



**Evaluation Report
December 2008**

About Family Link

Family Link is part of Safety Net - a local independent charity which has been working in East Brighton around Child Safety issues for more than 12 years. Family Link established in 2005, offers an early intervention family support service working in partnership with local primary schools across the East area of Brighton. It provides support to families as problems first arise, linking parents and school, and facilitating joined up service provision

Family Link Support Model: key elements

Partnership working with families, schools and other agencies

Voluntary engagement

Holistic

Working with the whole family

Early intervention

Flexible

Home visiting

Group work

Solution focused

Using Protective behaviours approach

Building on family's resilience and ability to cope

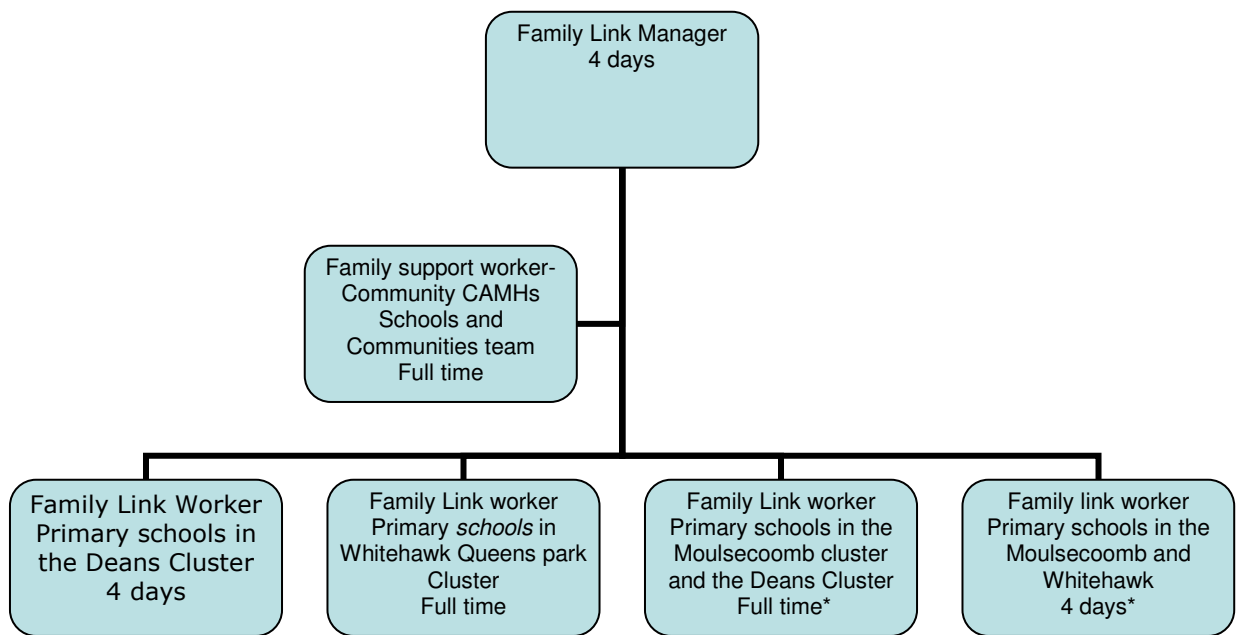
Working in partnership with families and school has proven to be an effective way of working.

With Schools we can identify families in need of support at an early stage; we can ensure family support is easily accessible and non-stigmatised- we emphasize the voluntary engagement nature of the service. We can support schools in developing increased understanding of family issues impacting on children and their school life; we can facilitate communication and links with home as well as access to additional resources for families and enlist the support of specialist support services where needed.

With Parents we are able to get alongside them and think together about the range of needs they are managing in the **whole** family, where they are struggling and where they are doing well; we can plan together to address areas of concern, identifying and developing resources within family, community, and other agencies. As such we can take a key role in ensuring a joined up approach.

Family Link Workers

Family Link workers come from a range of backgrounds: teaching, nursing, social care, counselling, etc, many have professional qualifications, and all have a range of working experience. All workers are trained in solution focussed working; protective behaviours and evidence based parenting programmes and child protection. Developing practise through supervision and training and sharing practise is a high priority.



*New posts

Services provided

- Emotional and practical support
- Home visiting working with all family
- Telephone support
- Group work particularly Triple P
- Workshops and seminars
- Interagency working
- facilitated access to other service
- Activities and outings and linking into the community

Referral criteria and processes

At present we encourage referrals from schools and parents themselves. Other agencies that have also referred families to the service are school nurses, Community Camhs, the social care team, and the parenting team. We are working together to ensure a coordinated approach and that families are getting swift access to the right service in accordance with need. We aim to help families when problems first arise and we are supporting schools in early identification and approach to families to promote easy access and engagement with the service.

Time scales

Once a referral is received we aim to make initial contact with the family within a maximum of 10 days. We aim to do significant work within up to 12 weeks/ sessions. If a family needs longer term input we will offer less intensive support after review including follow up phone calls, liaising with other agencies, and a less intensive home visiting service.

Family Link in the Deans

Family Link started working in the Deans area in April 2008. Good links have been established with all the primary schools and the service has been taken up enthusiastically by schools and parents alike. Shelley Wyatt, Family Link worker has particular responsibility for the Deans area supported by Caroline Gorton team leader. She will shortly be supported by a new Family Link worker who will be working across two clusters, funded by the lottery

Key tasks this year have been:

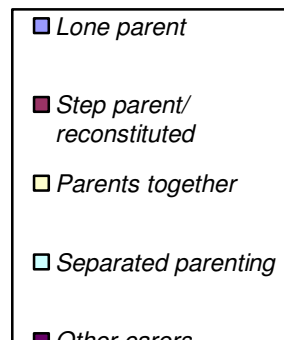
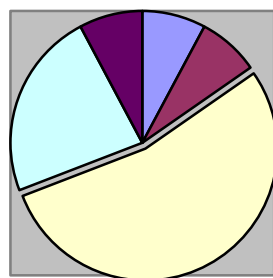
- Working together with schools to support the early identification and referral process for families who would most benefit from the home visiting service, including attending Parns meetings and Senco cluster meetings.
- Establishing the direct work with families, primarily home visiting
- Planning and delivering Triple P groups in partnership with the parenting team so they are available and accessible to all across the Deans area
- Working with schools, CYPT, extended schools and other agencies towards improved co ordination of support services for children and families. We are looking forward to joining up with the new family support workers in the secondary schools employed by Hove YMCA.

Profile of families referred to Family Link in the Deans

Ethnicity of families:

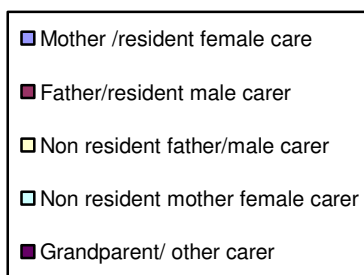
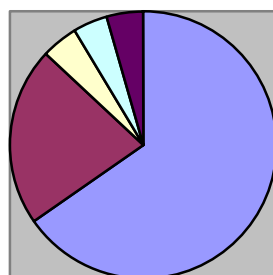
93% of families White British
7% White Other.

Parental status



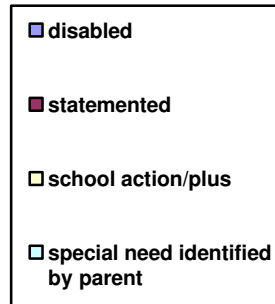
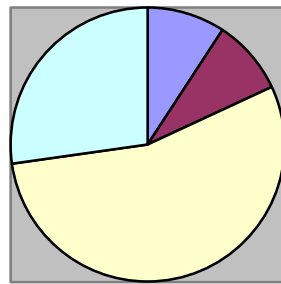
54% of families are two parent families 40 % are lone/ separated /or remarried.
6 % of children are being cared for by grandparents or other carers

Gender and role of parent carer



65 % of parents are mothers, 22 % are fathers or male carers

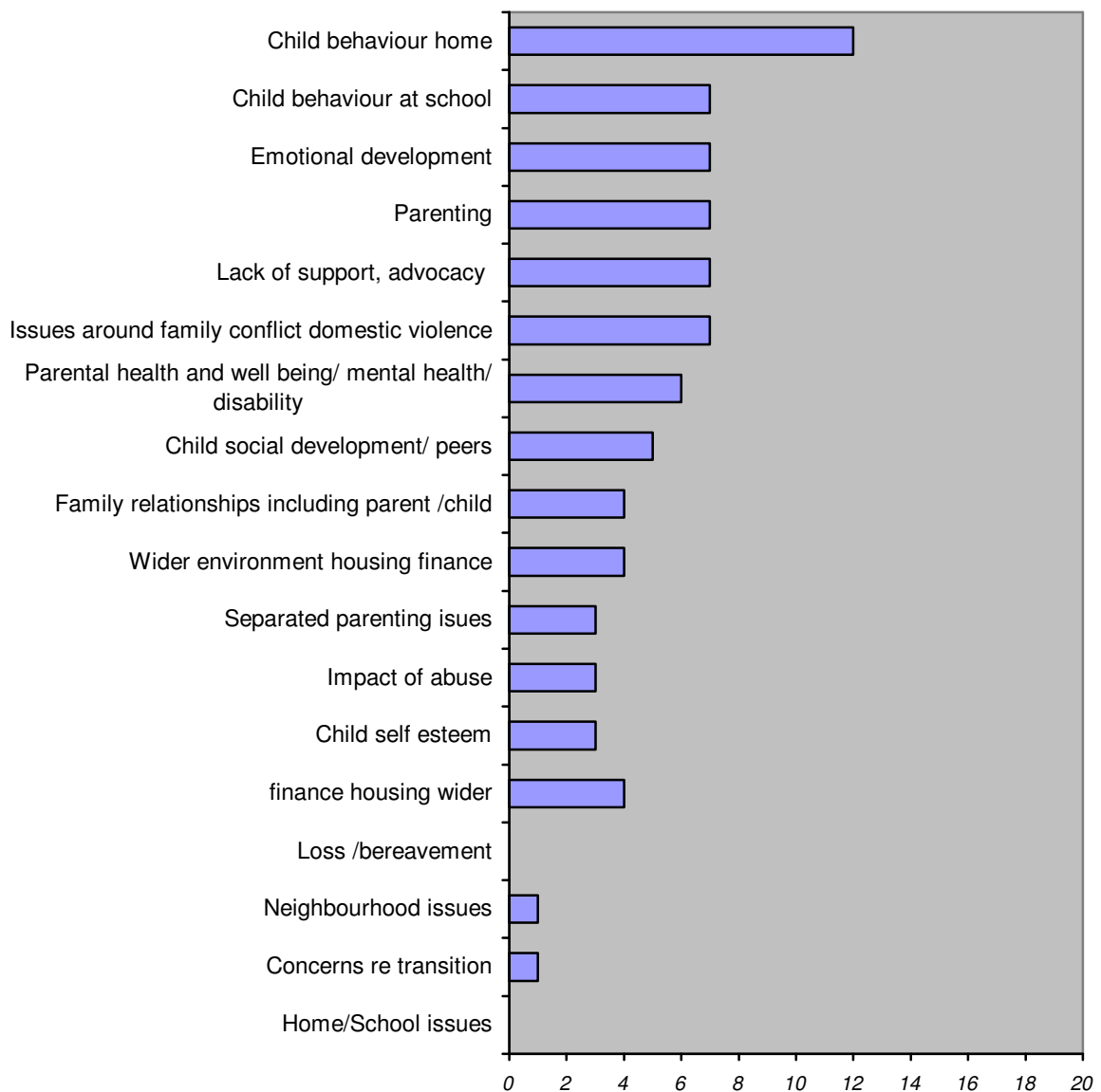
Children with special needs



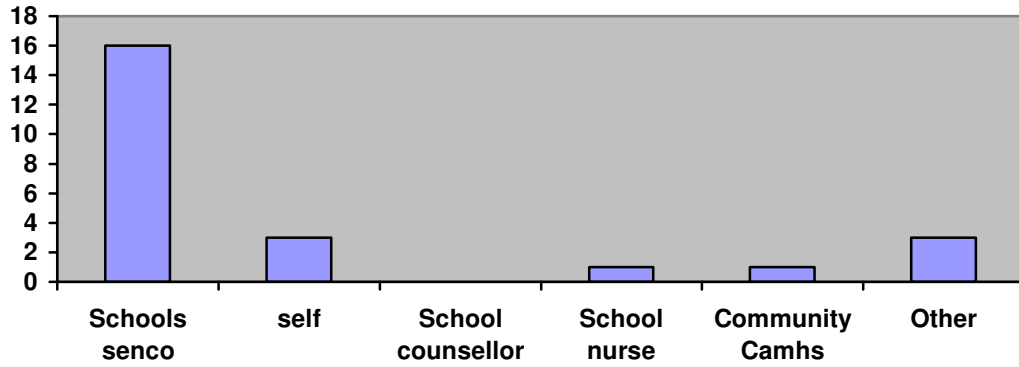
45% of families referred have a child with special needs in the family

Presenting issues on referral

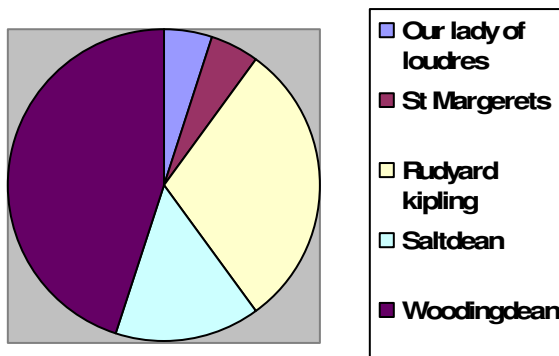
We ask referrers to identify key issues as well benefits for a family to receive a family link service. The most common reason for referral is the child's behaviour, this can be both at home and school or may be one or the other.



Source of referrals



Breakdown of referrals to home-visiting service, - which schools the children attend



In addition a Triple P group ran based at Woodingdean School. 8 parents were from Woodingdean School, 1 from Saltdean School.

Evaluation of Family Link

Outputs

Total number of family members engaged with service	92 family members
Families referred to home visiting service	23 Families
Parents referred to group work	10 Parents
Number of families attending outings and activities	2 families
Level of engagement with families referred to home visiting service.	95%
Average length of intervention	2 ½ months

Access to and working together with other services.:

We have supported families in accessing Safe as Houses, CAMHs, Amaze, Crossroads for Carers, Support groups, Triple groups, Seaside view, National autistic society; we regularly liaise with schools, counsellors EWOs School nurses, Community CAMHs, Social care, Health visitors, youth team etc,

Outcomes

How do we measure the benefits of the Family Link service?

Monitoring and evaluation are central to the service and are integral to our way of working with families. We have a range of evaluation tools and methods:

A. Home visiting service

We use tools adapted from the common assessment framework and solution focussed working to assess need, plan delivery, and evaluate outcomes in partnership with families. These are always used as part of the home visiting service. **See appendix 1.** 'CAF wheel' and 'Planning form'

B. Group work

Triple P group work has its own thorough evaluation focussed on parenting issues, parent wellbeing and child strengths and difficulties. Parents are asked to fill in a set of six questionnaires pre and post course. These are scored and fed back to participants as part of the programme. The results are also being fed back to the CYPT parenting team

C. School based feedback

We ask schools to identify areas and levels of concern on referral and again on closure identifying progress in these areas. **See appendix 3**

At the end of each year we ask schools in more detail the value and benefits of the service as well as to identify areas for development. This is still being developed

D. Feedback forms

We ask parents at the end of our work together to fill in and return an anonymous feedback form. **See appendix 4**

A. Home visiting

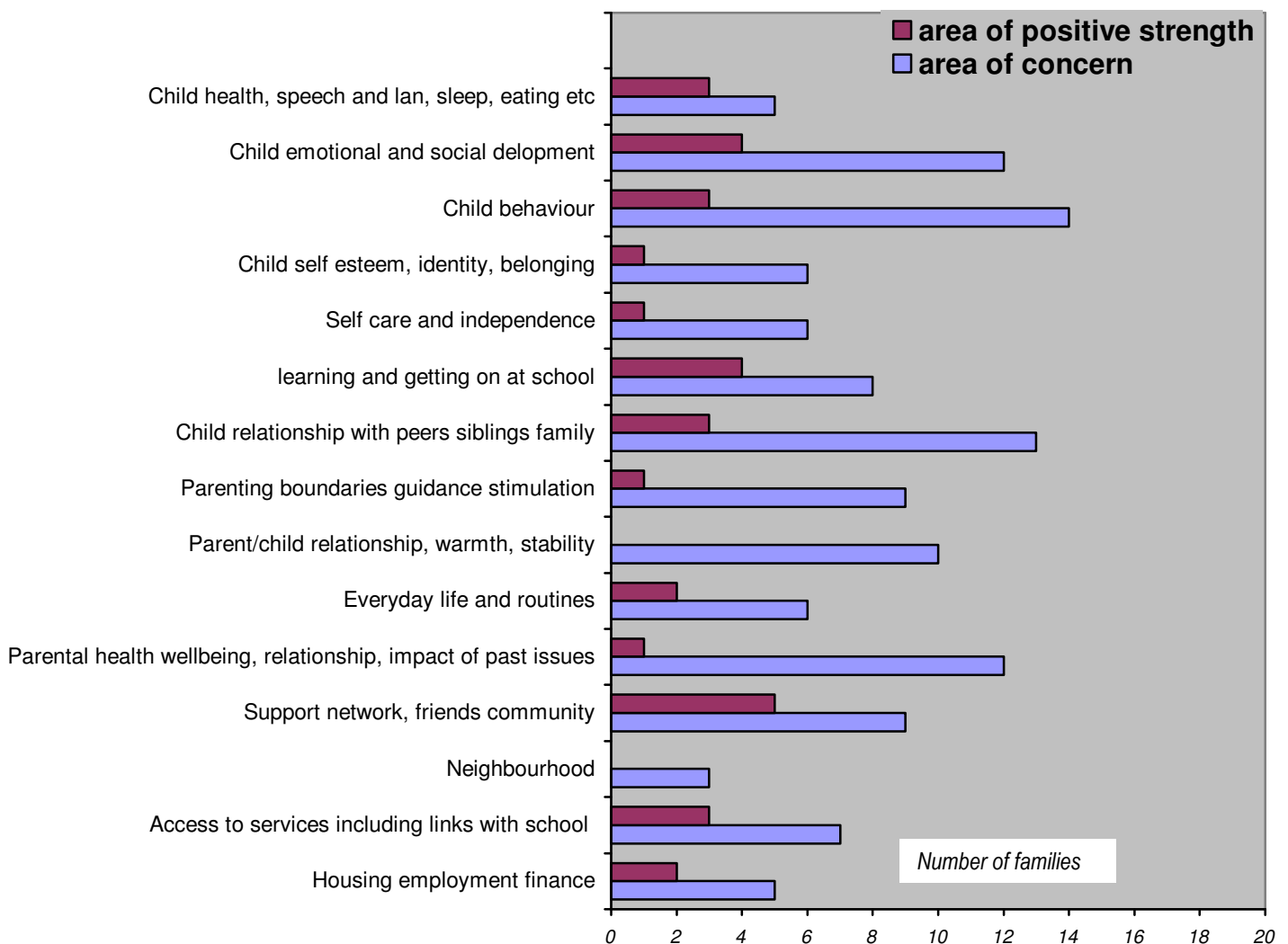
At the start of work together with parents we assess their family's needs using the CAF wheel to identify concerns as well as areas of strength and existing support. Parents are asked to rate different areas of family life on a scale of 1- 5. **1 = extremely problematic, 2 =problematic, 3= in general would like to change, 4= no concern, and 5= positive strength.**

We identify priorities, set outcomes and goals and use the planning form to summarise these. We return to these tools at review points (every 6- 8 sessions and at the end of the work together to measure progress along the way. If the work is focussed on one area we may use additional questionnaires

Issues and strengths identified by families at start of work

The following chart is collated from all initial assessments. It shows the number of families, who have identified areas as problematic or areas of concern, as well as the areas that are going well or positive strengths.

60% of families identified 8 and above areas of concern out of possible 15.

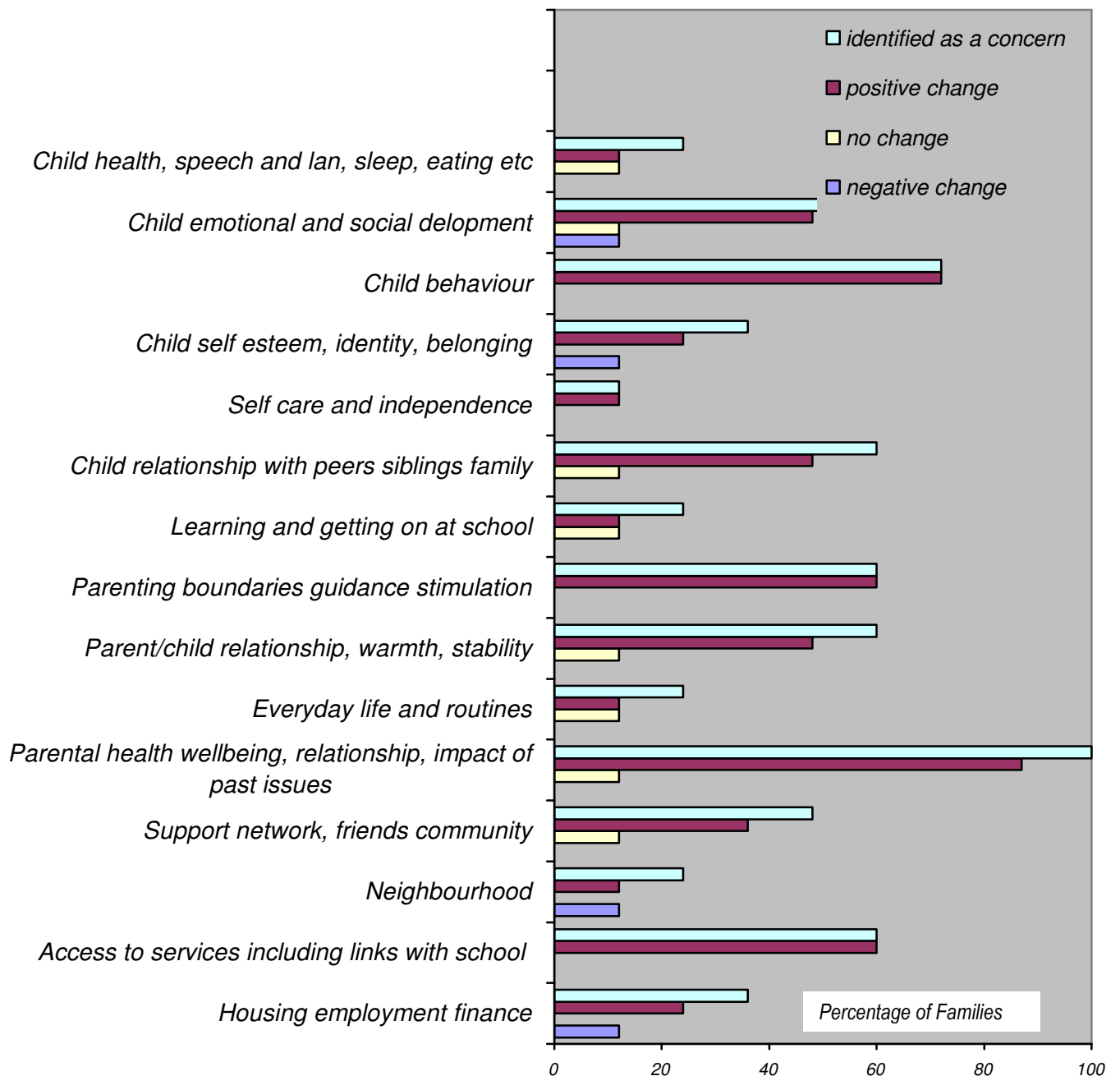


Most common areas of concern are Child's 'behaviour' 'emotional and social development' 'relationships', and Parent's 'well being and relationships.'

Has there been a change?

100 % of families reported a positive change in one or more area after working with Family link

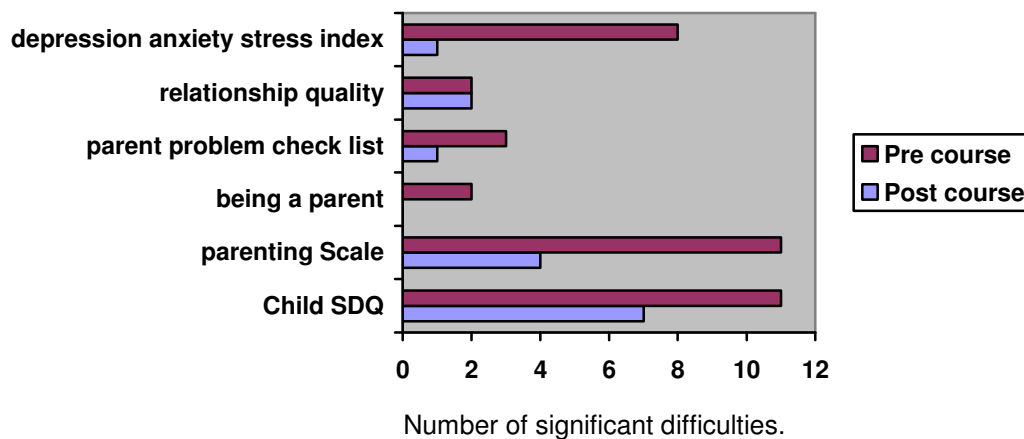
The following chart is collated from initial assessments and review findings with families we have worked with for at least 8 weeks. It shows the percentage of families who identified a particular concern, and the percentage who reported positive change, no change, or negative change in each area.



You can see from the above chart the areas which are most commonly a concern, and the level of change in the areas. The spread across areas continues to be valued feature of Family Link

B. Group work

Triple p Group work was delivered at Woodingdean School.
10 parents attended first session, 8 continued, completing the course.
The results below are based on 8 sets of collated pre and post questionnaires.
Childs strengths and difficulties
Parenting style
Being a parent
Parent problem check list
Relationship quality index
Depression anxiety and stress index.
75% of parents had significant difficulties in one or more areas, 35% of parents scoring in the clinical range in multiple areas. All parents showed improvement.
Scores in the clinical range reducing by 57 % overall



C. School monitoring and feedback

At present we do not have enough returns to draw conclusions. We hope to get full feedback from school for end of year report.

D. Feedback forms

We ask for anonymous feedback in relation to the experience and benefits of the family link service, both group work and individual work.
8 forms were returned. All returned all responded positively to the service.

75 % of answers said they had benefited 'a great deal'
35%of answers said they had benefited 'to some extent'
0 'not very much'
0 'not at all'

Comments from Parents

"She (family Link worker) made me feel very comfortable and able to openly talk about the problems that I was enduring. She made me feel that the problems were not all my fault and that they could be worked out"

"I now feel in control and really feel I can deal with any problem"

"I now feel able to deal with my difficulties positively and feel that I am doing a good job as a parent

"Some one to take a lot of notice of your problems and care about your self"

"This course has given me the opportunity and thinking time to tackle some of the parenting issues I face. It also provided me with some new ideas. As a result, I feel I am better able to cope with the challenges the children present. I have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to talk and learn with the other parents".

"I think all parents would benefit from doing this course"

"The course has given me the confidence to seek help for myself and (child name). I am able to accept that I am not expected to cope with all the behaviours that (child name) presents on my own".

"Very valuable experience"

In summary the above statistical material gives a picture of the areas and impact of the work of Family Link in the Deans, However family life is a complex interaction of a range of factors and often experienced as ups and downs. Feed back from parents most often identifies having someone who listens, to talk things through with and not to be judged as a key benefit to them.

A key area of our focus recently is to build on family's resilience and ability to cope in the face of difficulties. This involves getting alongside families to understand the complexity of life they are managing and to think with them about their resourcefulness, strengths, and abilities, as well as supporting them in locating additional resources and ways of coping. We are taking part in a Community of Practice developing work on building resilience informed by recent research alongside other practioners and supported by CUPP -Community University Partnership.

Case Studies

Case A

Reason for referral

- Child's behaviour at home – aggression, unable to cope with change or manage feelings

Issues/ concerns and strengths identified

- Mum has health concerns
- Lack of support with parenting - limited support network
- Lack of confidence as a parent (mum was in care herself as a child)
- Child enjoys school
- Mum has part time job she enjoys
- Stable financial and housing situation

Work carried out

- Listening and talking with mum re her concerns
- Identifying strengths in the family eg: positive relationships, what's working well, interests
- Mum identifying her own strengths (using Strength Cards)
- Use of Triple P questionnaires to identify parenting styles and relevant factors
- Discussion re parenting strategies - including specific praise, boundary setting, consistency, clear instructions, logical consequences
- Discussion re taking care of own needs as a parent e.g. : addressing health concerns, making time to relax and enjoy own interests & engaging the support of others

Outcomes

- Improvement in child's behaviour at home & more realistic expectations re child's behaviour
- Mum's self-esteem boosted and greater confidence in parenting
- Mum less stressed, taking time to relax & recognises the positive impact for herself / child
- Improved relationships with extended family members, who are now providing more support

Case B

Reason for referral

- Child behaviour problems at school & home – particularly aggression
- Mum feeling isolated

Issues/ concerns and strengths identified

- Child's unidentified needs – awaiting assessment
- Housing concerns – facing eviction
- Lack of support services involvement
- Mum feeling stressed and judged
- Single parent with some separated parenting issues
- Mum is close to her family and values their support
- Child is liked by peers
- Mum is positive about accessing support for her child's needs

Work carried out

- Initial discussion with mum re her situation
- Attendance/support/joint work at school meetings (PARMs / PSPs)
- Signposting/referrals to other agencies - AMAZE, Crossroads for Carers, ASP (respite/playscheme)
- Letter to housing department re banding & current temporary accommodation
- Phone calls between visits/ meetings for reassurance & ongoing support

Outcomes

- Mum is now connected in with a variety of other services and has accessed a Triple P group (run by AMAZE)
- Child is undergoing assessment prior to SEN statement process
- Child behaviour has improved at home - Mum feels more 'in control', but it is still an issue at school
- The family now have priority banding re housing
- Mum feels she has a better, more affectionate bond with her child
- The impact of child's SEN on every day life is still evident, but mum feels stronger & more able to cope
- Family Link support will continue at lower level (mostly phone calls) during statementing process

Shelley Wyatt Family Link Worker for the Deans Area

Since starting work with The Deans cluster of schools in April, I have been concentrating on building relationships with each of the 5 schools (Rudyard Kipling, Woodingdean Primary, Saltdean Primary, Our Lady of Lourdes and St Margaret's). I have attended PARMs at each of the schools, PSP meetings and parent's forums at individual schools (as requested). The Head teachers and SENCOs at all of the schools have made me feel most welcome and that the Family Link Service is needed.

TRIPLE P GROUP

I co-delivered a Triple P group at Woodingdean Primary between end September and mid November, which was attended regularly by 8 parents. I will be running another group at Our Lady of Lourdes in February 2009. Some parents prefer to attend a group outside of their immediate area, so the group will be open to parents of children at other schools in this cluster, although priority will be given to parents of the two Rottingdean schools.

The Woodingdean Triple P group was diverse in terms of participants. Some were parents of families with many issues and complex lives; others wanted to learn more about parenting and had just one or two specific issues. However, the former were encouraged by the presence of the latter and understood that the group wasn't for 'bad parents', but for those who wanted to feel greater confidence in their role. Pre- and post- course questionnaires identified positive changes across the group and feedback indicated it was a valued and beneficial experience for all who participated.

I have been able to respond promptly to referrals, with only a brief waiting period for those made whilst I was running the group. Most of the referrals have come via school SENCO's, some initiated via PARMs. We have also had some self-referrals. Common issues and themes include:

High numbers of

- Children with special needs
- Single parents
- Specific housing needs
- Parents who had been in care themselves as children
- Impact of special needs on the family,
- Domestic violence,
- Managing children's behaviour,
- Low self esteem,
- Lack of support network.

For some families a couple of home visits and follow up phone calls may be all that they require supporting their needs. At the other end of the scale, I am continuing to work with families with more complex needs over a longer period of time. Parents have overwhelmingly identified the value of being able to talk through their concerns in their own homes (without being judged) and discuss practical ways forward to meet their needs