

BRIEFING PAPER

Proposals for Parent Support Advisors

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1. Purpose of Report

Discussion paper regarding the future of the Parent Support Advisor role within Oldham and the links to broader parenting support.

2. Background

Extensive research by Charles Desforges has proven that parents have the greatest effect on the long and short-term outcomes of their children shaping them into adult life.

Following a national research project led by the TDA and the CWDC PSA's began working across all Oldham Primary Schools in October 2009. Findings from the pilot projects pointed to the need for centralised support and coordination in order to maximise delivery and reduce costs.

The PSA's are currently centrally managed within the Extended Services team. The role of the PSA Coordinator is to manage the work of the team, to provide individual casework supervision within a safeguarding framework. The central management function maximises resources across the schools and ensures supervision, referral and performance monitoring arrangements are standardised and quality assured.

The ten PSA's each carry a case load of approximately 11 families and work with families for up to 6 weeks depending upon their needs; referrals into the service are received through schools and other agencies providing family support, with the understanding that schools are contacted if referrals come via other agencies. Each of the PSA's has a specialism which is an additional strength of the skill base of the team and provides a clear cohesive link to specialist services.

Following referral the PSA will carry out an initial assessment of the family/parents parenting needs in relation to the child's development. During assessment a strengths and difficulties questionnaire is completed to identify areas of work; a chronological case history of their work provides monitoring and outcome information and can be used as evidence if issues escalate or a referral is made into another service.

In addition PSA's deliver a range of parenting, drug awareness, healthy eating workshops and evidence based parenting courses.

Evidence to date

418 parents received 1 to 1 support with an average of 6 weeks intervention (this figure excludes all parenting courses, signposting and short interventions). The original brief was for parental engagement and early intervention requirements at levels 1 and 2. However, case work records show there is a much greater focus on higher levels of need and support for parents; in order to meet these needs the referral criteria is being reviewed alongside other support agencies. Early intervention for parents support at lower levels should be met through universal providers such as Family Intervention Service signposting and online provision, for example online parenting courses.

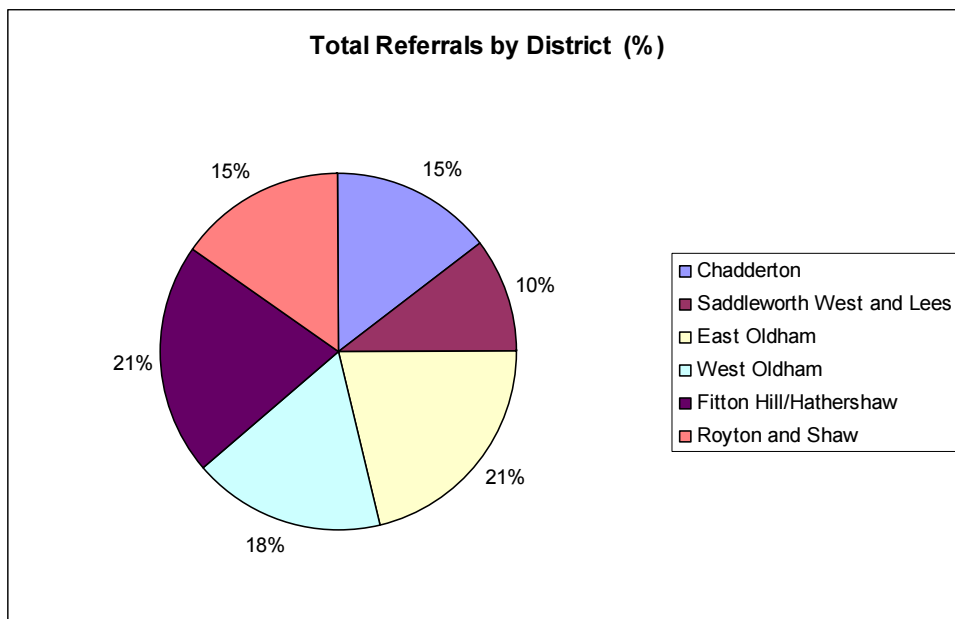
- **In 24% of all referrals there were domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health or a combination of all three problems**
- **10 % of all cases parent's had some degree of mental health problem although not within the threshold required for adult services**
- **8% of all cases involved domestic violence**

It is becoming increasingly apparent that there is work to be carried out with many families to address their own needs before the PSA's are able to work on issues related to their parenting skills and their children's attainment in school. This often occurs when parents experience problems that fall below the thresholds required for adult intervention, but which has a direct result on the outcomes for their children.

Of the 418 referrals that resulted in a piece of work being carried out:

- 44% came through schools
- 5% came through social care
- 7% from CAMHS (this is often when a child has been referred to CAMHS experiencing poor mental health as either a direct or indirect result of their parents parenting ability)
- 32% self referred
- Other referrers include school nurses, school attendance, Woodfield, Parent Partnership, GP's, Adult Mental Health, Barnardos, Community Outreach, CAF team

We are currently linking the work of the PSA's across the attendance behaviour database to measure changes to attendance patterns before, during and after intervention.



Taking the work forward

The PSA's are currently contracted until March 31st 2011, funded through the ES Standards grant; it was announced in the spending review that funding for Extended Services, including PSA's, will form part of schools baseline budget. We are currently exploring a number of potential options with schools to take work forward in the next year and transition into following years.