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**Parenting Courses Report Feb 2024**

The name of the course implies you are a poor parent in need of learning. While you may learn from attending courses, it depends on what course, at what stage of the children’s development, and at what stage of need (not only the child’s but often the family’s). The name can create a stigma for some families. Parent carers report that the choice of course name makes them feel inadequate or that they are not doing a good enough job being a parent.

Parents and carers who are offered a course usually have children whose behaviour is a cause for concern.

We get regular contact from family workers looking for parent carer help. They often come to our sessions for training boosters.

**Early Help Courses**

Parent carers offered courses as part of early help seem more positive about the value and experience of attending. *These appear worth continuing, although we would like to see parent carer feedback from course attendees.*

Some parent carers appear to be offered (and feel obliged) to attend multiple parenting courses, which they perceive as a delaying tactic when they feel they need more help. (They want someone to come in and help solve the problem rather than feeling they can solve it).

**Courses as a pathway to diagnostic services – Autism and ADHD**

Schools and parent carers don’t understand the pathways and mental health NICE guidelines. Where a request for assessment is dual (Autism and ADHD) or where a parent/ SENDCo is unclear of the needs or wants an all-encompassing assessment, then it is often not understood that a course is required to demonstrate an evidence-based approach to meet the NICE requirements of CAMH (ADHD diagnostic process).

While the NICE Guidelines recommend a course, the SEND Legislation says a child who ‘may have a special need’ is entitled to an assessment. Therefore, it is often presented that requiring a course to be taken before an assessment is unlawful. The letters sent out to parent carers imply otherwise. Parents who challenge this are often told if they don’t attend, they cannot proceed – this would be unlawful.

**Access to parenting courses**

Courses used to run frequently, and the wait was more than a school term. Now, it's hard to get access. As the courses are run in person (the online offer has just closed), they require the ability to travel. In some cases, courses are too infrequent to address the urgent need for help expressed by some families – this is related to extreme and challenging behaviour, ability to attend school or failing mental health.

Courses require parent carer attendance over a number of weeks for multiple hours. It assumes a parent carer can attend and doesn’t have other caring responsibilities. It assumes they can travel and afford to travel/ have access to transport. It assumes they will be available – many parent carers have to work, and taking time off is not an option for many (it is unaffordable or not permitted / risk of losing their job). Those who attend are predominantly the primary carer; some report this is a source of tension – the attendee takes the message home and may not be supported by the partner as they haven’t heard the message first-hand. It's common for the primary carer to report sole responsibility for managing behaviour as another cause of conflict and stress/distress.

Looking back over our records, we go in phases: about every six months, we get misdirection to us to offer parent programmes, and we try and get to the bottom of who is telling people we offer a formal ‘parent programme’ that would count as evidence to align with NICE guidelines. We don’t, but our sessions are well-received and offer to cover the same core information.

**Some recent examples of parents contacting Pinpoint:**

*I hope you can help? My name is xxxxxx, and I have previously attended one of your PDA twilight sessions. I am currently in the process of an EHA with my son's school in the hope we can access a community paediatrician to assess for any neurodevelopmental issues my son may be experiencing. My son is 5 years old and is having difficulties at school with his behaviour, which has resulted in temporary exclusions. I signed up for courses via the council several months ago and have still not got a place, the school tells me that I need to evidence attendance on courses for the EHA. I wondered if you had any appropriate courses for ADHD that might be coming up? Or anything else that we might find helpful.*

*Good Evening. My 9 year old daughter has recently been given a diagnosis of combined ADHD and ODD after we resorted to going privately at the ADHD centre to get a 2nd opinion. Her recommended treatment plan is Parental ADHD training courses and Methylphenidate tablets. Please can you advise how I access local ADHD parenting courses and ADHD support groups and what are the for and against of medicating a child? Any help and guidance would be greatly appreciated.*

*Good morning. I would like to ask if there is a parenting group that specifically focuses on having a child with autism and ADHD coming up soon. Our child does not have a diagnosis, but we are going through the process with school of the referral process. As I'm sure you are aware, we are required to complete a parenting programme, and I'm wondering whether this could meet the requirements instead of triple p? Triple p, I'm guessing, is likely to be quicker.
Either way, we would like to be offered support regarding neurodiversity if this is available within Pinpoint. Could you please guide us in the right direction? Look forward to hearing from you soon,*

*I am looking for some advice and wondering if you can help. I have a 9-year-old son who has recently been assessed (privately) by an educational psychologist. As a result, she has advised us to see a paediatrician for further assessment to determine if he meets the criteria for inattentive ADHD; both parent and teacher scores are high. I have looked at the Cambridge Community Services paediatrics website. It states that for referral for  ADHD assessment, parents need to have sought support and attended courses, and details of this need to be included on the referral form for the referral to be accepted. Can you advise me on whether or not doing one of your courses is the correct requirement? I have looked at your workshops. You have a course for girls with ADHD but nothing more general or specific for boys. Will you be running any courses in the near future? Can you point me in the right direction to find a course/workshop that will be acceptable for the referral form?*

*My son is a “masker” so will not display disruptive behaviour at school but gets home and just explodes making every evening a nightmare. Because in Cambs, we can only get an NHS diagnosis if the school refers him, we find we cannot access any help or even know what is wrong with him because of this.*

*It was amazing to hear that I am not alone in the struggle and that it isn't my parenting. No matter how much you know you are doing your best for your child, being told to do yet another parenting course that you know won’t help, is hard to keep swallowing it and not blame yourself. The speaker was amazing at explaining they are wired different so our approach has to be different.*

**Related Feedback from Pinpoint Sessions**

Even if you have an older child with needs and have done the course before, you must do it all over again.

Some parents do benefit from the courses with tips and strategies but mostly from connecting with others in a similar situation.

Name of the courses....."parenting" many feel they are "bad parents" and have to be sent on a course to be "fixed" Compounds poor mental health.  Even calling it Information sessions would help.

Some parents still don't know where to go for additional support afterwards. Could this be linked to poor mental health, as asking may feel like further failure?

*Fantastic that a therapeutic approach will now be recommended in our school and has made me feel much better about my daughter starting her deferred entry into reception knowing that she will not always be on the “rain cloud” These new ideas will support our therapeutic parenting and therapy.*

*This is the first of a 2 part session and I am very much looking forward to the next session where I’m sure I will gain a greater understanding of the impact of what we have learnt so far on our parenting and how we can possibly make adjustments to better fit our children’s needs.*

*It was really nice to meet other parents of SEN children and feel like they understand my parenting journey.*

*Just knowing that traditional parenting is not the right way to parent will help me feel more confident in the different approaches needed with this condition.*

*Huge amount of helpful information. Gave me confidence that parenting to suit my child’s needs is OK. Society tends to expect more traditional parenting. I am in a difficult time of not having a specific diagnosis for my child, although she is on a waiting list.*

*I feel like I have received a true representation of Autism with PDA and can now truly start to understand my son's needs. Previous advice given by so-called 'Professional' therapists who questioned parenting skills was completely wrong with their advice. I feel exonerated.*

*Always good to be amongst parents and professionals who understand how difficult it is to be a SEND parent. Confidence to trust our instincts and understand that typical parenting styles don’t work for SEND children.*

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*Teacher, SENDCo, relatives, and family friends deny that my child is neurodivergent, which would seem to imply that the problems we are having are entirely due to bad parenting or that I'm delusional. In the Tii Hub, other parents report similar parenting problems (often more severe than ours) and disbelief from others, so I feel less alone and reassured that I am not just imagining things. Without Tii Hub, I believe that it is likely that my mental health would progressively deteriorate due to the ongoing challenges and denials.*

*It was really nice to see that there were lots of people in the same boat as I have always felt really isolated, and judged and that people think that my son is bad. It has also given me the confidence to pursue a less traditional parenting approach that is based more on compassion and understanding and less on consequences. We have long thought that this works better for our children but have always been encouraged by professionals to stick to the more standard things. I also noticed that the SENCO from the boy's school was present, and I am hoping that this will allow us to have a more useful dialogue with the school going forward. Massive thanks to Pinpoint for organising this amazing session.*