

## **Plymouth Parent and Family Strategy 2007: Underlying Principles**

**We believe there some principles which all services for parents<sup>1</sup>. and families in Plymouth should adopt. They provide a minimum standard of quality to be expected. These are:-**

1. The importance of parenting in shaping children's lives needs to be openly and clearly valued and promoted. Information, advice, education and support for parenting should reflect and promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>
2. Parents need to be openly and clearly valued and respected. Their experiences and knowledge should be taken seriously.
3. Services should recognise and respect a diversity of cultural traditions and styles of parenting whilst clearly prioritising children's welfare. Programme content and style of delivery should actively challenge stereotypes of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, cultural and religious belief.
4. There is no blueprint for what constitutes best parenting, or the best ways of helping parents make sense of it. Those providing information, education and support to parents should acknowledge this openly in their work and state:
  - their own underlying values;
  - why they are doing what they do;
  - their expectations on the roles of service users;
  - what they hope will be the outcomes;
  - to whom they are accountable;
  - what will be evaluated in their work;
  - their confidentiality policy.
5. Parenting is influenced by factors such as income, housing, shops, other facilities, and accessible support services etc. These factors need to be openly recognised when working with parents and, where appropriate, support given to parents and others to initiate positive change. Strategic thinking about the development of services should recognise the impact of the city's built and natural environments upon parent and family life and integrate planning with ecological awareness and approaches to regeneration.

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, stepparents, grandparents or other members of the family, corporate parents, foster or adoptive parents, or other adult or older sibling caregivers.

6. Services should be developed to reflect the needs that parents, children and families identify. There should be carefully structured and supportive participation opportunities offered to all parents, especially those whose voices are seldom heard. The Plymouth Parent and Family Forum can act to enable two way exchange of information between parent representatives, service commissioners and services providers, and to enable the voice of parents to inform the planning, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services at locality and city-wide levels.
7. Parenting by definition includes parents and children. Services should be planned and developed to be accessible, affordable, welcoming and non-stigmatising to all family members. This includes:
  - recognition of the particular needs of any target user group;
  - service locations which recognise parents' likely means of transport to them
  - settings which recognise and seek to address any physical, sensory and learning difficulties faced by parents and children;
  - styles of communication and service delivery which are clear, friendly, and easy to understand by parents;
  - the use of translation, interpretation or additional aids to communication
  - facilities for children and childcare options;
  - recognition of the support needs of fathers
  - coherent linking, co-operation and continuity between services as seen from a parent's point of view;
  - open and effective signposting to other services;
  - recognition of the value of other services or professional disciplines.
8. The behaviour and attitude of some parents may at times have adverse effects upon others taking part. Wherever possible this should be addressed in ways that maximise opportunities for continued inclusion, reintroduction with support, or help with routes to an alternative service.
9. Parents should be empowered to make choices, take decisions, and maintain control of their lives and their parenting. Only in extreme situations where there are statutory interventions concerning the welfare of children, or young people, should such control be negotiable. All reasonable efforts should be made to help parents to regain that control as soon as is possible unless it is clearly against the best interests of the child.
10. Parents may wish to explore further opportunities for their own learning, personal development, or vocational training. Effective parenting services should provide guidance and support towards the wide range of local and national opportunities.
11. Those providing information, advice, education and support to parents should be recruited for their positive attitudes towards parents and families and their skills for working with them. Where necessary, qualifications should meet the requirements of any national occupational standards, membership of professional bodies and local agreements. Such qualifications should be

available to service users upon request., In line with the Every Child Matters agenda for workforce reform we will work to raise the status of those working with children, parents, and families.

12. The commissioning of services will have a clear rationale and seek accountability from service providers. The use of parenting programmes will be expected to be underpinned by a significant evidence base for known impact and /or supported by meaningful evaluation research. There will be scope for innovative and creative parenting support projects.
13. Services will be effectively managed and use sound information systems that accurately record and monitor activity and outcomes.
14. Adult focused services in all sectors, particularly employment, housing, retailing, and public support services, should recognise that many adults are parents and adopt parent-friendly policies, which actively help parenting in Plymouth.

*These principles reflect the starting points identified in the HAZ principles for parent and family services in 2001 and in subsequent consultations through to 2007.*