

Evaluation of the ESCAPE parenting programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aims of the evaluation

In 2003, Young People in Focus, YPF (formerly called TSA) created a parenting programme called ESCAPE, and has since trained many practitioners across the UK to run the course with parents. ESCAPE is a 12 week programme, involving six group sessions and pre- and post-course home visits with parents. ESCAPE aims to improve relationships between young people and their families, and specifically to improve attendance at school, behaviour at home and at school, and reduce offending behaviour.

The scope and methodology of this evaluation has been informed by the recommended standards set by the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) in their PPET ratings for the Commissioners Toolkit as follows:

- A sample size of between 20 and 25 families
- A longitudinal design
- The use of scientifically validated measures
- The inclusion of a variety of ESCAPE groups, in terms of geographical location and different contexts.

Methods and data collected

Seven ESCAPE groups were involved in the evaluation, from across the UK. Data were collected from parents at the start of the course, and again at the end. Measures used included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Family Grid, and a range of other quantitative and qualitative items. Data were collected from 40 parents pre-course, and from 32 parents post-course.

Results

The results showed a number of areas of change in parents' perceptions and behaviours between the two data collection points, in addition to parents reporting changes in their child or young person's behaviour. Findings included that at the follow-up:

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) results showed that children were: more considerate of other people's feelings; having less tantrums / hot tempers; kinder to younger children; lying or cheating less; volunteering more to help others; stealing less from home, school or elsewhere; more likely to be getting on better with adults than with children. These were all statistically significant.
- In addition the SDQ results showed
 - a decrease in the total difficulties score
 - a decrease in the conduct problems score
 - an increase in prosocial behaviour score

- a decrease in the impact score – this means that the child’s problems had less impact on them at T2 in terms of friendships, classroom learning, leisure activities and home life, and how distressed they were by their own problems. These were all statistically significant.
- 55% of parents said that their child’s problems were ‘a bit’ or ‘much’ better since doing the course
- Family Grid results shows parents’ level of self-esteem increased as a result of doing the course – both in relation to their perceptions of themselves as parents, and their perceptions of their child. These were both statistically significant.
- Parents found their child’s behaviour less difficult to understand; had increased knowledge about teenage development and behaviour; and felt an increased ability to manage their child’s behaviour. These were all statistically significant.
- Parents wanted less help by the end of the course. For example:
 - a reduction from 22% to 9% to those urgently require help in relation to communication with their child
 - a reduction from 47% to 3% in those who need urgent help in how they handle arguments with their child
 - a reduction from 41% to 13% in those who need urgent help in how to set boundaries and discipline their child
 - a reduction from 53% to 6% in those who need urgent help in managing difficult behaviour by their child.
- There was a positive finding in relation to one aspect of education. This was the extent to which the child’s difficulties impacted on their classroom learning. Those parents saying their child’s problems had ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of impact on classroom learning reduced from 63% at T1 to 40% at T2.

In addition to these quantitative findings, the qualitative data showed a range of positive outcomes for parents from attending the ESCAPE course. This included improved parent-child communication, parents developing a range of strategies for dealing with difficult issues, two-parent families being more consistent in their parenting strategies, and children having more respect for their parent/s. The majority of parents also said that their household was calmer, there were less arguments between siblings, and more opportunities for family discussion.

In addition, analyses were undertaken comparing parents who dropped out of the study after T1, and those who completed T2 data, in relation to demographic and baseline SDQ data. This showed high levels of similarities, with very few

differences in baseline SDQ data. In addition 'intention to treat' analysis was carried out on all 40 participants, comparing T1 and T2 data. This showed that all statistically significant effects were the same. This suggests that the results for the 32 participants who completed the course were very strong, and not affected by those who dropped out.

Conclusions

This small-scale evaluation has demonstrated that the ESCAPE parenting programme has a positive effect on parents, and on their children and young people. Thus the ESCAPE programme met its aim of improving relationships between young people and their families, and improving relationships at home. There were also positive but limited impacts on young people's school attendance and classroom behaviour, and offending.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following people for their contribution to the evaluation described in this report:

- All 40 parents who were interviewed and completed questionnaires
- All managers and workers from the seven ESCAPE groups who assisted with the project
- We used a number of research tools to carry out the evaluation – including the SDQ, the Family Grid, and some questions previously used by the Policy Research Bureau
- Karen Broady and Dona Crisfield at Young People in Focus for administrative support and data entry
- Lucy Knighton from Young People in Focus for designing and producing charts
- Debi Roker, Kevin Lowe and Wook Hamilton for advice and guidance as the project progressed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the evaluation

The ESCAPE parenting programme was written in 2003. In that time YPF has trained many practitioners people to deliver the course.

In the last five years or so there has been an increased focus on delivering interventions that 'work'. Public money is limited and practitioners want to deliver programmes that they feel have a sufficient evidence base to ensure that they are selecting a programme to use that will deliver specific results for the families they work with.

A number of parenting programmes, usually the larger scale programmes (such as Webster Stratton, Triple P and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities), have carried out large scale evaluations giving them a robust evidence base. Smaller scale programmes such as ESCAPE however, have generally not been subject to in-depth evaluation.

Practitioners have been encouraged to carry out their own evaluations of the ESCAPE programme, and anecdotally we are aware of the positive impact of using ESCAPE with parents. However, no evaluations to date have been sufficiently large scale or used robust enough methodology to give ESCAPE the evidence base it needs. This evaluation has been designed because of the increasing need for programmes to have a strong evidence base.

The National Academy of Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) has been promoting evidence based programmes as part of its workforce development remit. It has developed the Commissioners Toolkit as a central database where commissioners can gain information about programmes relevant for their target group. These programmes are validated against a series of quality ratings, including evaluation. ESCAPE is currently validated on the Commissioners Toolkit. However, this evaluation has been developed in order to increase our ratings in both evaluation and in the training of practitioners to a standard which is recommended by NAPP.

1.2 The ESCAPE parenting programme

The ESCAPE parenting programme was written in 2003. It consists of a six week course and two initial pre-course home visits and two post-course home visits. The training is currently being developed, but at the present time it is a two day course. As stated in the ESCAPE course manual, the main aim of the programme is '*... to improve relationships between young people and their*

families. To improve attendance at school, behaviour at both school and home and reduce offending behaviour’.

As part of the initial assessment and information gathering process, ESCAPE practitioners work with parents to complete Family Grid, a scientifically validated measure of self-esteem designed by Professor Hilton Davis (see separate appendices). Parents are asked to complete the measure in relation to their self and their child. At the end of the course parents complete the same measure. Comparison of the results determines the extent to which the programme has impacted upon parents’ self-esteem and positiveness towards their child. The evaluation of the programme described below therefore includes this measure.

1.3 Evaluation objectives and design

The evaluation of ESCAPE was designed on the basis of recommendations YPF received from NAPP. The aim of the evaluation was therefore to evaluate the effectiveness of the ESCAPE programme for parents and how it could be developed or improved. It was agreed with NAPP that in order to meet their evaluation criteria, the following aspects would be incorporated into the evaluation:

- A longitudinal design (ie collecting pre and post parenting programme data)
- A sample size of between 20-25 families
- The use of scientifically validated measures
- The inclusion of a variety of ESCAPE groups being run in different parts of the country, and working with parents in different contexts.

The next chapter describes the evaluation that was undertaken, including the sample and methods used.

CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1 Design of the evaluation

This was a small scale study involving 35 families. Data were collected at two time points – at the start of the course (either just before, or just after the first group session) and again between one and two weeks after the final group session.

At the start of the evaluation, trainers who had taken part in YPF's ESCAPE training were contacted randomly from a list and asked if they were still running courses. From this, seven ESCAPE courses took part in the evaluation. These represented a wide geographical spread, as follows:

- Durham
- Kirklees
- Northampton
- London Borough of Merton
- Mid Lothian, Scotland
- Powys, Wales
- Suffolk.

The courses involved in the research also represented a range of settings - one group was run by a YOT, another by a project working with young people at risk of offending, and the others were family support projects.

Our aim was to have pre and post data from between 20 and 25 families. Given the likelihood that some parents may drop out of the programme or the research, we started with a sample of 35 families to allow for this.

The majority of the data was collected via telephone interview. Parents were asked a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions. The quantitative information was collected via Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Professor Hilton Davis' Family Grid (FG) questionnaires. In addition YPF also devised some quantitative and qualitative questions (see Appendices). The majority of parents had received a referral to the course for just one of their children. In a few cases however, the referral focused on two of the children. For the purpose of the research the parent was asked to answer the questions in relation to just one of the children.

All the parents who participated in the research were given a £5 gift voucher as a 'thank you' for taking part, and the organisations involved were given a free YPF publication. The research was conducted in accordance with YPF's ethical policy, which addresses issues such as informed consent, disclosure, etc.

2.2 Data collected and data analysis

Participants

In total, telephone interviews were conducted pre-course with 40 parents from 35 families. At the post-course stage, data were collected from 32 parents from 28 families. Drop out occurred mainly where parents did not attend or did not complete their course.

Of the parents interviewed at the first time point, 85% were female carers and 15% male carers. With regard to their relationship to their child, 83% of interviewees were the child's mother, 10% were the father, 5% were the stepfather and one person (3%) was the step mother.

In relation to family type, 40% (16 parents) were single parents, 45% (18 parents) were in a two parent family and 15% (6 parents) were in a two parent step-family.

Two thirds of the 35 young people (25) were boys and a third (10) were girls. The age of the young people varied from age 11 to age 18. However the majority were aged between 13 and 15.

Data analysis

Quantitative information was analysed using the SPSS data management system. Data analyses were undertaken using t-tests and chi-squares, and reported as statistically significant at the $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ levels. Qualitative information was analysed thematically where appropriate, and quotes identified to illustrate main points.

The following chapter gives the results from the evaluation. Note that data collected at the first time point is referred to as 'pre-course' or 'T1' data, and data collected at the second time point as 'post-course' or 'T2 data'.

Comparison between pre-course interviewees and post-cost interviewees

As stated above, data was collected from 32 parents from 28 families at T2 – thus 8 parents dropped out at T2. Comparison was made between those who completed T2 and those who dropped out (T2 non-completers and T2 completers) to find out whether the group who dropped out were different to those who completed. T-tests and chi square analyses were performed in relation to a number of demographic features, including parents' relationship to child, gender of child, family type, gender of parent, age of child and type of school child attended. There were no significant differences between the T2 non-completers and T2 completers on the demographic information.

In addition, analyses were undertaken of the SDQ strengths and difficulties items for the two groups. This showed no significant differences between the two groups on 23 of the 25 measures. Two measures were significant, in relation to whether the child is easily distracted / concentration wanders, and thinks things out before acting. The non completers had more parents who scored higher on the 'child was easily distracted, concentration wanders' measure and also more parents who scored lower on the 'their child thinks things through before acting' measure. The group analysis was also undertaken on the SDQ symptom scores and again there were no differences between the groups in relation to these scores.

Given that there were very few differences between the T2 completers and non-completers, the data analysis comparing the results at T1 and T2 was undertaken only on the 32 parents who had data at both time points. In Chapter 3 results on all measures is shown for all 40 parents. In Chapter 4 results are shown for just those parents with T1 and T2 data.

Intention to treat analysis

'Intention to treat' analyses were undertaken with all 40 participants, comparing T1 and T2 data and all statistically significant effects were the same. This shows that the results for the 32 participants who completed the course were very strong, and not affected by those who dropped out.

CHAPTER 3: PARENTS DATA PRE-COURSE

This chapter presents the findings for the pre-course data, detailing the results for the SDQ and Family Grid, and YPF's quantitative and qualitative data. The section starts by detailing how parents came to be on the course, and the issues that they faced in their parenting. These questions were asked in the telephone interviews at T1.

3.1 How parents came to be on the course, and issues faced

Parents came to be on a course through a number of different routes. Some parents received a formal referral through the CAF process, whilst for others, the course was suggested by a family worker. The various routes included:

- GP referred to local adolescent unit who referred parents to the course
- Family support workers
- YOT or YISP
- School made referral to a Parent Support Adviser who then referred parent to course
- Pupil Referral unit or special school
- CAMHS
- Children's Services or Social Services
- Court – Parenting Order and Referral Order.

Two parents were on a Parenting Order, with the others attending the course voluntarily.

Parents were asked what the main issues were that the child was experiencing at the point of being referred to attend the course.

Just under a quarter (eight) of families said their child had ADHD, and one parent said her daughter had autism and mental health problems. In addition to the ADHD and/or autism and mental health problems, parents talked about their child's behaviour being difficult at home and/or at school.

The main issues mentioned by parents were child answering back, rudeness, anger, bad moods and bad tempers, being disrespectful, being violent, fighting in the street, lying, stealing and swearing. The behavioural problems at school demonstrated by some children included playing truant, challenging behaviour in the classroom and for a couple of children, a lack of confidence in attending school. In terms of the type of school their children attended (this data is based on the 35 children) - 60% attended a mainstream school, 26% attended a Pupil Referral Unit or some other type of alternative education, 9% (three young

people) were not currently at school and 6% (two young people) were at college. In total 47% (16) of children had been excluded from school in the last six months, with six children having been excluded three times or more. The majority of the children (84%) were attending school each day, although some parents were aware that their children were truanting.

The parents were also asked about the number of times their child's school contacted them about their child's behaviour. In total 53% (17 families) said the school never contacted them about this. For the remainder it was between once a month and more than five times a week.

3.2 Results for the SDQ

The full results for the SDQ at Time 1 were as follows:

Table 1: SDQ results at T1

TIME 1 n=40	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Some what true</i>	<i>Certainly true</i>
Considerate of other people's feelings	40%	57%	3%
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	27%	23%	50%
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness	50%	32%	18%
Shares readily with other children	23%	20%	57%
Often has temper tantrums / hot tempers	5%	18%	77%
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	55%	30%	15%
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	52%	43%	5%
Many worries, often seems worried	33%	39%	28%
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	10%	43%	47%
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	27%	23%	50%
Has at least one good friend	20%	15%	65%
Often fights with other children or bullies them	33%	42%	25%
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	35%	45%	20%
Generally liked by other children	10%	35%	55%
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	15%	8%	77%
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	49%	28%	23%
Kind to younger children	8%	25%	67%
Often lies or cheats	18%	35%	47%
Picked on or bullied by other children	57%	35%	8%
Often volunteers to help others	30%	40%	30%
Thinks things out before acting	87%	13%	0
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	45%	35%	20%
Gets on better with adults than with other children	40%	40%	20%
Many fears, easily scared	62%	25%	13%
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	62%	18%	20%

As these results show, there were relatively few parents who said that their child was solitary, or was unkind to younger children, or was being bullied. However, 52% of parents said that their child was not obedient or did what adults requested, and 87% said that their child did not think before acting.

The table below shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the SDQ strength and difficulties items:

Table 2: Mean and standard deviations for child strengths and difficulties

TIME 1 n=40	T1 Mean (standard deviation)
Considerate of other people's feelings	0.6 (0.5)
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	1.2 (0.9)
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness	0.7 (0.8)
Shares readily with other children	1.4 (0.8)
Often has temper tantrums / hot tempers	1.7 (0.6)
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	0.6 (0.7)
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	0.5 (0.6)
Many worries, often seems worried	1.0 (0.8)
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	1.4 (0.7)
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	1.2 (0.9)
Has at least one good friend	1.5 (0.8)
Often fights with other children or bullies them	0.9 (0.8)
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	0.9 (0.7)
Generally liked by other children	1.5 (0.7)
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	1.6 (0.7)
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	0.7 (0.8)
Kind to younger children	1.6 (0.6)
Often lies or cheats	1.3 (0.8)
Picked on or bullied by other children	0.5 (0.6)
Often volunteers to help others	1.0 (0.8)
Thinks things out before acting	0.1 (0.3)
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	0.8 (0.8)
Gets on better with adults than with other children	0.8 (0.8)
Many fears, easily scared	0.5 (0.7)
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	0.6 (0.8)

Following the SDQ analysis procedure, these 25 individual items were grouped into five categories or symptoms scores. Each item in the table above relates to one of these five symptoms scores – emotional symptoms score, conduct problems score, hyperactivity score, peer problems score, and prosocial

behaviour score. The mean results of these can be seen in Table 3 below. In addition there is the 'total' difficulties score which is a sum of these (except prosocial scores) and the 'impact' score (amalgamation of results for impact on child's problems; home life, classroom learning, friendships and leisure activities and the extent to which the child is affected by the problems).

Table 3: Symptoms scores and comparison with British norm

	T1 (n=40) Mean (standard deviation)	Norm (Britain) 11-15 year olds Mean (standard deviation)
Total difficulties score	20.3 (5.3) A	8.2 (5.8) N
Emotional symptoms score	3.7 (2.6) N	1.9 (2.0) N
Conduct problems score	6.2 (2.1) A	1.5 (1.7) N
Hyperactivity score	7.4 (2.4) A	3.2 (2.6) N
Peer problems score	3.0 (2.5) N	1.5 (1.7) N
Prosocial behaviour score	6.0 (2.1) N	8.6 (1.6) N
Impact score	3.3 (2.3) A	0.4 (1.2) N

*N=normal, B=borderline, A=abnormal

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for the symptoms scores and compares these with the national average for Britain's 11-15 year olds (see www.sdqinfo.net). These results classify means as normal, borderline, or abnormal. The information provided on the SDQ website describes these classifications as a 'rough and ready' method for detecting disorders. The mean scores relating to these classifications are as follows:

Table 4: SDQ symptoms scores and classifications

	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
Total Difficulties score	0-15	16-19	20-40
Emotional symptoms score	0-5	6	7-10
Conduct problems score	0-3	4	5-10
Hyperactivity score	0-5	6	7-10
Peer problems score	0-3	4-5	6-10
Prosocial behaviour score	6-10	5	0-4
Impact	0	1	2+

As these results show, the mean average for our sample looks very different to the means for the British 11-15 sample. The means for our sample of 40 parents shows that they are experiencing high levels of difficulty. The total difficulties score of 20.3 falls just within the 'abnormal' category, as do the means for the conduct problems score, the hyperactivity score and the impact score.

In addition, parents were asked about the level of difficulties they felt their children were facing with emotions, concentration, behaviour, and getting on with people. The results were as follows:

Table 5: Level of difficulty faced by child at T1

	No	Yes - minor difficulties	Yes - definite difficulties	Yes - severe difficulties
Time 1 (n=40)	0	23%	62%	15%

As this table shows, 62% of parents said their child was experiencing 'definite' difficulties, and 15% 'severe' difficulties.

The parents were also asked about the impact of their child's difficulties on different aspects of family life. These results are given below:

Table 6: How the difficulties interfere with child's home life, friendships, classroom learning and leisure activities, T1

Time 1 (n=40)	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Home life	3%	27%	55%	15%
Friendships	26%	38%	23%	13%
Classroom learning	18%	22%	38%	22%
Leisure activities	46%	23%	21%	10%

As this shows, parents felt that the difficulties their child was experiencing interfered mainly with their child’s home life (70% replied either ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a great deal’) and classroom learning (60% in these categories). The difficulties had less impact on their child’s leisure activities, and to a greater extent their child’s friendships.

Parents were also asked in the SDQ about the extent to which the difficulties with their child were a burden on the parent and the family as a whole. The results were as follows:

Table 7: The extent to which the difficulties put a burden on the parent or family as a whole, T1

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Time 1 N=40	0	15%	60%	25%

As can be seen from this, 60% of parents said their child’s difficulties put ‘quite a lot’ of burden on the family and 25% said ‘a great deal’.

3.3 Results for the Family Grid

As stated in Chapter 2, the Family Grid is a measure of self-esteem. It asks parents where they feel they are on certain key elements, and where they would ideally like to be. It also asks about their child’s behaviour and their ideal child. The results are given in terms of a discrepancy score, ie the discrepancy between actual self and ideal self, and actual child and ideal child. As a rough guide, the developer of the grid (Professor Hilton Davis) states that a score of two or over represents a significant problem.

In total 34 parents had Family Grid data in relation to self, and 33 in relation to their child. Mean scores were as follows:

Table 8: Mean scores Family Grid

	Mean (standard deviation)
T1 Self (n=34)	1.6 (0.5)
T1 Child (n=33)	2.3 (0.8)

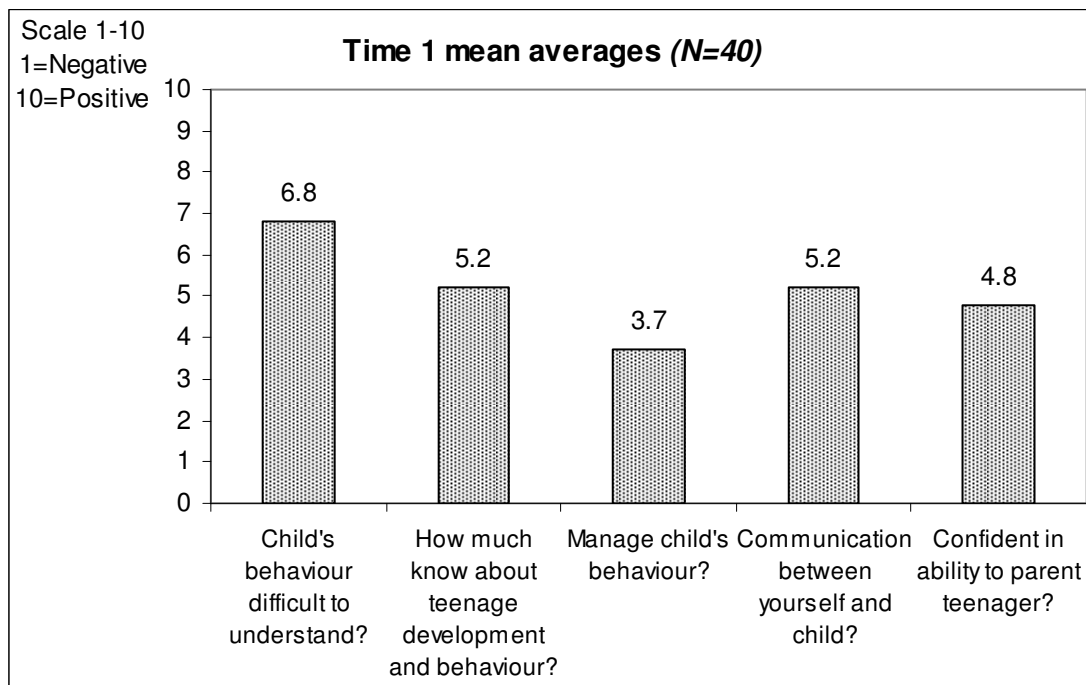
The results for the parents' view of themselves showed that nine of the 34 parents had a score of two or above, suggesting a significant discrepancy between actual and ideal self. As the table below shows, the mean was 1.6. In relation to their actual/ideal view of their children, 25 of the 33 parents scored two or over, indicating a significant level of problems. The mean score on this measure was 2.3. This demonstrates that over two-thirds of the parents were experiencing significant problems with their child.

3.4 YPF quantitative data

Parents were asked a number of 1 to 10 scale questions in relation to their child. The questions were as follows (with 1 indicating no/negative and 10 yes/positive):

- Do you find your child's behaviour difficult to understand?
- How much do you feel you know about teenage development and behaviour?
- How well do you feel you are able to manage your child's behaviour?
- How well do you and your child communicate in general?
- How confident do you feel in your ability to parent your teenager?

Table 9: Results for five parenting scale questions, T1



As these results show, many of the parents found it difficult to manage their child's behaviour (mean=3.7) and were not particularly confident in their ability to parent their teenager (mean=4.8).

In terms of the type of school the children attended (this data is based on the 40 parents) - 65% were in mainstream schools, 23% were at Pupil Referral Units or alternative provision, 8% were not currently attending school, and 5% were at college. Most of the children (87% of those currently attending) went every day they were required to. The remaining 13% attended variably. In terms of the number of times that parents were contacted about their child's problems or behaviour, this was as follows:

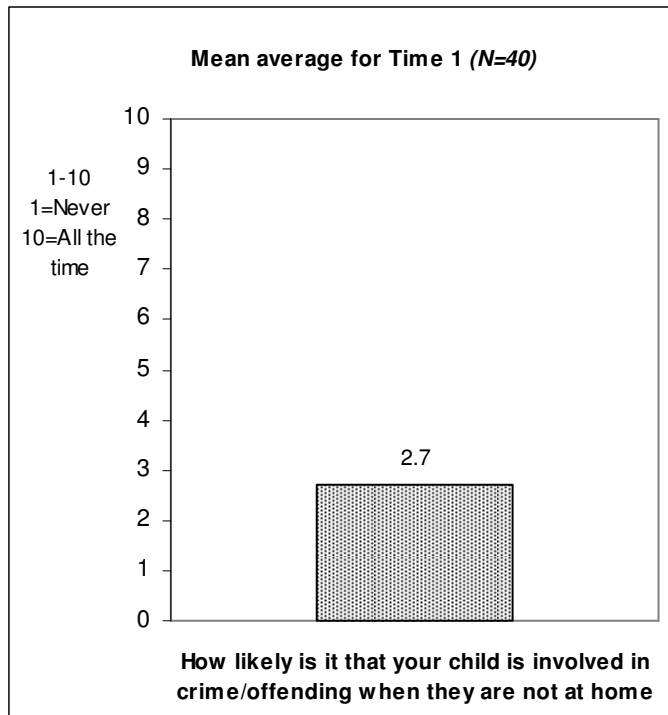
Table 10: Contacts from the school / college about child's behaviour

	Number of contacts
Never	54%
Once a month	3%
Once a fortnight	5%
Once a week	19%
2-3 times a week	14%
Every day	5%

As this table shows, 54% of parents were never contacted by the school about their child's behaviour. The remaining parents were contacted between once a month and every day. Note also that 46% of the children had been excluded from school in the last six months.

The parents were also asked whether they thought their child was involved in offending while they were out of the home. The results were as follows:

Figure 1: Likelihood of that child is involved in crime/offending when they are not at home, T1



As can be seen there was a mean score of 2.7 on this scale, indicating that most parents did not feel that their child was involved in crime or offending when they were out of the home.

The parents were also asked about the areas that they most wanted help with, in relation to their child. These results were as follows:

Table 11: Amount of help required with different issues, T1

Time 1 N=40	No help required	Some help required	Help urgently required
Communication (talking to your child)	8%	70%	22%
Handling arguments with your child	5%	45%	50%
Making a big decision about child	28%	54%	18%
Setting boundaries / disciplining your child	5%	45%	50%
Improving your child's school attendance	65%	20%	15%

Dealing with your child's offending	70%	13%	17%
Managing difficult behaviour by your child	0%	50%	50%

As the table shows, the areas that parents wanted urgent help on, were handling arguments, setting boundaries/disciplining child, and managing difficult behaviour by their child. On each of these questions 50% of parents wanted 'urgent' help. Note also that only 35% of parents wanted 'some' or 'urgent' help in relation to their child's school attendance. In addition only 30% of parents wanted 'some' or 'urgent' help in relation to their child's offending.

3.5 YPF qualitative data

A variety of qualitative questions were asked about parents' views and expectations for the ESCAPE course. This information is given here, with selected quotes to illustrate:

How parents felt about being on the course

Most parents were very positive about starting the course. For example: as the following quotes demonstrate:

"I think it's good. I think everybody should do it"

"I'm looking forward to meeting other parents and learning some new strategies"

"At the moment I'll take any help I can get. I feel positive about it"

Some parents added that they wished they had been on one of these courses a while ago. For example:

"I think it's a good idea for me. My other children weren't like this. It's a shame it's taken so long"

"Very good because it's a refreshing change to have people help us – because we've gone several years without getting much"

A few parents were less positive about going on a course:

"Initially I didn't really want to do the course as it felt like we were being told we were bad parents"

"I'm not overly struck because I feel like I've done everything I can"

What parents expected the course to be like

At this point some of the parents had already attended their first session whilst others were about to start the course the following week. There were a range of responses to this question, as follows:

“I don’t know but am open to anything”

“Hopefully we’ll learn something that will help sort our child out”

“Fun but enlightening”

“I think it will help”

What parents hoped to get out of the course for themselves

The main themes emerging from this question were: being a better parent and to have a better relationship with the child, learning new techniques, hearing other people’s point of view and gaining support from others going through similar things. For example:

“For myself to be a better parent”

“To learn to be a better parent and learn techniques to help us cope with various things. Plus to meet others with similar problems”

“To learn to negotiate more with her – rather than get angry. To cope with her a little better”

“Contact with others, support and the chance to off load”

What parents hoped to get out of the course for their child

There were three main themes in relation to what parents hoped to get out of the course, for their child. These were:

- The child learns to respect and understand the parent

“I would like him to see that I am supporting him and that I can change my behaviour at my age and he’ll respect me for that”

“She sees that I’m not the worst parent in the world”

“Help her know I care and want to understand what she’s going through”

- Parent handling situations better

"I can pick up some techniques that will work"

"learn skills to manage the situations more constructively"

- Improvement to child's behaviour

"... if I can approach him in a different way it might help him to be a bit calmer"

"Hope he learns to show more respect and to speak to people normally and not like something he's scraped off his shoe"

What parents hoped their family would get from them attending the course

The following themes were most common in relation to this question:

- Better communication

"To be able to communicate better than we do now"

- More understanding

"To explain things to the family about her behaviour. They think she's a brat but sometimes her behaviour is a response to how she's feeling"

"My other sons get annoyed at the way she speaks to me"

- A calmer, more harmonious household

"A calmer atmosphere. It's very tense at the moment"

"That it will work. When my son kicks off it affects everyone. It's like walking on egg shells"

- Siblings being less affected

"I'm hoping it'll be calmer – the other 2 are affected as he lashes out at them and can be really nasty"

"We can live happily ever after. I can't leave them alone at the moment because they fight. So no more fighting would be good"

What were the initial home sessions like?

All parents had positive feelings about the initial home sessions. For example:

“It was good to get to know her (the worker) and for her to get to know you. Can talk freely and tell her what’s been happening”

“Was good. It makes you think about things”

What parents thought about the first group session

As stated above, some parents were interviewed just prior to the first group session, whilst others were interviewed a couple of days after the first group session. Altogether 28 out of the 40 parents had attended the first group session. The main positive aspects that parents identified were that: it was good to meet other parents, it was informal, fun and relaxed, and the workers / facilitators were good. Comments included for example:

“It wasn’t what I expected. It was like a group of friends getting together. Two hours of peace and quiet”

“Very informal, very relaxed. It didn’t feel like I was being preached at. The leaders were very understanding”

“I thought it was well presented and they provided us with a sandwich. I felt a lot less isolated”

Only two people out of 40 had negative comments about the first group session, as follows:

“It was a bit boring. We did a fun quiz but spent too much time on it and too much time spent looking at our own pasts”

“I felt it was a bit derogatory and patronizing. We looked at cartoons. They think the level of intellect is going to be sub-standard”

Worries or concerns parents had about attending the course

Altogether 29 parents said they had no worries or concerns about attending the course. For the parents who did have some worries, these included the following concerns:

“At the court we were sitting among parents who didn’t think their children had done anything wrong. So I’m a bit concerned about that”

“I don’t know what to expect and I don’t know anybody else in this area”

Chapter 4 that follows gives the results for T2 (ie post-course) with comparisons from T1.

CHAPTER 4: PARENTS' POST-COURSE DATA AND COMPARISONS WITH PRE-COURSE

This chapter details the post-course data for the parents, and compares this with the pre-course data. As explained earlier, 32 parents out of the 40 parents who were involved at T1 were interviewed again. Therefore the data below relates to these 32 parents.

First, it is useful to note the number of sessions attended by parents:

Table 12: Total number of sessions attended by parents

Number of sessions attended	Percentage (number) N=32
3	13% (4)
4	9% (3)
5	41% (13)
6	38% (12)

As can be seen from this, 79% of parents attended either 5 or 6 (ie the maximum) of the group sessions. Reasons for non-attendance included illness of parent, illness of child or partner, work issues, or childcare. In addition, it is important to note that where parents only attended three or four of the group sessions, 'catch up' sessions were offered. These included telephone catch up, or parents would arrive at the subsequent session half an hour earlier.

4.1 SDQ results

The results for the SDQ at T1 and T2 were as follows, detailing percentages, means, and standard deviations:

Table 13: T1 and T2 comparisons for SDQ, child strengths and difficulties

N=32	Not true		Somewhat true		Certainly true	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
<i>SDQ questions:</i>						
Considerate of other people's feelings	38%	16%	60%	72%	3%	13%
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	28%	28%	19%	38%	53%	34%
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness	53%	60%	34%	16%	13%	25%
Shares readily with other children	19%	9%	25%	34%	56%	56%
Often has temper tantrums / hot tempers	3%	19%	19%	34%	78%	47%
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	53%	45%	31%	32%	16%	23%
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	50%	25%	47%	75%	3%	0
Many worries, often seems worried	39%	42%	36%	39%	26%	19%
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	9%	6%	44%	31%	47%	63%
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	28%	28%	22%	28%	50%	44%
Has at least one good friend	22%	13%	19%	26%	60%	61%
Often fights with other children or bullies them	41%	48%	35%	29%	25%	23%
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	35%	38%	44%	44%	22%	19%
Generally liked by other children	13%	3%	38%	41%	85%	56%
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	9%	9%	6%	22%	85%	69%
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	52%	60%	26%	25%	23%	16%
Kind to younger children	9%	0	28%	19%	63%	81%
Often lies or cheats	19%	38%	34%	31%	47%	31%
Picked on or bullied by other children	53%	72%	41%	19%	6%	9%
Often volunteers to help others	28%	16%	41%	41%	31%	44%
Thinks things out before acting	85%	75%	16%	19%	0	6%
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	47%	84%	41%	6%	13%	9%
Gets on better with adults than with other children	41%	29%	41%	36%	19%	36%
Many fears, easily scared	66%	66%	25%	19%	9%	16%
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	69%	56%	13%	22%	19%	22%

Table 14: SDQ child strengths and difficulties, mean and standard deviations

	T1 Mean (standard deviation) N=32	T2 Mean (standard deviation) N=32	Statistical significance
Considerate of other people's feelings	0.7 (0.5)	1.0 (0.5)	.01 ***
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	1.3 (0.9)	1.1 (0.8)	
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness	0.6 (0.7)	0.7 (0.9)	
Shares readily with other children	1.4 (0.8)	1.5 (0.7)	
Often has temper tantrums / hot tempers	1.8 (0.5)	1.3 (0.8)	0.01
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	0.7 (0.8)	0.8 (0.8)	
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	0.5 (0.6)	0.8 (0.4)	
Many worries, often seems worried	0.9 (0.8)	0.8 (0.8)	
Helpful if someone is hurt / upset	1.4 (0.7)	1.6 (0.6)	
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	1.2 (0.9)	1.2 (0.8)	
Has at least one good friend	1.4 (0.8)	1.5 (0.7)	
Often fights with other children or bullies them	0.8 (0.8)	0.7 (0.8)	
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	0.9 (0.8)	0.8 (0.7)	
Generally liked by other children	1.4 (0.7)	1.5 (0.6)	
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	1.8 (0.6)	1.6 (0.7)	
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	0.7 (0.8)	0.6 (0.8)	
Kind to younger children	1.5 (0.7)	1.8 (0.4)	0.05 ***
Often lies or cheats	1.3 (0.8)	0.9 (0.8)	0.05
Picked on or bullied by other children	0.5 (0.6)	0.4 (0.7)	
Often volunteers to help others	1.0 (0.8)	1.3 (0.7)	0.05 ***
Thinks things out before acting	0.2 (0.4)	0.3 (0.6)	
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	0.7 (0.7)	0.3 (0.6)	0.01
Gets on better with adults than with other children	0.8 (0.8)	1.1 (0.8)	0.05
Many fears, easily scared	0.4 (0.7)	0.5 (0.8)	
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	0.5 (0.8)	0.7 (0.8)	

*** indicates the mean has increased which represents a positive change

As this table shows, there were a number of positive significant changes in the SDQ results between T1 and T2. Parents reported that their children were:

- more considerate of other people’s feelings
- having less tantrums / hot tempers
- kinder to younger children
- lying or cheating less
- volunteering more to help others
- stealing less from home, school or elsewhere
- more likely to be getting on better with adults than with children.

Additional analyses were also undertaken on the SDQ. The 25 individual strengths and difficulties items, as shown in the table above, were grouped into five categories to provide symptoms scores. Each item in the table above relates to one of these five symptoms scores – emotional symptoms score, conduct problems score, hyperactivity score, peer problems score, and prosocial behaviour score. The mean results of these can be seen in Table 15 below. In addition there is the total difficulties score, which is a sum of these (except prosocial scores) and the impact score which is the sum of questions in relation to the impact on the child.

Table 15: Child symptoms scores

	T1 (n=32)	T2 (n=32)	Statistical significance	Norm (Britain) 11-15 year olds
Total difficulties score	20.2 (5.6) A	17.8 (5.5) B	0.05	8.2 (5.8) N
Emotional symptoms score	3.5 (2.5) N	3.3 (2.5) N	-	1.9 (2.0) N
Conduct problems score	6.0 (2.1) A	4.5 (2.4) A	0.01	1.5 (1.7) N
Hyperactivity score	7.6 (2.4) A	6.8 (2.2) A	-	3.2 (2.6) N
Peer problems score	3.2 (2.5) N	3.2 (2.4) N	-	1.5 (1.7) N
Prosocial behaviour score	6.0 (2.1) N	7.1 (1.9) N	0.01	8.6 (1.6) N
Impact score	3.3 (2.1) A	1.7 (1.8) B	0.01	0.4 (1.2) N

A=abnormal, B=borderline, N=Normal

The results in the table above show some positive, statistically significant changes between baseline and post-course data, as follows:

- A decrease in the total difficulties score
- A decrease in the conduct problems score
- An increase in prosocial behaviour score
- A decrease in the impact score (meaning the child's problems had less impact on them at T2).

In addition, in relation to the classification of abnormal, borderline and normal both the total difficulties score and the impact score, moved from the 'abnormal' category at T1 to 'borderline' at T2. These norms are as follows:

Table 16: Child symptoms scores and classifications

	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
Total Difficulties score	0-15	16-19	20-40
Emotional symptoms score	0-5	6	7-10
Conduct problems score	0-3	4	5-10
Hyperactivity score	0-5	6	7-10
Peer problems score	0-3	4-5	6-10
Prosocial behaviour score	6-10	5	0-4
Impact	0	1	2+

Classification and interpretation (www.sdqinfo.com)

These scores still vary from the national average, as shown in the far right column on the table above, however, there are positive changes for the children of the group of parents who took part in this parenting course. These all show that parents who took part in the course rated their child's difficulties as significantly different, after they had taken part in the course.

The SDQ also included questions about the level of problems that their child had had since the parent had taken part in the programme. The results were as follows:

Table 17: Child's problems since parent has taken part in the ESCAPE programme

	Percentage n=32
Much worse	3%
A bit worse	13%
About the same	29%
A bit better	36%
Much better	19%

As this shows, 55% of parents said that their child’s problems were either ‘a bit’ better or ‘much’ better since doing the ESCAPE parenting course. Altogether 29% said they were ‘about the same’. Only 16% said they were ‘a bit’ or ‘much’ worse.

The parents were also asked at T1 and T2 about the level of difficulties their child was having. These results are given below:

Table 18: Level of difficulty faced by child, T1 and T2

(n=32)	No difficulties	Yes – minor difficulties	Yes – definite difficulties	Yes – severe difficulties
Time 1	0	25%	56%	19%
Time 2	16%	25%	50%	9%

It should be noted from this table that 16% (5 parents) reported having ‘no difficulties’ at T2. There was also a 6% reduction in those with ‘definite’ difficulties, and a 10% reduction in those with ‘severe’ difficulties.

The parents were again asked at T2 about the extent to which their child’s difficulties impacted on four key areas – home life, friendships, classroom learning, and leisure activities. The results of this were as follows:

Table 19: How the child’s difficulties interfere with four areas of life, T1 and T2

(n=32)	Not at all		Only a little		Quite a lot		A great deal	
	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Home life	3%	4%	31%	52%	50%	44%	16%	0
Friendships	23%	41%	36%	33%	29%	19%	13%	7%
Classroom learning	19%	28%	19%	32%	41%	24%	22%	16%
Leisure activities	42%	70%	23%	19%	26%	7%	10%	4%

(Note that the results shown in the table above form part of the impact score referred to above).

A number of results are noteworthy here, all indicating an improvement in these key areas by T2. Fewer parents at T2 reported that their child’s difficulties had

'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of impact on their home life (44% at T2 compared with 66% at T1). The pattern was similar for the impact on friendships (42% at T1 compared to 26% at T2), classroom learning (63% at T1 compared to 40% at T2), and leisure activities (36% at T1 compared to 11% at T2).

The table below shows the T1 and T2 results for the burden placed on the parent/family as a result of the child's difficulties:

Table 20: Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the family as a whole? T1 and T2

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Only a little</i>	<i>Quite a lot</i>	<i>A great deal</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Time 1	0	6 (19%)	18 (53%)	8 (25%)	0
Time 2	3 (9%)	6 (19%)	14 (44%)	4 (13%)	5 (16%)

As this shows, five parents (16%) stated that their child did not have any difficulties by T2. Of the remainder, the numbers of parents stating it put 'a great deal of burden' had halved from eight to four.

Finally, an 'intention to treat' analysis was undertaken. The intention to treat analyses were run with all 40 participants, comparing T1 and T2 data. All statistically significant effects were the same. This shows that the results for the 32 participants who completed the course were very strong, and not affected by those who dropped out.

4.2 Family Grid

As stated in Chapter 3, the Family Grid results in a single 'discrepancy' score, indicating the difference between a parents' actual and ideal self in relation to their parenting, and their actual and ideal child. A score of two or over indicates significant problems. Note that data reported in this chapter is only used for those parents who had Family Grid information at both T1 and T2. This represents 23 for the 'parent' data, and 21 for the child data.

The numbers of parents whose score for actual/ideal self were two or more (indicating a likelihood of problems) were as follows:

Table 21: Parents in relation to self: those with significant problems

N=23	Mean (standard deviation)	% scoring above 2 (indicating significant problems)
T1	1.7 (0.5)	29% (9 parents)
T2	1.4 (0.5)	13% (3 parents)

* significant mean difference $p < .05$

As this shows, there was a statistically significant reduction in the discrepancy scores for parents' view of themselves as a parent and their ideal self, between T1 and T2. Therefore there was a significant increase in their self-esteem as a parent.

The results for the parents' perception of their child / ideal child were as follows:

Table 22: Parents in relation to child: those with significant problems

N=21	Mean (standard deviation)	% scoring above 2 (indicating significant problems)
T1	2.4 (0.9)	73% (22 parents)
T2	1.8 (0.6)	43% (9 parents)

* significant mean difference $p < .01$

As this shows, there was a statistically significant reduction in the mean discrepancy score in relation to parents view towards the child between T1 and T2. There was a reduction in the numbers of parents with a score of two or over at T2, which indicates a fall in the number of parents with significant problems. Numbers of parents in this category fell from 22 at T1 to nine at T2, showing that parents had a significantly improved view of their child at T2.

4.3 YPF quantitative questions

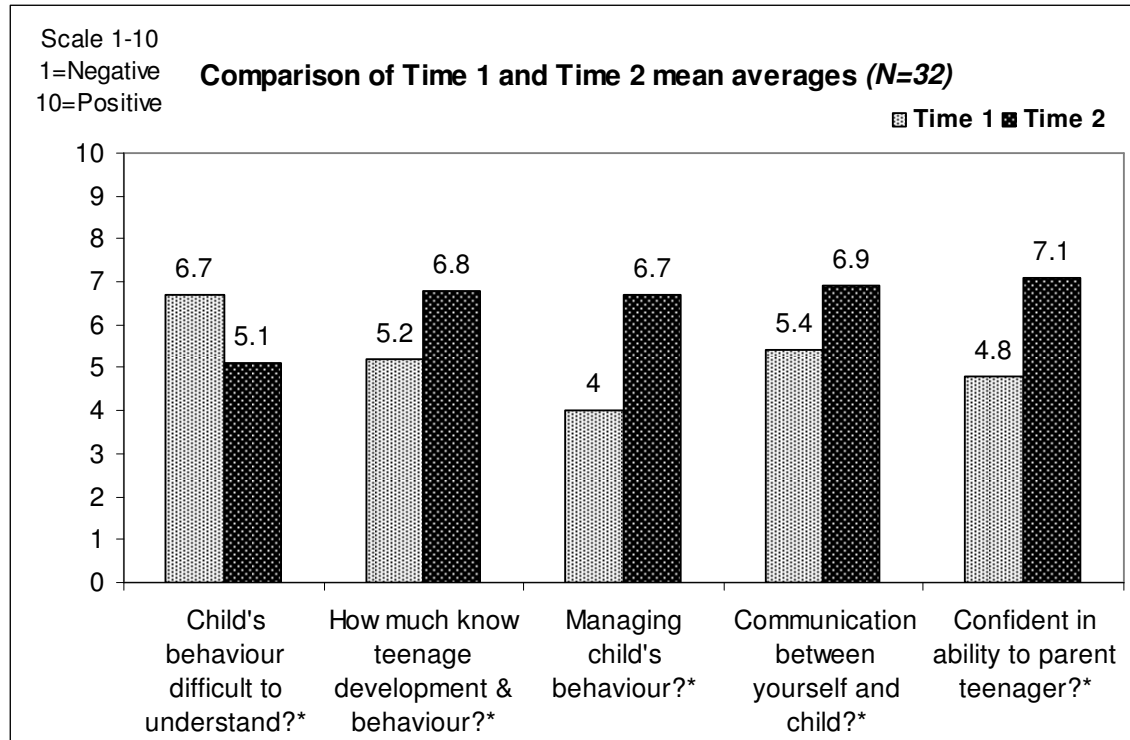
Parents were asked at T2 about the overall impact of the course on their child's behaviour, feelings and issues. The mean on this question was 6.3 (where 1 = no difference and 10 = a lot of difference). This shows that the course had a clear impact for many parents.

The table below shows the results on the following seven questions (where parents scored themselves on a scale of 1-10, with 1 = no/negative and 10 yes/positive):

- Do you find your child's behaviour difficult to understand?
- How much do you feel you know about teenage development and behaviour?
- How well do you feel you are able to manage your child's behaviour?

- How well do you and your child communicate in general?
- How confident do you feel in your ability to parent your teenager?

Figure 2: Results T1 and T2 for five parenting questions



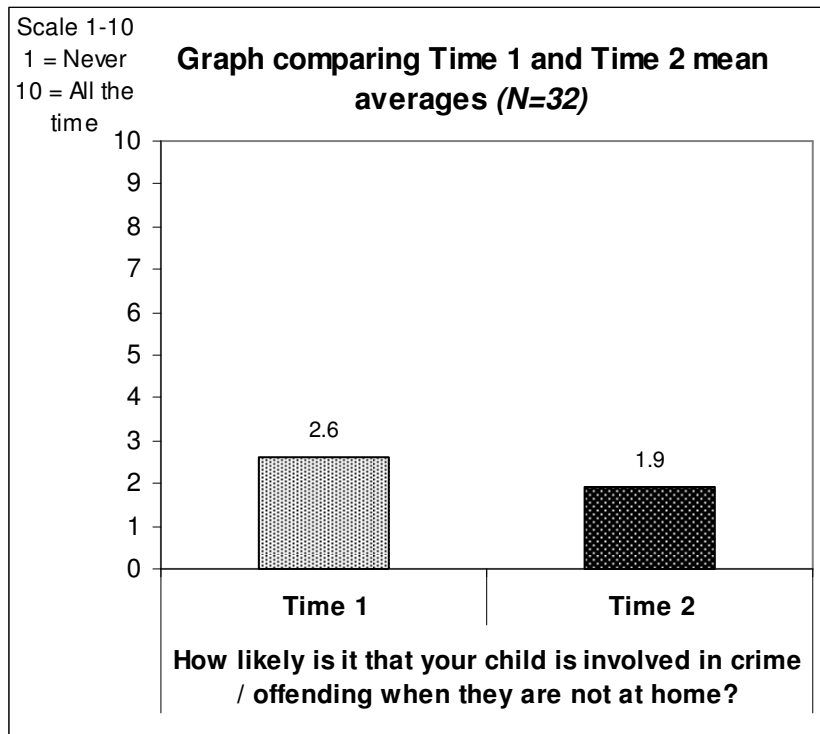
(* = statistically significant difference T1 to T2, all $p < .01$)

The results of this figure show that there was an improvement in the all five areas between T1 and T2, in that parents felt:

- more knowledgeable about teenage development
- more able to understand their child's behaviour
- more able to manage their child's behaviour
- better able to communicate with their child
- more confident in their ability to parent their teenager.

At T2 the parents were also asked again how likely they thought it was that their child was offending whilst out of the home (scoring 1 = not all likely and 10 = very likely). The results were as follows:

Figure 3: Likelihood of child involvement in crime, T1 and T2



As this chart shows, there was a reduction in the mean level of parents' concerns about their child's offending (from 2.6 at T1 to 1.9 at T2), although this was not significant. However, level of concern about the likelihood of their child offending was low.

The following results refer to seven questions that the parents were asked, about the degree of help they felt they needed ('help urgently required', 'some help required', 'no help required').

Table 23: Amount of help required with different issues, T1 and T2

	No help required T1	No help required T2	Some help required T1	Some help required T2	Help urgently required T1	Help urgently required T2
Communication / talking to your child	6%	38%	72%	53%	22%	9%
Handling arguments with	6%	41%	47%	56%	47%	3%

your child						
Making a big decision about your child	28%	42%	60%	45%	9%	13%
Setting boundaries / disciplining your child	6%	47%	53%	41%	41%	13%
Improving your child's school attendance	66%	65%	19%	16%	16%	19%
Dealing with your child's offending	72%	78%	13%	19%	16%	3%
Managing difficult behaviour by your child	0%	31%	47%	63%	53%	6%

As this table shows, there were a number of notable changes in the amount of help that parents required between T1 and T2. These included the following:

- a reduction from 22% to 9% to those urgently require help in relation to communication with their child
- a reduction from 47% to 3% in those who need urgent help in how they handle arguments with their child
- a reduction from 41% to 13% in those who need urgent help in how to set boundaries and discipline their child
- a reduction from 53% to 6% in those who need urgent help in managing difficult behaviour by their child.

We also compared the child's school attendance and behaviour between T1 and T2, and the number of contacts parents received about their child's behaviour. There were no changes on either measure between T1 and T2.

4.4 YPF qualitative data

This section details the results for the post-course qualitative questions asked of parents.

What parents found most useful about the course

There were a number of themes emerging. These were as follows:

- Meeting other parents / sharing experiences / support from other parents

In total 25 of the 32 parents said how much they valued meeting other parents, talking through issues, sharing experiences etc. It helped reduce isolation by parents realising they weren't the only parents in this situation. and helped parents look at things from a different perspective. For example:

"Talking to others. Realising you're not on your own. That made such a difference"

"Listening to other people's problems as well, its not just you going through this"

- Learning techniques / ways to handle behaviour

In total 12 of the 32 parents talked about learning new ways to handle behaviour. For some this came through understanding their own or their child's behaviour more, for others it came from learning specific techniques. For example:

"I realise now I don't see the positives so am trying to rejoice when something positive happens. When I now go to yell at my child I see the parenting worker's face. I've learnt that it's not ideal to shout and it's not good for you or them"

"I've learnt to chill out and stand back and look at things and stop being a raging bull"

- Understanding teenage behaviour

Five parents said the course gave them a better understanding of teenage behaviour. For example:

"We can cope with him a lot better. I felt like I learnt some of the reasons why they do what they do"

"Understanding them. Help with what to do. They helped us understand them and how to approach them"

- Other people's situations are worse

Seven parents said it made them realise their situation was not as bad as others and that some people had it worse. This really helped parents to feel more positive. For example:

“The way two other parents were talking made me feel like my child was an angel”

“You realise you’re not the only one. I realised mine wasn’t as bad as some of the others eg others in trouble with the police”

- Realising you are not to blame

Three parents felt the course helped them to realise what was happening with their child wasn’t their fault. For example:

“Realising I’m not a bad Dad – I wasn’t doing much wrong”

“Knowing you’re not the only parent going through it. Can tend to blame yourself. Wasn’t just down to you”

- Getting a break

Two parents talked about how the course gave them a break. For example:

“It was all really interesting and also gave me a break for a couple of hours”

“It was really good. I really enjoyed going and getting away for a few hours”

Only one parent talked about not really getting anything out of the course. Asked what he got most from the course, he responded:

“None of it really. I was the only man. We didn’t really learn anything. I would have preferred one to one support”

Did parents get out of the course what they hoped ?

In total, 26 of the 32 parents said they got out of the course what they hoped to. The main themes that arose in response to this question were as follows:

- Sharing experiences / support from other parents

“Everyone was supportive on the course. Other parents were having a worse time which helped us. It made our problems seem pretty insignificant”

“I got a lot of support from other parents. It was so friendly and welcoming and it was absolutely fantastic. I can’t sing its praises enough”

➤ Being a better parent

"I said I wanted to be a better parent. I learnt how to approach a subject without being angry so you get an answer rather than a bad reaction. If you go in full on and angry you just get the angry response"

"I became more confident. Especially when I came home from the classes. I reacted differently with her. I feel more in control now"

➤ Having a better relationship with child

"To walk away and realise my kids aren't that bad. I come back from the group in a better mood. We get on better and I look at my kids in a different light"

"It's definitely made a difference. He's been a changed child these past 3 weeks"

➤ Learning new techniques to handle behaviour

"I learnt to negotiate. Me and my ex negotiated and made some agreements"

"I've got a better understanding through the topics we covered and the discussions"

Finally in this section, four parents felt the course did not meet their expectations. One considered that her child's behaviour had improved because of changed medication for ADHD, rather than as a result of the course. Two others felt they raised specific issues in relation to their child which were never properly addressed by the course leaders.

Additional things parents got out of the course

A wide range of themes emerged in relation to this question. These included:

➤ Changes in parental behaviour, such as stepping back and shouting less

"I learnt to take a step back because my son's got some issues and me shouting at him isn't going to help him"

"The way you handle things. When [my child] goes off on one I tend to fire up quickly. Am calm now and don't react. I stay calm or I just ignore it and he comes round then. It has helped tremendously"

- Improved communication through understanding

“Learning to listen more and being able to talk things through”

“Learning to take a step back and not charge in. It’s a shame that I didn’t have that experience of just stepping back and listening years ago”

- Changes in young person’s behaviour

“Doing strategies and having a contract. My son has made his own set of rules. So there’s a big improvement. We’re able to discuss these things now”.

- Social aspect / support from other parents

“Made some good friends”

“Other parents were totally open and honest which was really good”

“I felt like I wasn’t alone”

“It was really good to talk to other parents”

Parental behaviour that is different now

The main things that the parents did differently after the course were as follows:

- Step back / walk away / less confrontation

Ten parents talked about shouting less, walking away and generally avoiding confrontation. For example:

“I’ve learnt to hang back a bit rather than keep nagging her”

“I communicate much better with her now. I deal with situations differently, for example if she’s late I’m not so quick to jump on it. I listen and talk to her rather than shout at her”

- Listen more / encourage child to talk more

Eight parents talked about listening more to their children. For example:

“I sit down and listen a lot more. Now if my daughter goes straight upstairs I’ll go up and see how she is. Before I would have left her up there”

“I do listen to her more. She does talk to me slightly more now – you know, bits and pieces”

- Negotiation / agreements / contracts with child / setting boundaries

Five parents talked about setting boundaries with their children, making behaviour contracts, negotiating, and making agreements. For example:

“I did a rota with the kids – they can be out 2 nights then in 2 nights. We negotiated that so it put the responsibility onto them”

“We made a contract not to argue. He gets a warning then there are consequences. I’m more positive. We’re not getting into as many arguments. I try and remain calm. I’m much more consistent. It’s reinforced my need for clear boundaries”

- Understanding, empathy and praise

Four parents talked about having more understanding or empathy for their child.

“I consider him to have his own issues and can sympathise with this – it’s a chemical imbalance”

“I actively try to offer praise and encouragement. Its about putting yourself back in time. I can empathise more and can rationalise the behaviour a bit more”

- Parents communicate together more

Some parents felt that in two-parent households there was better communication. For example:

“There’s a few things we do differently now. Me and my wife talk about aspects of discipline now before implementing them”

How doing the course has affected your child

Altogether 21 of the 32 parents gave examples of how the course *had* affected their child in a positive way. Of the remaining nine, these parents felt that their attendance on the course had not actually affected their child – despite the fact that many of these parents felt that they had got an enormous amount of support from attending. One parent said her child had changed but this was due to medication for his ADHD, the others generally said it had not directly affected their child. Two parents were unsure whether their child had been affected.

The positive changes stated by the 21 parents can be grouped into four categories:

- Attitude or behaviour changes

All 21 parents believed their child had been affected positively, relating to attitude or behaviour changes. For example:

“The first few weeks he got worse – he was bucking against it. He then said he wanted boundaries. Now we’re being firm and strict. Generally its an improvement – he knows going off on one isn’t going to get him anywhere”

“His behaviour has changed dramatically. He’s more of the child he was before. He’s more sociable and more tolerant”

- Improved parent / child communication

Ten parents specifically mentioned that the communication between themselves and their child has improved.

“We chat through stuff more ... He still has his moments but he’s a bit more confident. The relationship’s better. We’re talking more”

“He respects me because I’m willing to go on the course. I’m willing to try. He comes to me more to talk now”

- Young people feeling supported by parent going on a course

“He knew I was going to the course to put things right so I think he thought if my mum is trying then I can try. We did the various homework scenarios activities together”

“I think it made her feel better that I care enough to do the course”

“He respects me because I’m willing to go on a course. I’m willing to try. He comes to me more to talk now”

- More respect for parent

Several parents mentioned that their child has more respect for them now. For example:

“She has less mood swings. Its made her realise it wasn’t all her. It made me think about her point of view and the way I treat the situation. She respects me a bit more”

How it affects how you get on as a family

When asked at T2 how doing the course has ‘affected your family’, 27 of the 32 parents said that doing the course had definitely affected how they get on as a family, in a positive way. The main themes were:

- More opportunities for discussion eg family meetings, goal setting

“We discuss things more now. We’re more prepared to listen to their side of things. We discuss things as a family – listen to their point of view more and negotiate”

“Have set goals together – they both wanted new things to wear and had to work for them”

- Calmer household

“A lot different. Before it was terrible but now its all different. We all work together. Much calmer now. The brothers now get on a lot better too”

“We talk more and shout less. The household is so much calmer.”

- Less arguments among siblings

“Him and his brother still argue but he doesn’t take it as far as he used to. He’s happier at school too”

“He also gets on better now with the younger children. They used to fight and argue but he’s taken on a more adult role now”

- Both parents (in two-parent families) working together more / discussing more

“I spoke to my partner about how we can do things differently and he’s been really responsive to that”

“I think me and the wife are getting on better. We talk more about him now. We used to have full blown arguments”

Views about the group leaders

All parents had positive comments about the group leaders. The areas parents tended to comment on were the leaders' level of knowledge, their personality, their organisational skills and their approachability. Particular areas commented on were as follows:

"They listened and came back with stuff"

"Lovely. They knew their stuff. Couldn't fault them. It was very relaxed"

"Very knowledgeable and very easy to listen to. They made it interesting"

"Easy to talk to and approach"

"They were very nice and knew their stuff. You can be yourself with them"

What parents liked least about the ESCAPE course

The majority of the parents – 19 of the 32 parents – said there was *nothing* they did not like or enjoy about the course. The following themes emerged for those who specified an aspect of the course they liked least:

➤ Timing

Two parents would have preferred the course to take place at a different time. One person wanted an afternoon group because of childcare issues and another would have preferred a slightly later start time for an evening course.

➤ Few fathers

One father said he disliked the fact that he was the only man in his group.

➤ Practicalities

One group used a group taxi to collect parents. One of the parents said she would have liked to know in advance that it was a group taxi.

➤ Individual situations

Two parents from different ESCAPE groups said they would have liked more time spent on looking at their individual situations and circumstances and finding out which strategies other parents have used.

Improvements to the course

Despite generally being very satisfied with the course (as above) 13 parents made suggestions for how the course could be improved. These improvements were as follows:

➤ Size of the group

Two parents said they would like to keep the size of the group small so that everybody gets the opportunity to have their say. However, another parent said he would have liked a larger group as the small group felt too personal. Also as mentioned above, this parent would also have liked more men to have been in the group.

➤ Opportunities for 1 to 1

Two parents wanted more opportunities for 1 to 1 work, rather than the group work.

➤ A longer course

Three people, all from the same group, said how much they had enjoyed the course and would have liked a 10 week course rather than the 6 week course. As one parent said

“Our household is now so much calmer. Can you imagine if it was a 10 week course I’d be as cool as a cucumber!”

➤ Different start times

Altogether five parents talked about start times. A few parents attending a group that started at 5.30pm would have preferred at 6pm start, one parent attending a daytime group would have preferred an evening group and a parent attending an evening group would have preferred a daytime group.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Reminder of the aims of the evaluation

The aim of the ESCAPE training programme is '*... to improve relationships between young people and their families. To improve attendance at school, behaviour at both school and home and reduce offending behaviour*'. The evaluation of the programme was designed to meet the NAPP evaluation criteria, as follows:

- A longitudinal design (ie collecting pre and post parenting programme data)
- A sample size of between 20-25 families
- The use of scientifically validated measures
- The inclusion of a variety of ESCAPE groups being run in different parts of the country, and working with parents in different contexts.

The research described in this report met each of these criteria.

5.2 Summary of main findings

The main findings from the evaluation were as follows:

SDQ: Results included the following:

- At T2 children were: more considerate of other people's feelings; having less tantrums / hot tempers; kinder to younger children; lying or cheating less; volunteering more to help others; stealing less from home, school or elsewhere; more likely to be getting on better with adults than with children. These were all statistically significant.
- In addition the SDQ results showed
 - a decrease in the total difficulties score
 - a decrease in the conduct problems score
 - an increase in prosocial behaviour score
 - a decrease in the impact score – this means that the child's problems had less impact on them at T2 in terms of friendships, classroom learning, leisure activities and home life, and how distressed they were by their own problems. These were all statistically significant.
- 55% of parents said that their child's problems were 'a bit' or 'much' better since doing the course

- 16% of parents said that their child had ‘no difficulties’ at T2 – no parents said this at T1. There was also a 6% reduction in those with ‘definite’ difficulties and a 10% reduction in those with ‘severe difficulties’
- There was a reduction at T2 in the impact of the child’s difficulties on four areas – home life, friendships, classroom learning, and leisure activities.

Family Grid: As stated in Chapter 3, the Family Grid results in a single ‘discrepancy’ score, indicating the difference between a parents actual and ideal self in relation to their parenting, and their actual and ideal child. A score of two or over indicates significant problems.

For the parents’ own score, the numbers of those with a discrepancy score of two or over fell from 29% at T1 to 13% at T2, and there was a statistically significant reduction in the means for all parents from 1.7 to 1.4. Thus there was a significant increase in parents’ self-esteem between T1 and T2.

For the parents’ perception of their child/ideal child, there were also improvements. The numbers of parents with a discrepancy score of two or over fell from 73% at T1 to 43% at T2. The overall mean for all parents reduced from 2.4 to 1.8, which was statistically significant. This shows that parents’ perceptions of their child significantly improved between T1 and T2.

YPF quantitative questions: At T2 there were several statistically significant differences on some measures. These were that at the follow-up parents

- Found their child’s behaviour less difficult to understand
- Have increased knowledge about teenage development and behaviour
- Felt an increased ability to manage their child’s behaviour
- Felt general communication between themselves and their child is better
- Felt more confident in parenting their teenager

In addition parents felt more able to

- Handle arguments with their child
- Set boundaries and discipline their child
- Manage difficult behaviour by the child.

The findings above are backed up by the qualitative results which showed that parents felt more able to handle arguments, set boundaries, discipline their child, and manage difficult behaviour.

It was also found that most parents considered their child’s behaviour and challenging issues had changed as a result of the course. On a scale of 1 to 10, parents were asked how much their children had changed during the course (with one as ‘not at all’ and 10 as ‘very different’). The mean average at T2 was 6.3, suggesting that most children had changed in a number of respects.

There was also a change in relation to whether their child's behaviour had improved at all during the course. In total 55% of parents said that their child's problems were either a 'bit better' or 'much better' since attending the course. In fact six parents said their child no longer had any problems or difficulties since the parent attended ESCAPE.

Finally in this section, there was a reduction in the levels and type of help that parents wanted in relation to their child. This showed:

- a reduction from 22% to 9% to those urgently require help in relation to communication with their child
- a reduction from 47% to 3% in those who need urgent help in how they handle arguments with their child
- a reduction from 41% to 13% in those who need urgent help in how to set boundaries and discipline their child
- a reduction from 53% to 6% in those who need urgent help in managing difficult behaviour by their child.

In addition, when parents were asked about the impact of their child's difficulties on classroom learning, there was a reduction from 63% saying 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' at T1, to 40% saying this at T2. Thus for a group of parents, their child's problems were no longer having much of an impact on their ability to learn at school.

YPF Qualitative questions: The main findings from the qualitative data were as follows:

- 26 of the 32 parents said the course met their expectations
- The majority of parents said they now do things differently as a result of the course
- 21 of the 32 parents gave examples of how the course had affected their child in a positive way
- 27 of the 32 parents said that doing the course had affected how their family got on in a positive way
- Most parents were very positive about the skills and behaviours of the course leaders.

Overall, the qualitative results supports the quantitative results, with most parents stating that attending the ESCAPE programme had improved the way they parented, and led to a calmer, more positive atmosphere in their home and in their relationship with their child.

5.3 Comparison of the results with the ESCAPE programme aims

As stated in the ESCAPE course manual, the main aims of the ESCAPE programme are to:

- Improve relationships between young people and their families
- Improve behaviour at both school and home and
- Improve attendance at school
- Reduce offending behaviour.

This final section considers the results of the evaluation in relation to these aims. For ease of presentation, the aims have been combined into three main categories, as follows:

- To improve relationships between young people and their families / improve behaviour at home
- To Improve attendance at school and behaviour at school
- To reduce offending behaviour.

➤ **To improve relationships between young people and their families / improve behaviour at home**

As described in this report, at the start of the programme parents talked about the sorts of difficulties that they faced. These included the child answering back, rudeness, anger, bad moods and bad tempers, being disrespectful, being violent, fighting in the street, lying, stealing and swearing. All of these issues were impacting negatively on family life, school life, and the child's friendships.

The majority of parents in this evaluation talked about positive changes in their child's attitude and behaviour since attending the course. The qualitative data showed that parents' behaviour towards their child had changed – they were shouting less, listening more, praising and encouraging more, understanding their child's behaviour more and also being more consistent with discipline and setting boundaries with their children. Consequently they believed that their child's behaviour has changed as a result, and that relationships within the family had improved.

The quantitative findings supported the positive impact of the ESCAPE programme on family relationships and young people's behaviour at home. The SDQ results for example showed that children and young people were having less tantrums at T2, stealing less, and lying and cheating less. There was also a reduction in symptoms at T2, including a decrease in the 'total difficulties' score. In addition, 16% of parents reported that they had 'no difficulties' with their child at T2 – there were no parents who said this at T1. There was also a 16%

reduction in those with 'definite' or 'severe' difficulties at T2. In addition, the quantitative findings showed that fewer parents needed 'urgent' help by the end of the course – for eg a reduction from 47% to 3% in those needing urgent help in handling arguments, and a reduction from 53% to 6% in relation to help managing their child's difficult behaviour. In addition, at the second time point, parents

- Found their child's behaviour less difficult to understand
- Had increased knowledge about teenage development and behaviour
- Felt an increased ability to manage their child's behaviour
- Felt general communication between themselves and their child is better
- Felt more confident in parenting their teenager.

The finding that behaviour improved at home is further supported by results in relation to the child problems at the end of the course. The research showed that 55% of parents said their child's problems were either 'a bit' better or 'much' better since attending the course. Parents were also asked on a scale of 1 to 10 how much difference they feel the course made to their child's behaviour, feelings, issues etc The mean average was 6.3 (if 1 = no difference and 10 = a lot of difference). This suggests that most parents had seen a real change in their child.

Finally in this section, it is useful to look at the results for the Family Grid, a measure of self-esteem conceptualised as actual/ideal parent, and actual/ideal child. On both of these measures, there was a statistically significant change between T1 and T2, demonstrating that parents' self-esteem had gone up in relation to their parenting during the course, and also their view of their child had improved.

Overall, therefore, there was clear evidence that the ESCAPE programme met this aim – ie the course had a positive impact on family relationships, and led to improved behaviour by children in the home.

➤ **To Improve attendance at school and behaviour at school**

Some of the parents in the study talked about a range of problems that their children were experiencing at school – this included playing truant, challenging behaviour in the classroom and for a couple of children, a lack of confidence in attending a mainstream school. Given the small scale nature of the study we were unable to obtain school attendance figures. We therefore relied on parents to report how often the child went to school and how often the school contacted parents about the child's behaviour.

The findings show that school attendance was not a particular problem for the majority of parents in the study. Two-thirds of parents said they did not require

any help in relation to their child's school attendance. This did not change at T2. For the third who did require help, half of these required urgent help and the other half required some help. Again this did not change significantly between T1 and T2.

There was a positive finding in relation to one aspect of education. This was the extent to which the child's difficulties impacted on their classroom learning. Those saying 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of impact on classroom learning reduced from 63% at T1 to 40% at T2. This is a notable change over such a short time period.

Overall therefore, there were small but positive changes in classroom learning as a result of parents attending the ESCAPE course.

➤ **To reduce offending behaviour**

The figures parents gave for the likelihood that their child was involved in crime / offending behaviour were fairly low – at T1 a mean average of 2.6 and at T2 a mean average of 1.9. Whilst there was some difference at the two time points, this was not statistically significant, nor was it particularly high. Thus there was a reduction in parents' level of concern about their child offending as a result of the course, but from an already low base.

This is an interesting finding given that some of the parents were referred to the course through a YOT or an offending prevention project. Further, when asked about the areas parents wanted help with, at T1 72% said no help was required to reduce offending behaviour. This increased to 78% at T2. Thus there was a slight but not significant increase in the number of families who did not need help in relation to their child's offending at T2.

Overall therefore, there was a very small but positive change during the course on parents' perceptions of their child's offending. However, relatively few parents considered that their child was offending (or at risk of offending) at the start of the course.

5.4 Limitations of a small scale study

This evaluation was undertaken to meet the requirements of the NAPP evaluation. However, there were limitations to the study, as follows:

- Small sample size
- Some families and children/young people in the study were receiving additional support, either through school or community settings

- The data was all self-report, with no objective or observational data collected
- Although a longitudinal design was used, the follow-up was immediately post-course. Additional changes may have taken place, for example six months after the course
- Some participants dropped out during the course, and therefore their data was not included at T2. However analysis of demographic differences between the T2 completers and non-completers showed no differences in the samples. In addition intention to treat analysis was carried out on all 40 participants, comparing T1 and T2 data and all statistically significant effects were the same. This showed that the results for the 32 participants who completed the course were very strong, and not affected by those who dropped out.

Whilst this research therefore shows that the ESCAPE programme had a positive effect on parents and children/young people, further research is needed, with a larger sample, to demonstrate the effects more clearly.

NOTE: APPENDICES ATTACHED IN SEPARATE FILE