service.

The Parenting Advocacy Service is providing more drop-in surgeries at Croydon Children Centres, where we have seen an increase in one-off pieces of Advocacy work in comparison to 1:1 case work.

Between October 2011 and October 2013, the Parenting

Advocacy Service has received a total of 139 referrals and provided 1:1 advocacy casework to 71 Parents .

Delivery of the Parenting Advocacy Service and Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service

Since April 2013 we have delivered 11 Parenting Advocacy workshops to Volunteer Peer Advocates, Family Navigators, Comic Relief, Children's Centre managers and Family Support Workers, promoting the service and raising awareness.

Following on from our first VPA training workshop in January 2013, we have delivered a second four day training workshop, including guest speakers, which took place in June 2013. There were 3 new Volunteer Peer Advocates present at the June workshop.

“What was good about the training was meeting the other advocates learning the potential issues advocates may face in the course of their work and discussion on the various mental health issues and illnesses people may face”.

Due to the success of the first VPA training workshop the same training model was used in the second VPA training workshop. (as detailed in the 12 – 18 month report).

“I found the guest speakers to be informative. The training materials & handouts were self explanatory”.

“I have enjoyed the learning experience. Welcome packs look very useful. Guest Speakers excellent. Very interesting to hear other advocates experiences”.

VPA Drop-In Service

Initially we were providing drop-in surgeries at Croydon Central Library. As part of the ongoing development within this strand of the project we wanted to expand the drop-in surgeries across the Croydon borough, reaching out to the wider community.

Since June 2013 we have been fortunate enough to pilot the drop-in surgeries at several Children's Centres across the Croydon borough: Norbury Manor, Aerodrome (Waddon), South Norwood (Cypress Hill), Faichildes and Castlehille in New Addington. The Parenting Advocate and VPAs will provide the surgeries once a month, during the Stay and Play sessions at each of the centres. We are currently in discussions regarding the provision of drop-in surgeries at Thornton Heath Children's Centres.

On average we can speak to 15 parents in each Stay and Play session. Our aim is to promote positive mental health and well being in all parents and people in parental roles. During surgeries, the role of the Parenting Advocate and the VPA is to provide on the spot information and/or respond to



parents' enquiries by signposting them towards appropriate agencies. We carry a library of information electronically via our in house advocacy directory. If the parent's issue is deemed more complex then they have the option of referring themselves to the Parenting Advocacy service, which may result in actual case work.

Of the parents that we speak to in the drop- in surgeries, we have identified that the service comes into contact with a low number of Fathers. We would like to target this client group through other pathways such as Fathers Groups.

89% of the parents we come into contact with at our drop-in surgeries are female and 11% of parents are male.

Fathers Groups at the Children Centres

From October 2013, we are piloting drop-in surgeries once a month, in the Aerodrome Children's Centre on a Sunday. During the first session we introduced the service to 9 Fathers. Regarding our monitoring statistics of Fathers we come into contact with at drop- in surgeries, we have identified that we need to be more flexible in our approach towards targeting more isolated clients groups. We are soon to commence additional drop-in surgeries for Fathers at Canterbury Road Children's Centre, once a month on a Saturday, during the Dad's Time sessions.

VPA Newsletter and Postcards 1 & 2

With the launch of the VPA project and drop- in surgeries we are producing a quarterly newsletter that will feature the latest news about the service and updates

on the future delivery of the VPA service. We will be introducing contribution from the VPAs and hope to feature contributions from Practitioners and Parents regarding their experiences of the service.

As part of the ongoing development of the Parenting and Volunteer Peer Advocacy service we have designed a postcard to promote the service, informed by feedback about the ways in which Parents may respond to our status as a Mental Health service. During our meetings with Children's Centres we received feedback from staff that many Parents view the words 'Mental Health' with stigmatisation. The parents we come into contact with may not consider themselves as having a mental health issue and may never have accessed mental health services. Our approach towards parents is to talk about promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing.

"I saw an electronic version of the postcard and thought it was very nicely designed".

We believe parents have responded positively to the parenting postcard, which displays simple language and accessible information. These cards are displayed across the borough of Children's Centres, Mental Health Services, Children's Social Services, GP Surgeries and Schools. The following agency feedback has been received:

"This service would be fantastic for women attending the DV (Domestic Violence) freedom programme".

Parenting Focus Group 3

In July 2013 we ran a Parenting Focus Group. This concept evolved from ongoing discussions between the VPAs and the Parenting Advocate regarding the resources, services and support they felt Parents needed, that was not currently available.

"It was an open group

Parenting Focus Group





discussion which I found comfortable and helpful.’

These discussions enabled us to identify various themes that we used in our focus group, to initiate conversation between the six parents that participated.

“I found it invaluable and empowering to listen to other parents’ experiences and to relate my own experience to people that understood and did not consider me a parental failure as I often feel myself.”

At the end of the focus group, we asked the participants if they could prioritise arising issues and vote on the type of intervention they felt they needed from services in Croydon. The main outcomes

arising from the discussions were written on coloured cards, which we asked parents to anonymously prioritise.

Below is a brief analysis of the outcome of this activity. A detailed analysis is available at the end of this report under appendices.

“It may help to have on going focus group sessions to see how things have improved and see what positive changes have taken place within the service.”

“It was great because it shows there is hope for people like me.”

“More awareness / support should be available for men

experiencing domestic violence.”

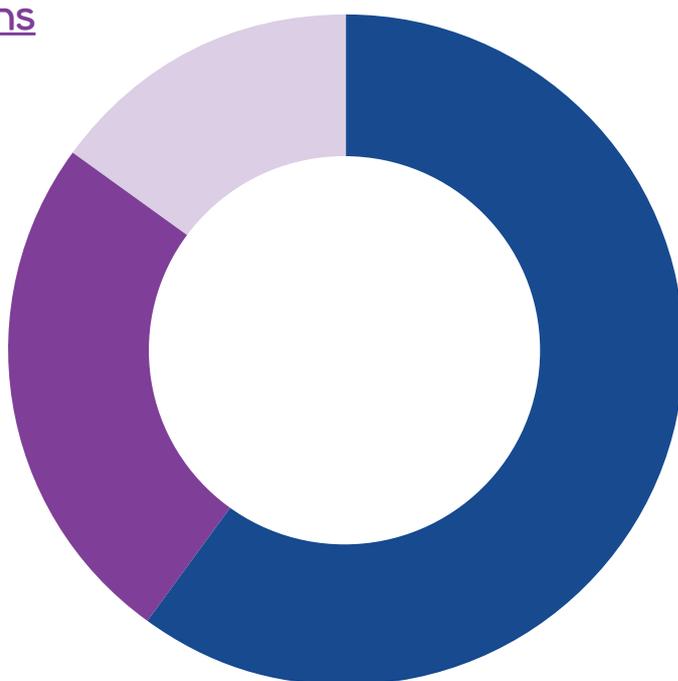
Monitoring Information / Statistics

The charts are from new clients who received 1:1 advocacy between the periods of April 2013 - October 2013. Our highest number of referrals continues to be self referrals, these statistics show that parents identify a need for an advocacy service.

Client Issues

The service continues to support parents with a broad range of issues requiring advocacy support. On the next page the chart shows a brief breakdown of those issues identified by 17 parents during the period of April 2013 - October 2013.

Desired Interventions



■ Advocacy helpline for parents 50%

■ Promoting positive mental health in parents by delivering awareness workshops to statutory agencies, voluntary agencies and parents 25%

■ An easy read information booklet produced by Children’s Social Services for parents 15%



The monitoring statistics have identified that of the issues that parents request during 1:1 advocacy support, a higher proportion are related to Local Authority/Children’s Social Service issues.

Outcome of Issues

The data in the ‘Outcome of Issues’ graph on this page is reflective of the 1:1 casework provided to Parents receiving advocacy support between the periods of April 2013 - October 2013.

Issues Recorded as One of Contact

A high proportion of One off Contacts is provided to parents at the drop-in surgeries, this involves on the spot information and / or signposting parents towards other agencies. Additionally the advocacy service records all telephone enquiries and emails (anonymously) which includes signposting and providing on the spot information. The service also receives enquiries from other boroughs for example Lambeth, Sutton and Bromley.

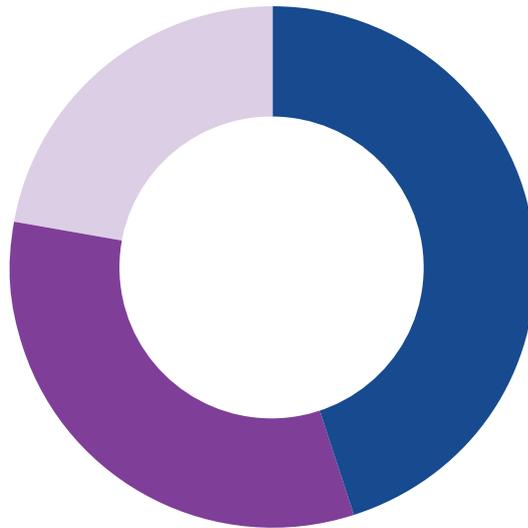
Issues recorded: Access to services, Housing, Legal Rights, Local Authority, Education, Children’s Social Services, Signposting and Providing Information.

The monitoring statistics recorded as one off pieces of work between the period from April 2013 - October 2013 equates to 79.25 hours.

Citizenship

During the period of April 2013 – October 2013, the monitoring statistics for Citizenship has identified an increase in parents whose status is Refugee and Immigrant in comparison to the last 12 -18 month report. Through

Referral Source



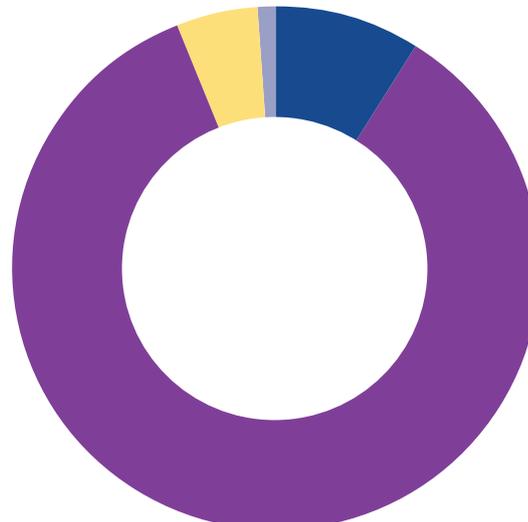
- Self Referral 45%
- Integrated Mental Health Service
- Other Agencies 22%

Issues



- Housing 18%
- Children and Families 55%
- Legal Rights including Care Proceedings 18%
- Education 0%
- Apects of Clinical Treatment 9%

Outcome of Issues



- Ongoing Issues 9%
- Resolved 85%
- Unresolved 5%
- Part Resolved 1%



the drop-in surgeries we have come into contact with a higher proportion of parents from BME communities, through our current methods of monitoring we are not able to obtain their Citizenship status. This is shown on the graph on this page.

The service hopes to target more parents through agencies in particular where Citizenship and Immigration status may be an issue.

Ethnicity

Of the parents receiving 1:1 case work during the period of April 2013 –October 2013, we have identified 45% of parents accessing the service are from a wider sector of BME groups. Overall parents from White British groups make up a higher percentage of those accessing the service. We will continue to promote the service to all community groups in Croydon.

Gender

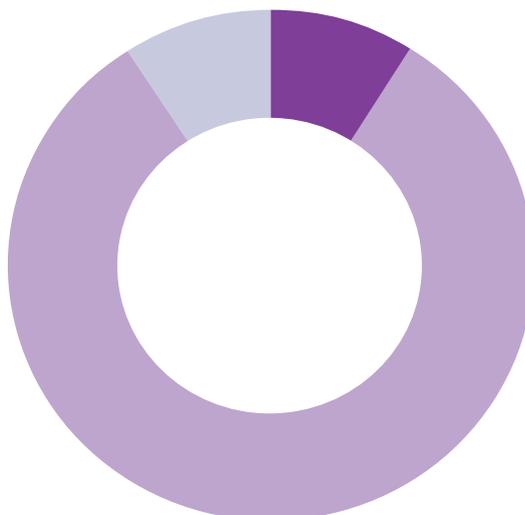
Females in a parental role in comparison to Males in a parental role make up a higher proportion from those gender groups accessing the Parenting Advocacy Service. We hope to see an increase in Males in a parental role by targeting more Fathers groups.

Sexual Orientation

Of the parents that disclosed their sexual orientation, a higher proportion has identified themselves to be heterosexual, in comparison to other Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups. We will promote the service to those groups of parents to raise awareness through agencies such as South London Lesbian Mums Group and Rainbow Families.

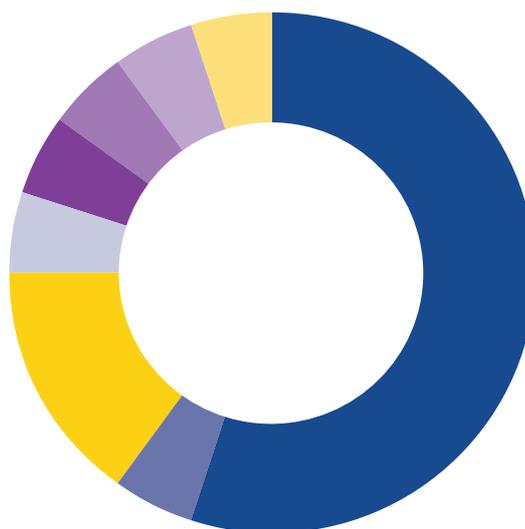
This is shown on the graph over page.

Citizenship



- Asylum Seekers 0%
- Refugee 9%
- Undisclosed or N/a 82%
- Immigrant 9%

Ethnicity



- White British 55%
- Indian 5%
- White & Black Carribean 15%
- Other Indian 5%
- Black British 5%
- Black African 5%
- Other Mixed 5%
- Other 5%

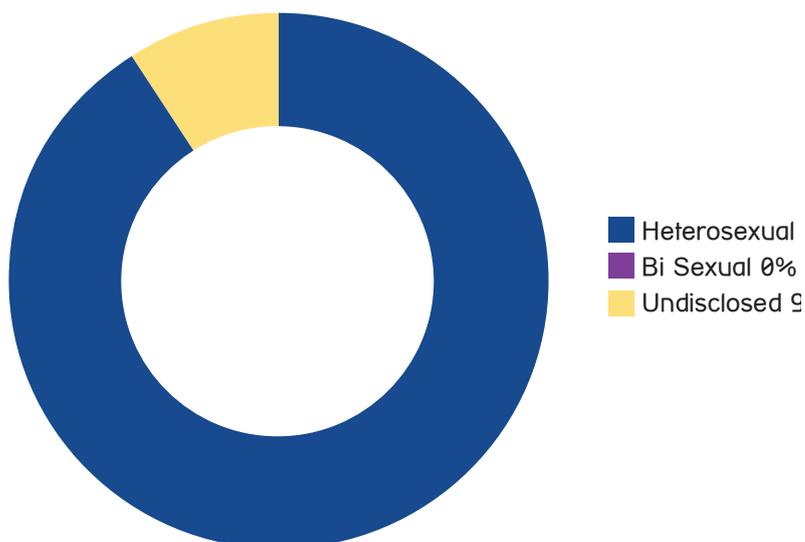
Gender



- Female 70%
- Male 30%



Sexual Orientation



Outcomes and Findings so far

We have seen a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing the service via one-off pieces of advocacy work.

Recruiting and training 6 VPAs was our original aim for this strand of the project and we are pleased to have reached this goal. This strand of the project has exceeded our expectations from the start of the recruitment process and the ongoing development of this service. We did not anticipate that we would be as successful as we have been.

With the set up and development of the VPA strand, we were able to promote the service and target a wider group of parents that we would not normally have come into contact with through the drop-in surgeries and alternative pathways, for example: Child Minders, Parents from wider sectors of BME communities and Fathers.

What's Worked Well

Piloting our service in Children's Centres has enabled us to deliver the promotion of positive mental health awareness and wellbeing directly to parents who we may not normally come into contact with in the community, outside of mental health services. Additionally, providing drop-in surgeries during the weekend 'Dad's Groups' has been a significant success for this project.

Following feedback received from parents, VPAs and agencies, we have redesigned our marketing material and introduced postcards. The postcards have generated positive responses from both parents and agencies. The postcards feature basic and accessible language and act as a simple but effective introduction tool for the service.

Challenges and Difficulties

One of our challenges has been securing a notice board in the reception area of the local

authority's Children's Social Services to promote the Parenting and VPA service in the way we would like to. Feedback from Parents indicates that there needs to be better awareness of the service and a better understanding of what the service is about, particularly regarding local authority issues. Although we have our postcards and leaflets on display in the reception area, we believe a more targeted means of communicating what we provide, including testimonials from parents, is needed to reach parents that are isolated and unaware of our service.

Future Delivery of the Service 24 to 30 months

During the next 12 months we will largely focus on the Volunteer Peer Advocacy strand of the project. We will continue to promote the Parenting Advocacy Service across all agencies throughout the Croydon borough and raise awareness of positive mental health and wellbeing in parents.

With the VPA strand using much of the project's resource, the Parenting Advocate will carry a smaller caseload focusing mainly on local authority/statutory and legal issues. We would like to give the VPAs an opportunity to work alongside the Parenting Advocate on some 1:1 advocacy cases. In addition to this we would like to run regular case study group workshops with the VPAs, as part of their ongoing learning and development.

We would also like to run more parenting focus groups via various workshop events. Our aim is to collect relevant data from the parenting focus groups and develop a Parenting mental health



awareness workshop, targeting local authority practitioners and other health care professionals. The workshops will be delivered by the Advocacy Service Manager, Parenting Advocate and VPAs

Appendices

1. Volunteer Peer Advocacy Newsletter
2. Volunteer Peer Advocacy Postcard
3. Parenting Focus Group detailed analysis

Thankyou

Volunteers give their time to Mind in Croydon. We would like to express our appreciation to them for all their dedication and for the time they give so willingly.

Volunteer Peer Advocates

Julia Donavon
Amber Darlington
Christopher Anderson
Abbi O'Neil
John Holmes
Sabera Jaffer

Guest Speakers who kindly gave up their time to deliver a workshop for our VPAs.

Vincent Docherty – Safeguarding Coordinator Croydon Council
Risq Animassium – Community Development Worker BME Forum
Avneet Chana - Link Worker Hear -us
Richard Pacitti – Chief Executive Mind in Croydon
Mind in Croydon Advocacy Team and Family Navigator



The Parenting Volunteer Peer Advocacy Summer Newsletter



PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN PARENTS

First edition of the Volunteer Peer Advocacy (VPA) Newsletter

We are delighted to be launching our first ever edition of the (VPA) Newsletter. This will be followed by quarterly newsletter updates.

The VPA newsletter will feature the latest news about the service and updates on the future delivery of the VPA service. We will be including contributions from the Volunteer Peer Advocates (VPAs) and hope to feature contributions from the Practitioners and Service Users on their experience of the service

The VPA service is part of the Parenting Advocacy Service and is funded by Comic Relief. The service is provided by VPAs who have had direct experience of mental health services and issues that parents face.

The Volunteer Peer Advocates

So far we have recruited 6 VPAs. The first 3 VPAs were trained on a four day workshop in January 2013 and are now in post. An additional 3 VPAs were

trained on the second four day workshop in June 2013 and will be in post soon. The trainers for the workshop included the Advocacy Service Manager, Parenting Advocate, Family Navigator and Independent Mental Health Advocate. Guest Speakers included: All the VPA trainers, Mind in Croydon Chief Executive Officer, Croydon Council Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Team, Croydon Black Minority Ethnic Community Development Worker and Hear-Us Link Worker Service.

The VPA Drop-in Surgeries

In February 2013 we started to provide drop-in surgeries at Croydon Central Library which coincided with the weekly children's events.

In June 2013 we launched our first VPA drop-in surgery at Norbury Manor Children's Centre which we currently provide on a fortnightly basis. We are due to rotate these drop-ins with Aerodrome Children's Centre located in Waddon commencing in August/September 2013.

We hope to deliver further drop-in surgeries in other children's centres across the Croydon Borough.

The VPAs will be spread across the children's centres alongside the Parenting Advocate to deliver the service to parents or those in a parental role.

What happens at the VPA Drop-in Surgery ?

The surgery provides on-the-spot information about some of the issues or concerns raised by a parent. For example, an issue may be raised by a parent regarding their children being in contact with children's social services. They may require information on their parental rights and help in understanding the process. The VPAs and Parenting Advocate can support the parent by providing information and/or present them with options regarding their issues.

The VPA and Parenting Advocacy Service has access to an extensive directory on a range of services and information that can support the parent with their enquiry. We can signpost parents onto other agencies if required.

If an issue is more complex and requires further support outside of the surgery, then the parent can refer themselves to the Parenting Advocate who provides a more specialist service.

Family Fun Morning at Norbury Manor Children's Centre

We recently had a stall at Norbury Manor Children's Centre for their Family Fun Morning.



Above The Advocacy Manager—Emma Turner, The Parenting Advocate—Nichola Harris and Family Navigator—Abbi Green with the Family Support Workers from Norbury Manor Children Centre

The event is mainly targeted at new parents; dads, working parents or parents who are not currently accessing children's centres.

Quote below from one of our VPAs

"I applied for the role of a VPA because as a parent who has experienced mental health problems, I understand and am familiar with the difficulties and issues other parents may face and would like to help them".

Future developments of the VPA Service

We would like to target more parents through the dads/fathers groups in the children's centres. We believe this particular group of people can be isolated and have difficulty in accessing services.

The Parenting Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service

How to contact us
020 8763 6730 or parenting@mindincroydon.org.uk



- Free
- Confidential
- Independent



Volunteer Peer Advocacy Service

Promoting Positive Mental Health in Parents



www.mindincroydon.org.uk
Charity no: 1073880

Knowing your rights		Relationships
School & Education		Debt, Finances or Benefits
	Do these issues affect your role as a parent?	
Housing	Are you experiencing stress, anxiety or feeling worried?	Isolation
Legal		Health Issues
Children & Family Social Services		Accessing support and services



PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN PARENTS BY DELIVERING AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

Priority:

1	=	4
2	=	3
3	=	2
4	=	0

AN EASY READ INFORMATION BOOKLET PRODUCED BY CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PARENTS

Priority

1	=	4
2	=	2
3	=	2
4	=	1

ADVOCACY HELPLINE FOR PARENTS

Priority

1	=	5
2	=	3
3	=	1
4	=	0

Main priority = **ADVOCACY HELPLINE FOR PARENTS**

Jointly followed = **PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN PARENTS BY DELIVERING AWARENESS WORKSHOPS' AND AN EASY READ INFORMATION BOOKLET PRODUCED BY CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PARENTS**

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- **Drop in Surgeries at Social Services = Priority 2**
- **Family support & mental health standard letters being made available from Gp's / schools and produced by Mind Advocacy Service = Priority 2**
- **Respite care for a parent / parents that need a break (children accommodated temporarily) to prevent a crisis that could lead to children being removed permanently = priority 3**
- **A more helpful service open to males going through abuse = no rating.**
- **A service for mental health patients who are going through a break up = no rating.**
- **Having given the issue of parenting the old saying that parenting does not come with a manual or hand book. However, education is the most vital issue and should be introduced as parenting classes for older students at school where diverse social issues are discussed. This would help prepare future parents and deter teenage parents = no rating**
- **Systemic approach to mental health campaigning once in children centres. Move towards being FAMILY CENTRES through statistics. Therefore how presented v. important = no rating.**
- **More money for 'middle ground early intervention' = no rating**
- **Workshops on mental health awareness – impact of mental health conditions on whole family / Co parenting – how to preserve own mental health = no rating.**
- **Culturally driven pamphlet – with input from ethnic minority parents = no rating.**
- **Reduce sense of isolation – better info sharing between agencies, info on data protection, support group / networks for parents = no rating.**
- **SS – better communication more transparency = no rating**
- **Mental health training for Social workers / teachers. Currently being offered in my own personal situation by Educational Psychologist as is family therapy = no rating.**

EVALUATION COMMENTS ON FOCUS GROUP

' I found it invaluable and empowering to listen to other parents experiences and to relate my own experience to people that understood and did not consider me a parental failure as I often feel myself.'

'It may help to have on going focus group sessions to see how things have improved or positive changes within the service.'

'It was great because it shows there is hope for people like me.'

'More awareness / support should be available for men experiencing domestic violence.'

'It was an open group discussion which I found comfortable and helpful.'