

Parents and teenagers

Families Supporting Families Discussion note, January 2018

About this paper

In July 2017 we put together a discussion paper on what can help families, especially when people welcome some additional support. The report was put together as a part of our Families Supporting Families project, funded by CYPFEIF. You can read the paper here <http://otbds.org/parents-teenagers-report/>

We sent the report to 121 organisations, the majority of which have also been funded by the CYPFEIF fund. We got a lot of very interesting feedback about the report which we can add to our learning from the Families Supporting Families project. Below we have included information that we felt was important to note as we consider what can help families, especially those with additional support needs.

Responses

Play Network told us about research they commissioned looking at ways of encouraging play without having to spend a lot of money. You can read the report by going to <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/6973/downloads>.

One of the key findings from the report was that there was very little or no positive information for parents on how to 'hang out' or engage in 'play' activities with older children (teenagers mainly). The report found that the messages, infographics and information that parents of older children received was nearly always negative and focused on tackling difficult behaviour. Parents shared that they would prefer to see some positive messages instead.

It was interesting to realise that there not being adequate information for teenagers, and their parents/carers, was a theme that other organisations also recognised. Stepping Stones for Families have also come across this gap recently. They focus mainly on early years and primary school age children, however some of their work brings them into contact with parents who have older children. They gave an example of when they tried to make an onward referral for a 12 year and their parent but none of the Children's services, organisations or agencies would or could accept the referral as the child was 'too old' to meet their criteria.

We heard more about how there is a need for support for the parents and carers of teenagers when we heard from Mentor UK. As part of their work they support kinship families nationally (some of this is funded by CYPFEIF) and one area of their work

has been providing training to kinship carers on supporting their children at all ages, particularly when many of these children have suffered abuse, neglect and trauma and how this has impact even more so in their teenage years. This programme offers information along with practical hints/tips to put into practice. They have also been working with SCPHRP (Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research & Policy) around the development of their training programme.

Fast Forward were also keen to see what work could be done with their organisation and the findings from the July 2017 note. Fast Forward specialise in targeted work addressing specific issues affecting teenagers (eg gambling, substance misuse etc). They work with teenagers and practitioners.

They also offer free training:

- For dads - fun and practical workshops on how to talk to their kids about sexual health, substance misuse, alcohol, gambling, tobacco and online safety
- For peer educators - training, one-to-one consultations, resources, lesson plans and advice as part of the Scottish Peer Educators Network

It was encouraging to hear a lot of positive feedback about the report and to confirm the experiences of organisations like Youth Scotland, Dyslexia Scotland, the Adoption and Fostering Alliance and Trellis. Trellis also shared how they ran a Good Practice sharing Day at Balnacraig School in Perth. It brought together 30 people – teachers, youth workers, psychologists and volunteers to learn about how gardening can be used to help some of the country's most vulnerable teens to build resilience and skills.

Grounds for Learning also told us how they are utilising green space in their work looking at teenage mental health. They are planning to run a project working with groups of young people to co-design the programme.

Scottish Families affected by alcohol and drugs (SFAD) also commented that they are finding a significant gap around support for teenagers. They are working with a couple of ADP areas to develop a young person's national demonstration project, focusing on 12-25 year olds who are overlooked from provision. This includes siblings and older 'children' affected by parental substance misuse.

One Parent Families Scotland helpfully shared how they agree with the paper and think that separated parents probably struggle more with issues such as how to handle risk taking, young people becoming more independent, and different 'thresholds' between parents in two households.

It was helpful to hear from organisations that work with children and younger people who may need support around different issues, such as sexuality and additional

learning needs.

Befriending Networks suggested we change the term “gay” in the July 2017 paper to LGBTQI. Befriending Networks informed us that some of their members offer befriending for families, but this is still rare. They proposed that perhaps families befriending families could be a helpful idea, but suggested this could be difficult in practice.

Another organisation that gave us their feedback, was John Muir Trust. They told us how they see both individuals and families spending time getting involved in enjoying and caring for nature as part of the John Muir Award. A wide range of organisations use the Award to help improve outcomes for participants. This includes a number of organisations supporting vulnerable children and young people, and working to help foster family relationships – through getting outdoors and experiencing nature together.

They don't have any case studies of targeted parent–teenager family awards, but the case study about With Kids award gives a sense of what families can gain from the experience of working to achieve an award together:

www.johnmuirtrust.org/about/resources/419-case-study-with-kids-family-award In particular, parents referred to both the benefit of spending time with their own families, and also to interact with other families, providing opportunities to socialise, share experiences and feel part of a community:

Dyslexia Scotland also agreed that the discussion paper was interesting and decided to send it round their teams. They also advised us of a new website they have launched recently, aimed at young people aged 8-18 with dyslexia:
<https://unwrapped.dyslexiascotland.org.uk>

Final note

It is becoming quite obvious that there are not only gaps in services and support available to parents and teenagers, but also issues around the language and preconceptions about that stage of life.

We are very interested in getting involved with peer support projects for parents of teenagers, teenagers themselves or family groups. The projects could be up and running or just in the design stage, or even only on a wish list at the moment.

We would also like to hear from other organisations interested in partnership working, either with ourselves, or with any of the organisations mentioned in this update.

Finally, if there is anything you would like to add to this, please get in touch.

Thank you for reading and please share this with your networks.

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