

Appendix 1 - Parenting Support programmes overview

Background:

The Parenting Support Programme project aims to support parents and carers of children and young people aged 0–18 years, and up to 25 years for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are in full-time education or employment.

The initiative is designed to ensure that families across Oxfordshire have equitable access to effective parenting support. This collaborative, data-informed project involves multiple stakeholders and emphasises accessibility, inclusivity, and meeting the diverse needs of children, young people, and their families across the county.

Project Objectives:

- Identify and map existing parenting support programme provision across Oxfordshire.
- Capture lived experiences and outcomes for parents and carers.
- Establish categories of need across localities.
- Assess gaps in current provision and evaluate demand for various programme types and delivery methods.
- Evaluate programme objectives, goals, and outcomes, including completion rates and accessibility (addressing needs such as mental health, SEND, learning disabilities, domestic violence, etc.).
- Analyse geographical distribution to ensure equitable access across all localities.
- Consider financial accessibility, including whether programmes are free or require payment.
- Develop strategic recommendations for future commissioning, including costed options to address identified needs.
- Develop a centralised and accessible digital platform and web page that consolidates resources, offers clear signposting, and provides effective pathways for families.

Data Mapping:

- A targeted survey was distributed to providers of parenting programmes across Oxfordshire to aggregate programme types, delivery methods, participant engagement, geographic coverage, and perceived demand.
- Simultaneously, a separate survey was issued to parents and carers who had participated in these programmes to capture their experiences and the outcomes achieved, unfortunately despite widespread advertisement and encouragement from the Oxfordshire parent carer forum three responses were received.

- An internal data analysis was undertaken to determine the categories of need among children and young people across all Oxfordshire localities, to support a direct comparison between identified needs and the availability of parenting support and programmes
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OVERVIEW OF PARENTING PROGRAMME MARKET

The market for parenting programmes in Oxfordshire is diverse. Primary schools, voluntary sector organisations, alternative provision settings, and charities are the main providers, with additional support from community centres, nurseries, youth services, and health professionals.

A wide range of parenting support programmes is available. Frequently attended programmes include Family Links, Health Support/Advice, Peep Learning Together, and SWIFT. Specialised interventions address areas such as Parent Wellbeing, Adolescent Mental Health, baby and toddler support, and SEN assistance, anxiety and exam stress and depression parenting workshops are also being delivered by MHST's.

The primary objectives are to increase parental knowledge, strengthen family support systems, promote children's mental health, and enhance parental confidence and attachment.

Available programmes address key needs, including mental health and emotional wellbeing for both parents and children, development of self-care and independence, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), learning disabilities, sensory and physical needs, and autism. The market particularly focuses on supporting families with complex and varied challenges.

Most programmes are delivered in person, facilitating meaningful engagement. However, online and alternative methods are also used to provide greater flexibility and accessibility, especially for families facing barriers to traditional participation.

Parenting programmes are available throughout Oxfordshire, covering localities such as Abingdon, City North and South, Didcot, North, South East, West, and countywide services. While access is broad, certain areas report higher concentrations of need.

Most programmes are offered free of charge, minimising financial barriers and promoting equitable access. Where fees are required, these are generally minimal (approximately £5 per session), with some programmes adjusting pricing based on family circumstances.

There is significant demand for parenting programmes, evidenced by waiting lists and continued requests for additional support. Completion rates are relatively high, at around 75%, though there remains potential to further increase engagement and address factors that may impact completion.

High-demand programmes include SWIFT, Early Days, Family Links, Peep Learning Together, Triple P, and others. There is also notable demand for universal programmes on behaviour management and anxiety, in-person support for teen parents, fathers, and kinship carers, early years support for deaf children, and expanded SEND (including support for neurodivergent children and sensory issues) language and communication and educational support.

Mental health and counselling services are particularly sought, especially for young people aged 13–25 and their parents, with existing waiting lists. Service providers recommend developing new programmes and expanding current offerings to address these emerging needs. This is evidenced by the roll out of Parent Behaviour workshops delivered by MHST's.

Feedback from MHST's:

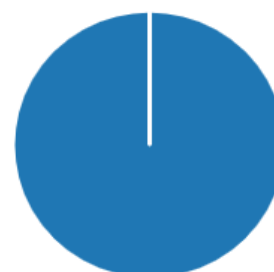
Overall, how would you rate the workshop?

● Excellent	13
● Good	0
● Fair	0
● Poor	0



How useful did you find the information shared?

● Extremely useful	13
● Somewhat useful	0
● Somewhat not useful	0
● Extremely not useful	0



Across all five localities in Oxfordshire, the most prevalent challenges include mental health concerns (for both parents/carers and children), learning disabilities, domestic violence, emotional abuse, neglect, and challenging behaviour. Additional issues reported include physical disabilities, substance misuse, self-harm, sensory needs and the needs of young carers.

KEY PARENT AND CARER FEEDBACK

Parenting programmes are generally effective, achieving high satisfaction rates and measurable improvements in parenting skills, parental wellbeing, and child behaviour.

Parents consistently value these programmes, describing them as helpful, supportive, and empowering. Notable outcomes include enhanced relationships, increased parental confidence, and a better understanding of children's needs. Additional benefits reported are improved prosocial behaviour in children, better parental mental health, and practical strategies for family life.

However, some groups remain less engaged or unconvinced, and there are gaps in content, such as cultural inclusion and explanations of early parenting challenges that should be addressed.

Successes:

- Across nearly all programmes, parents consistently described their experiences as helpful, supportive, and empowering. Programmes such as OXPIP (Parent–Infant Psychotherapy), Botley Bridges Family Support, and Willowcroft School (Nurturing Programme) were especially noted for creating safe, inclusive, and friendly environments.
- Many parents reported measurable improvements in their parenting confidence and skills. For example, Brookside Longfields and Launton Schools (Family Links) and Grow Families (Parenting Puzzle) saw 100% and 75% of parents, respectively, reporting increased confidence and understanding of their children's needs.
- Programmes like OXPIP and The Berin Centre were credited with improving parent-child relationships and reducing parental anxiety and depression. Parents also observed increased prosocial behaviour and reduced emotional difficulties in their children.
- Parents valued gaining practical strategies for managing difficult behaviours and nurturing themselves and their children, particularly in Grow Families (Parenting Puzzle) and AFI UK (BOMA Cross-Cultural Parenting).
- Programmes such as BYHP (Tackling Youth Homelessness) were described as empowering, with all participants reporting positive change after completion.
- Parents valued the Parent Behaviour Workshops delivered by the MHST's: "Different strategies for calming and holding boundaries"
- "Knowing that the school approach is the same and that rewarding the small things can have a big impact. Also nice to know you're not alone!"
- "Practical strategies and science behind behaviour"

Areas for Improvement:

- **Inclusivity and Engagement:** Several programmes noted gaps in engaging specific groups. For example, OXPIP had low participation from Black and Asian minority groups, while AFI UK (BOMA) was limited to African parents and had low male involvement.
- **Programme Impact:** Some parents in Grow Families (Parenting Puzzle) and Botley Bridges Family Support did not feel the programme made a significant difference to their parenting or remained unsure about the benefits.
- **Content Gaps:** Oxford Health 0–19 Years Service lacked detailed explanations on hormonal and brain changes in early parenthood, which some parents found important for understanding emotional challenges in the first weeks.
- **Accessibility and Duration:** BYHP had limited presence in secondary schools, and AFI UK (BOMA) faced challenges with restricted locations and short training periods.
- **Effectiveness of Strategies:** In Willowcroft School (Nurturing Programme), some parents felt not all strategies improved their skills.
- **Support and training on sensory needs** was required, when the Occupational Therapy Service piloted a Sensory OT scheme in 2023-24 the uptake on parenting programmes focused on sensory support was extremely high which was delivered to 9 parent groups (supporting 113 children).

KEY PROVIDER FEEDBACK

Successes:

- **Strong Engagement and Completion Rates:** Most programmes report high completion rates (around 75% or higher), indicating strong engagement and perceived value among participating families.
- **Positive Outcomes:** Programmes are successful in educating parents about their children's needs, supporting attachment, and boosting parental confidence.
- **Personalised Support:** The range of programme types allows providers to meet varied needs, from behaviour management to SEND and mental health.
- **Collaboration:** Providers benefit from collaborative working with other services, such as Early Help, Family Centres, and commissioning teams.
- **High Demand:** Providers consistently report high demand for their programmes, particularly those focused on mental health, SEND, and early years support.

Challenges:

- **Capacity and Resources:** High demand for programmes often exceeds current capacity, leading to waiting lists and potential unmet need, especially for mental health and SEND support.
 - **Completion Barriers:** While completion rates are generally good, there is room for improvement. Some parents face barriers to finishing programmes, such as time constraints or accessibility issues, which need further investigation.
 - **Limited Data and Engagement:** Survey fatigue and limited parent/carers engagement with feedback exercises constrain the ability to gather comprehensive data and fully understand needs.
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GAPS

Despite a robust and diverse parenting support offer, Oxfordshire faces ongoing challenges in reaching all families equitably. Addressing these gaps, by expanding targeted programmes, increasing capacity, enhancing engagement, and creating a centralised information hub will be critical to ensuring that no family is left behind.

Recent mapping and feedback highlight several persistent gaps in the provision of parenting support across Oxfordshire:

Under served Groups:

There are notable gaps in support for specific groups, including fathers (however the role of the new app Dad Pad aims to address this need), kinship carers, and parents of children with unique needs such as early years deaf children and teen parents. These groups often face barriers to accessing personalised programmes, resulting in unmet needs within the current offer.

Geographical Inequality:

Provision is uneven across the county, with rural localities particularly affected. Families in these areas may have less access to certain programme types, underscoring the need for more targeted outreach and flexible delivery models to ensure equitable access. The intention is to deliver the parenting support programmes from Family Hubs in the future to ensure families can access support within their community.

Programme and Capacity Gaps:

There is a shortfall in programmes addressing behaviour management, anxiety regulation, and SEND and sensory support, especially for preschool children. Additionally, high demand for mental health and counselling services has led to waiting lists, delaying timely support for families.

Engagement and Accessibility:

While many programmes are free and offer flexible delivery (in-person, online, hybrid), there is a need to further enhance engagement particularly through richer, in-person feedback mechanisms. Improved accessibility also depends on maintaining free provision and expanding flexible options.

Information Fragmentation:

Families often struggle to find comprehensive information about available support as information on parenting support programmes is displayed in several places on the OCC website. The absence of a centralised digital hub makes it harder for parents and carers to navigate the system and access the help they need.

NEXT STEPS

Collaboration Across Services:

There is a strong focus on fostering collaboration between key services. This will

include Family Hubs, LCSS, and Families First, to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach to parenting support, while minimising duplication of effort.

Data Mapping and Needs Assessment:

Ongoing internal data collation and analysis are being conducted to map categories of need by locality, assess demand, and identify gaps in current provision. These activities will support expanded outreach, enable the personalisation of programme content to diverse needs, and facilitate the collection of more comprehensive feedback, ultimately strengthening the impact and inclusivity of parenting support programmes.