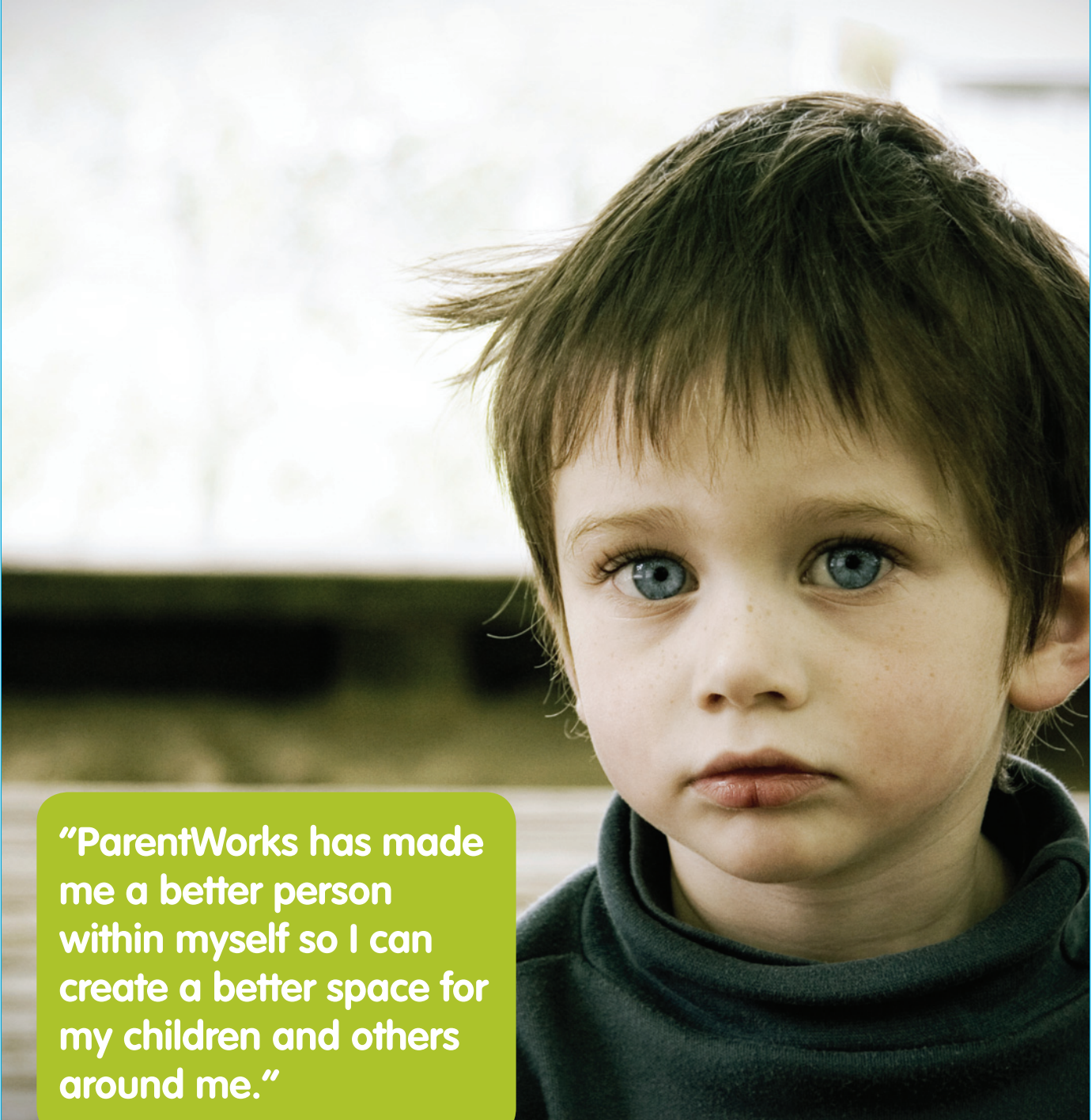


Christchurch Methodist Mission

# ParentWorks

## Review 2012



**"ParentWorks has made me a better person within myself so I can create a better space for my children and others around me."**

## Foreword

Since 2002, ParentWorks has been helping non-custodial parents to build better relationships with their children and assist them both in the short and long term. The Christchurch Methodist Mission employs a multidisciplinary team to work with parents to ensure positive outcomes and provide comprehensive information for key stakeholders.

This report sets out the 2012 review of the ParentWorks programme run. The review included feedback from participants, referring agencies and various other people involved with ParentWorks. An independent review of the programme delivery was also carried out.

The review identified that the ParentWorks programme is not only effective, it is vital for many of the parents who are referred to it. Throughout the review the success of this programme has been reiterated by those involved and this has been recorded within this report.

The review process also assisted in gaining an understanding of where further development of the programme might be useful. This has allowed the Methodist Mission to update assessment tools, session content, the programme manual and the end of programme reports.

The review highlighted the constructive relationship between Methodist Mission and Child Youth and Family and how both agencies collaborate to achieve the best outcomes for children.

## Evaluation Overview

### AIMS OF REVIEW

1. The aims of the ParentWorks evaluation were:
  - a). To identify if the programme promotes positive change in those attending
  - b). To identify if the programme assists with decision-making regarding the families involved
  - c). The identification of potential improvements to the programme

### EVALUATION METHODS

2. The evaluation involved qualitative and quantitative data gathering, including:
  - > A survey of referring agents
  - > Interviews with key informants
  - > Review of client evaluations 2010-2012
  - > Review of referrer evaluations 2010-2012
  - > Document and record review, including psych tests, course material, and reports
  - > Review of programme content and delivery

## ParentWorks programme

3. ParentWorks is a combined group education and home based programme for non-custodial parents run by the Methodist Mission. ParentWorks helps parents to develop positive parenting strategies, understand the causes of their child's behaviour, manage misbehaviour, understand and manage anger, explore thoughts and attitudes about parenting values, develop and plan effective routines and establish survival tips for high-risk situations.
4. The Christchurch Methodist Mission has been running the ParentWorks Programme since 2002.
5. ParentWorks is normally delivered in 3 stages:
  - a). Stage 1 originally derives from the "My Family First" programme run by Mercy Family Services in Queensland, Australia. It focuses on enabling the parent to recognize both their own strengths and those of their children. It also assists parents to understand child development, manage emotions, grief and loss, the functioning of child protection and legal services, challenging unhelpful thoughts and coping in difficult situations.
  - b). Stage 2 derives from the "Triple P Pathways" programme developed at Queensland University. This stage focuses participants on positive parenting strategies, managing misbehaviour, understanding and managing anger, exploring thoughts and attitudes about parenting values, developing and planning effective routines and establishing survival tips for high-risk situations.

After each group session, a weekly home visit is set up during access visits to observe the parent/child interaction, while discussion and coaching of the learning is provided.

Pre and post programme psychometric tests are completed by a psychologist or programme facilitator as part of full reporting of parenting ability.

- c). Stage 3 is a consolidation phase offered after the group programme is completed. It consists of home visitation to support the child's care plan which may include a transition back to home process or supporting access arrangements.

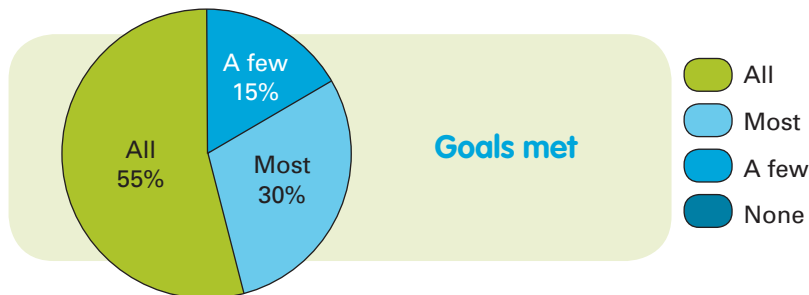
## Key Findings

### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORMS

- Participants who have attended ParentWorks are routinely sent a feedback form at the end of the programme. The feedback form is used to inform on-going development of the programme.
- This evaluation reviewed the feedback forms that were returned in 2011 and 2012. Unfortunately forms for earlier years were lost when the Mission building was destroyed in the earthquakes.

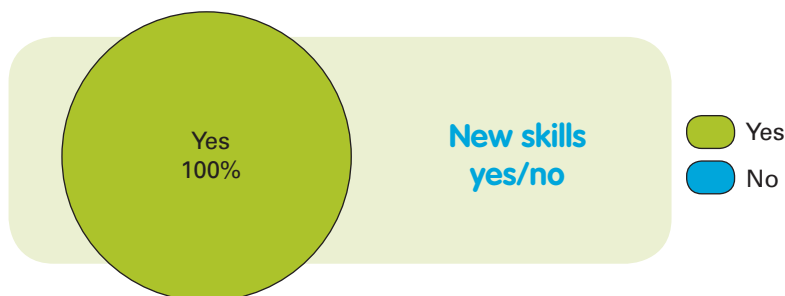
#### > Were participants' goals met?

- All participants reported that some of their goals had been met. Those who reported that they had only "a few" or "most" of their goals met indicated that the goal remaining to be met was having their child returned.



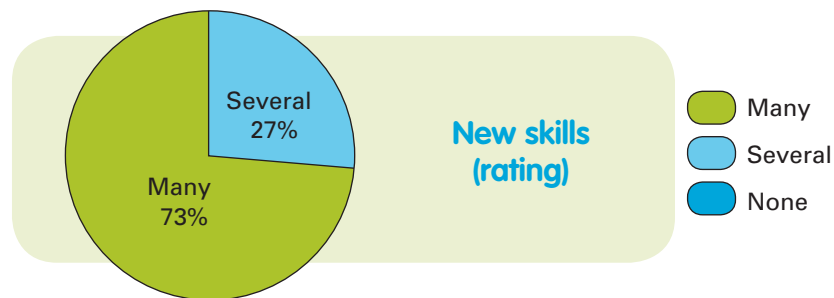
#### > Did participants feel they had developed new skills?

- Participants were asked if they had gained new skills as a result of attending the programme. The evaluation questionnaire was altered during the year and this question was changed slightly.
- Initially the question was a yes/no response



# ParentWorks Review 2012

11. The question was then changed to a rating question: None, Several and Many.



12. Participants particularly noted that they had developed new parenting and relationship skills as a result of participating in the programme:

**"Helped me to change the way I think and react to different situations"**

PARENT EVALUATION

## > Do participants believe they know where to get support in the future

13. The ParentWorks programme aims to ensure that participants are aware of where to get help and support when they need it, before matters escalate.
14. Participants were asked if they know what kinds of support are available in the community. All participants indicated that they knew where to get help in the future.

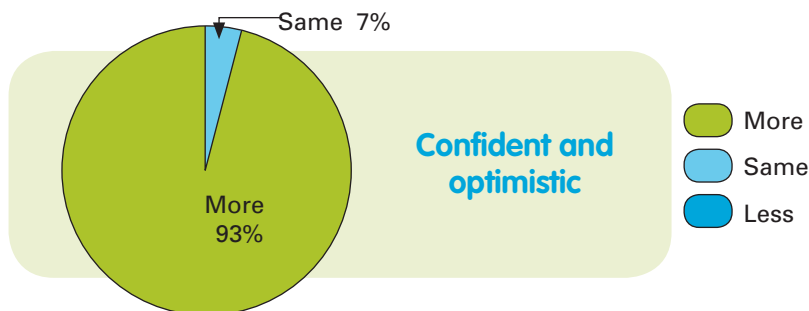


## > Were participants optimistic and positive about the future?

15. Research indicates that parents who are positive and optimistic about the future will be more able to develop and implement positive parenting practices.
16. Participants were asked if they were optimistic about the future. Well over 95% reported that they felt more optimistic as a result of participating in the programme. Initially this was asked as "do you feel confident and optimistic about the future".



17. This question was changed during the year to avoid confusion: "do you feel optimistic about the future since participating in this programme"



18. Participants reported that the programme had not only made them feel more positive about the future but better about themselves:

**"It has made me a better person within myself so I can create a better space for my children and others around me."**

PARENT EVALUATION

## > Did participants suggest any improvements to the Programme?

19. Participants reported that they appreciated the way programme facilitators handled each person needs.
20. One participant suggested they would like the programme to be more strengths-based. However, that participant also reported that they thought the programme should continue and was needed:

**"People don't need to be reminded of their mistakes – everyone struggles. Don't ever shut down the course – parents need it. Ours didn't have programmes like this."**

PARENT EVALUATION

21. Others reported that they found the programme challenging at times, but things were explained to help them understand:

**"I have never completed anything in my life, thank you both for everything. I finished this course with your support"**

PARENT EVALUATION

and

**"You have changed my life in a good way"**

PARENT EVALUATION



## REFERRER EVALUATIONS 2011-12

- 22. Professionals who refer their clients to ParentWorks are routinely sent a feedback form at the end of the programme. The feedback form is used to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the programme and inform its on-going development.
- 23. This evaluation reviewed the feedback forms that were returned since 2011. Unfortunately forms for earlier years were lost when the Mission building was destroyed in the earthquakes.

### > What were the reasons people referred clients to ParentWorks?

- 24. Feedback forms indicated that referrers had referred their clients to ParentWorks for a range of reasons, including:
  - > to assess their clients capacity to provide effective parenting for their children;
  - > to assess their clients willingness to develop and own new parenting strategies.

### > Were referrers expectations met?

- 25. All referrer feedback forms indicated that the referrers expectations of the programme has been met



### > Did referrers find the ParentWorks reports useful?

- 26. Referrers indicated that they found the ParentWorks Stage 2 reports useful



27. Referrers believed that the reports were comprehensive and covered all the appropriate information, indicating that they were clearly presented and evidence based:

**“Great depth of information and explanations and analysis”**

REFERRER FEEDBACK FORM

28. However, one respondent indicated that the outcome of the final report reflected a different outcome than previous discussions with ParentWorks facilitators and suggested: “the report reflected the client better”

## > What impacts on Clients were reported by referrers?

29. Referrers indicated that their clients had been given strategies to deal with child behaviour and their own parenting styles.



30. However, one referrer suggested that the change in their client had not endured:

**“At first the client showed insight and appropriately engaged with the social worker, but now that the programme has finished they have reverted back to their old ways”**

REFERRER FEEDBACK FORM

## > What did referrers say about the relationship with Methodist Mission staff?

31. Referrers stated that they have a positive relationship with the Mission staff and intended to continue to refer clients to the programme:

**"I have always found Methodist Mission to be most helpful when discussing clients and services "**

REFERRER FEEDBACK FORM

and

**"Will look forward to on-going work "**

REFERRER FEEDBACK FORM

## SURVEY OF STAKEHOLDER AGENCIES

32. A survey was sent to representatives of key referring agencies asking for feedback on the programme including why they refer to ParentWorks and whether the programme meets their expectations.

### > Why do stakeholders refer clients to ParentWorks?

33. Stakeholder provided a number of reasons why they refer their clients to the ParentWorks. The reasons given can be grouped into four key themes:
- > To provide an independent assessment of the client
  - > To assist clients to develop skills
  - > To assist client to gain a greater understanding or insight
  - > The programme had been recommended
34. Some respondents referred to ParentWorks to get an independent assessment of the parents' ability to parent appropriately. For example, a number of respondents stated that through ParentWorks they received thorough information on the ability of their client to parent:

**"...having confidence about where the case is going "**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

and

**“The staff seem to be honest to clients, in their reports and in their Courts testimony. There does seem to see a child first policy even if it risks upsetting the client”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

35. Respondents also reported that they referred to ParentWorks so their clients could learn new skills regarding their parenting, including establishing goals that would address their individual circumstance and needs:

**“I have had several clients complete the programme. They have appreciated the content and support that they have been offered ”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

and

**“The programme has a good reputation, is known to be comprehensive and involves both group and individual components”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

36. Some respondents reported that they referred clients to ParentWorks so they could gain a greater insight into why the client’s children were in care and the impact of their actions on children.
37. Some respondents reported that they had initially referred to the Parent-Works because it had been recommendations by other professionals:

**“...Because of the positive reports I have received about it – from clients who have participated in it and from relevant literature/professionals ”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

## > Did stakeholders identify changes in their clients as a result of the programme?

- 38. Respondents also reported that parents were more “child focused” and had increased awareness of their children’s needs and how better to meet those needs. They had gained insight into the impact of their behaviour on the children’s wellbeing. Respondents reported that clients had learned different strategies to deal with children’s behaviour and address the ways in which they cope with children’s behaviour.
- 39. Respondents also reported that their clients were “more open” and had developed a greater understanding of why their children came into care. They also reported that the clients understood that change needs to occur:

**“I am so impressed in the change my client made. She refers back to her new learning daily. She now has boundaries and good routines in place”**

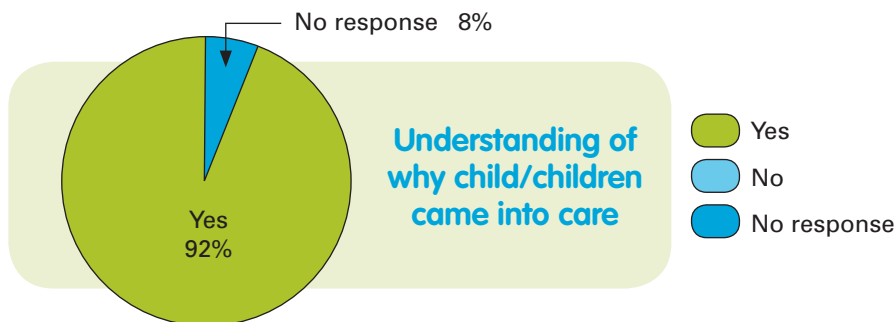
SURVEY RESPONDENT

and

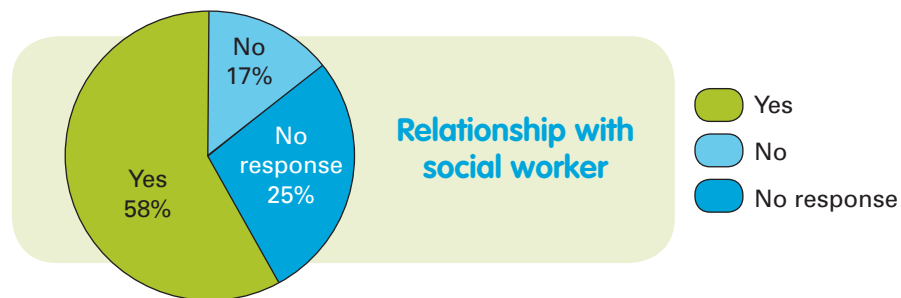
**“Parents who were motivated to have their children back made incredible changes understanding better, why their children were removed and were willing to work hard to have their children returned to them and maintain changes ”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

- 40. Most respondents reported that their clients had a greater understanding of how their children came into care as a result of being on the ParentWorks programme



41. Most respondents reported that the client relationships with social workers improved as a result of being on the programme.



42. Respondents indicated that clients better understood why social workers initially removed children and were more open to working with the social worker and understanding the changes that were needed:

**"More positive, able to listen, work together for the best outcomes for the children"**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

43. One respondent noted that initially the clients had gained insight into the impact of their actions but a year on there was no change and they were back to where they started.

## > Are ParentWorks reports useful?

44. All respondents who had received reports found them very useful. Respondents indicated that the ParentWorks reports provided an objective and full assessment of parenting issues, including client abilities to parent, any problems that get in the way of learning new things and parent/child relationship and attachment issues:

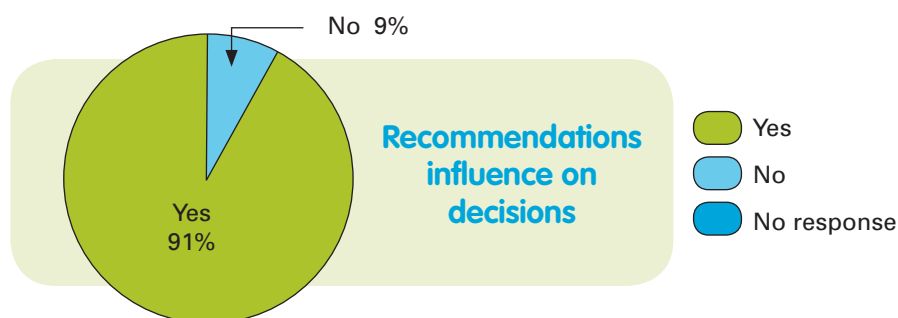
**"Evidence based. High quality of reports. Reports are always very detailed and give a great understanding which parents have made changes and are suitable to have their children returned"**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

# ParentWorks Review 2012



45. Most respondents indicated that the recommendations in the report (or verbal recommendations) had influenced their decisions regarding the children.



46. Two respondents had not received a report and had only had verbal discussions with Mission staff. These respondents believed that a written report would have been useful. However, one noted that they were a Family Court lawyer and the reports are not always available to them.
47. Most respondents did not suggest any improvements to the reports; however a few did make some. One suggested that reports should be received rapidly, while another suggested that there should be more willingness to take and state a position – whether or not a goal of 'return home, stay at home' is safe and appropriate. They questioned whether sometimes the worker-parent relationship is the prime concern, rather than being honest and open about the concerns. Another respondent felt the report had contradicted what had been reported verbally.

## > How could ParentWorks be improved?

48. A few respondents made suggestions regarding improvements to the programme. These suggestions were largely about extended home-based support, including:
- > Extended on-going support if connection made with worker and if children are returned home.
  - > More frequent family visits monitoring.

49. Another respondent suggested expanding the criteria, for example work focusing on father assessments as they perceived this to be a gap in the market.
50. Overall it appears that all respondents believed that ParentWorks was an effective programme:

**"It is my assessment that Parent works is one of the more demanding programmes and does require personal motivation to complete. From what i know it seems also to be one of the best. "**

**SURVEY RESPONDENT**

## INTERVIEW WITH CYF PRACTICE LEADERS

51. Interviews were held with Child Youth and Family Practice Leaders. They were asked for feedback regarding the ParentWorks programme.

### > Why do they refer clients to the ParentWorks programme?

52. Practice Leaders reported that the ParentWorks programme helps parents focus on what the real issues are for the family. It is able to "drill down" to 'why' the children are in care and support change in lifestyle choices for parents.
53. They believe that the programme is successful because it combines group work with home visitation which means facilitators have the ability to monitor and observe home environments and access:

**"Because the programme goes over initially the short block and then the 8 weeks it shows change over a period of time – from the initial group all the way through to the access/home visitation ... ability to show participants shifting in their behaviours – focus on client over time... report shows decision making process "**

**INTERVIEW FEEDBACK**

54. Practice Leaders believed the practical work makes it more evidence based in the area of 'change'.
55. They noted that the programme promotes positive relationships between parent/s and children but child safety and wellbeing is always paramount.



## > Did Practice Leaders identify changes in their clients as a result of the programme?

56. Practice Leaders reported that they had seen a number of tangible changes in parents, for example:
- > a willingness to work with people;
  - > working with the foster parents to work on transfer home;
  - > willingness to have good relationships with their children;
  - > willingness to be a part of their children's lives in a more positive way.
  - > greater understanding as to why their children came into care

**"A lot more openness in parents; some parents are really stuck"**

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

57. Practice Leaders also indicated that social workers reported that their relationships with their clients changed as a result of their participation in the programme. They reported that clients were less aggressive and more able to discuss needs of their child.

## > Do the ParentWorks reports help inform decisions regarding the client?

58. Practice Leaders indicated that ParentWorks reports are one of the factors influencing long term decision regarding cases. They believed that the reports were well written and were able to be used by CYF for legal matters. They also suggested that it would be useful if ParentWorks workers had training in case they needed to attend court proceedings.

## > Are there alternative programmes or services?

59. Practice Leaders were asked if, and why, they refer to other services. They reported that on occasion they refer to other services but believed that none were as effective as ParentWorks:

**"None that compare to ParentWorks. it targets our group of people/clients and reason that children are in care. We could use alternative methods. But there is nothing as structured or defined as ParentWorks and nothing where we see the progress of change over time "**

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

and

**"I have used other programmes, however, with the social worker home visitation and group work the advantages and dynamics are of a different calibre to other programmes or services "**

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

## How could the programme be improved?

60. Practice Leaders reported that they could not see any immediate gaps or areas of improvement needed to the programme:

**"This is an effective group. Keep it up... Don't Stop "**

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

## INTERVIEW WITH METHODIST MISSION COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGERS/TEAM LEADERS

61. The Managers/Team Leaders highlighted a number of elements they thought were working well with the ParentWorks programme:

- > Client retention – is very good but does depend on client circumstances
- > Wrap around service – pre work with parents before and during Stage 1 and consolidation of work at home following Stage 2. Also work with children as well
- > Intensity of the programme – gave good support to parents over an appropriate level of time to facilitate change
- > Multidisciplinary team worked

62. The Managers/Team Leaders also highlighted some areas they believe could be addressed:

- > Styles of facilitation – were different at times and this had produced some issues. This may be assisted by some team building or further input.
- > Staff capacity – needs to be sufficient staff facilitating the programme to ensure that facilitators are not doing the ParentWorks groups continuously.
- > Pairing of Facilitators – in terms of skills and strengths. Co-gendered facilitators would be an advantage.

- > Report writing – given the importance of the report and the considerable time assigned to completing reports, staff need to have a high standard of report writing. Report efficiency in terms of time was an important consideration and a lead person with time set aside without disruptions has worked well recently.

## REVIEW OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

63. An external 'expert' reviewed the ParentWorks programme delivery and the course material. The external evaluator met with the programme facilitators to explore how the programme is delivered and how it differs from its original design.

### Stage One

64. The facilitators felt that this stage of the programme was working well. This stage was described as being for and about the participants themselves. Content was set out for each session and a process approach to the material was taken. Sessions 1, 2 and 3 formed the basis of the approach and these tended not to change regarding order. These sessions help parents to understand themselves, their values, beliefs and took a broad view regarding exploring relationships with others. The story tree was regarded as very powerful for the group members and looked at what values they would like for their families.
65. The facilitators reported that it was important that they separated the person's behaviour from the person themselves. Facilitators therefore worked hard so that when parents made a mistake it was safe to say so and to stay in the group on their journey to make change.
66. At each planning session the facilitators looked at what they would focus on in particular given the issues of the group they had. Sessions 4 to 9 were flexible and determined by the issues group members brought. For example, if more than half the members had drug and alcohol issues an exploration on that and its impact on parenting may be included. For the session on children in care, facilitators found that for some members there appeared to be no impact while for others it tapped into their own experiences as children.
67. A session on domestic violence that was more structured and which could be inserted as required was identified as helpful addition.
68. Homework was not formalised in the written programme but each week questions were given at the end of the sessions for participants to think about and try out over the week.

## Stage Two

69. The team talked mostly about how the delivery of the content was what made the programme work so well:
  - > Warm ups were to do with the content and teaching of the session being presented.
  - > Ways of incorporating interactive activities where parents learned by participating in creative exercises that got the content across. This made the concepts and ideas practical and memorable for the parents.
  - > Towards the end of the group a snakes and ladders board game was played that involved the parents applying all the skills learned over the course.
70. The team reported that the session order has been changed so that skills are learned in a way which builds well for this group of parents. For example, session 2 of Stage 2 on positive relationships comes early so that there is ample time to get these skills developed before moving on to misbehaviour and also to recognise the importance of them.
71. Homework tasks had become less formal and were given out at the end of each session. It was tailored more specifically to the particular group but involved practice of skills from the session presented and often given out on a separate sheet. In the home visits these homework sheets were worked on and checked to assist learning.
72. Home visits had been extended to involve a visit to a public place such as a supermarket, the Warehouse or a park to help ensure learning was transferred to those settings.
73. The things that the delivery team wanted strengthened were the scenarios relating to thoughts, feeling and behaviour, some prepared examples of common thinking errors and perhaps thinking/feelings/behaviour as cartoons. They wanted to look at the final chart which introduces the idea of 'hot' thoughts and wondered if simply helpful and unhelpful thinking would work better. One of the examples they thought may be useful to set up as a scenario was a family group conference (FCG) where the parents use some of their new skills to manage the situation better.
74. The "Little Angels" DVD was still used for teaching and any updated material was welcomed.
75. Facilitators wanted the questionnaires to be more integrated into the reports and tied in with the summary.
76. The last round of report at the end of 2011 had worked well having one person to co-ordinate the report writing and it was all completed within 2 to 3 weeks. Having 2 full days for everyone set aside without other commitments had sped up the process.

77. Concerns about external facilitators were raised regarding meeting clients in the pre and post parts of Stage 1 and 2. They felt that the external facilitator needed to be there for the pre meetings or the last session of Stage 1 to meet the parents.

## COMMENTS BY THE EXTERNAL REVIEWER

78. The external reviewer noted that that facilitators are “fantastically creative” in the way they use the material and deliver the programme.
79. She noted that the programme caters for the full range of learning styles by using a range of mediums, including individual work, group work, modelling behaviour, practical exercises, practice of new behaviour, DVDs and written material
80. The external expert also reviewed the reports for the end of 2011 and stated that:
- > Reports had a clear template and an easy format.
  - > Information was descriptive, understandable and informative.
  - > Summaries were well based and helpful with clear recommendations.
  - > Questionnaire results and comments on whether this was consistent in the home setting and within group sessions were brought together in the summaries.
  - > The layout and quality of the reports were of a high standard.

## Conclusions

81. ParentWorks is a three stage group and home based programme for non-custodial parents run by the Methodist Mission. The first stage focuses on the parents themselves and consists of a number of group based sessions where parents explore who they are and learn how to deal with their own emotions and behaviours. The second stage assists parents to develop their parenting skills while helping them to develop healthy relationships with their children. Stage three is about providing support to parents after the conclusion of the group programme and helps them to practically implement the skills developed in stages one and two.
82. The ParentWorks programme has been identified by stakeholders as having a ‘good reputation’ which results in positive change for their clients. Parents are referred to the programme for a number of reasons: to provide an independent assessment of clients; to assist clients develop skills; to assist clients to gain a greater understanding or insight; and because the programme has been recommended.

83. The evidence gathered during this review offers a good overview of the effectiveness of the programme. Parents who have taken part in the programme overwhelmingly responded positively in feedback forms. All respondents indicated they had developed new skills and 93% were optimistic about the future after participating.
84. All referring agents who returned feedback forms indicated that their expectations of the programme were met and believed it had a positive impact on their clients. A significant majority of the representatives from referring agencies surveyed identified that ParentWise Reports were extremely useful and influenced decisions about clients' children.
85. CYF Practice Leaders identified a number of tangible changes in their clients as a result of the programme, including a willingness to work with people, a willingness to have a positive influence on their children, and a greater understanding as to why their children came into care. One Practice Leader said that they could use alternative programmes, but "there is nothing as structured or defined as ParentWorks and nothing where we see the progress of change over time."
86. An external expert who carried out an independent review of the ParentWorks programme indicated that it was working well, saying it caters for the full range of learning styles.
87. The ParentWorks programme is not only effective, it is vital for many of the parents who are referred to it. The wide consultation carried out for this review has shown there to be no equivalent programme that delivers the same high standard of quantitative and qualitative results. However, the review process has also identified a number of areas where improvements can be made. The Mission is committed to developing the programme through continued consultation and feedback from those involved to provide the best possible results for parents who take the course.
88. The international literature about interventions for parents who maltreat their children/or are at risk of maltreating them suggests that parent behaviour therapy groups are useful in the short term. Then treatment gains can be lost over time because the participants have difficulties in other aspects of their lives (eg D & A, mental health issues financial, difficulties with their children, etc).
89. ParentWorks has increased its effectiveness by adding components designed to address other spheres of the participants' lives alongside the group intervention – this includes the inclusion of Stage One of the programme and the home visitation component in stage 2 and 3 which enhance the integration of the learning.
90. Literature suggests that medium to long-term home visitation (up to two years) has been found to be effective in reducing the incidence of child abuse as measured by hospital admissions, emergency department visits and reports to child protective services. Evaluation findings also suggest that in some instances longer engagement with a client may be useful

91. The review process has assisted in gaining an understanding of where further development of the programme might be useful. This has allowed the Mission to review and update:
- > Assessment tools – new questionnaires have been added while less useful ones have been removed.
  - > Session content – attribution segments have been included and mindfulness exercises suggested as part of the managing anger session. A structured session on domestic violence has been developed including resources.
  - > Programme manual has been reviewed and the new material included.
  - > End of programme reports
92. These improvements bring the programme into line with the most up-to-date evidence on programmes of this type.