



# An evaluation of the piloting of the Share Plus programme

Parentline<sub>plus</sub>





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Widening opportunities through learning

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# Preface

In recent years, there has been a marked change in development approaches to improving conditions and outcomes for children and young people. Agencies working with children have realised that work with parents is an additional and crucial component in improving the well-being of children and young people. The government has recognised this through setting up initiatives which target parents in order to improve outcomes for children in need. Such initiatives include Connexions, On Track, Sure Start, EAZs, HAZs, and New Deal for Communities.

Parenting programmes are now becoming more widely available. The content and delivery of these programmes may vary, but a parenting programme is a 'complex process of raising awareness about parenting by means of participating in a series of group sessions whose overt purpose is to allow parents to find ways of improving their parenting, or to feel affirmed in the own parenting methods'<sup>1</sup>.

Share Plus is a set of parenting materials developed for use with parents in a variety of settings, either as a set course or as an additional focus in existing work with parents. This report outlines the evaluation of the piloting of the Share Plus programme.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, C (1996) *Developing parenting programmes*, London: National Children's Bureau

# 1 Background

## The organisations

**CEDC** (the Community Education Development Centre) works to widen opportunities for health improvement, education and community regeneration for those who have previously benefited least from such opportunities. CEDC works directly with health organisations, schools, local authorities, national government departments, adult education organisations, Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), youth services and voluntary organisations. CEDC aims to involve excluded groups in learning and improve their quality of life, using creative approaches in order to widen opportunities for learning.

CEDC has developed a number of programmes to widen opportunities for learning in the community. One example is 'Share', an initiative to involve parents in their children's learning, in order to improve children's educational attainment. Share began as a pilot project involving twenty schools in five local education authorities. It has now expanded into over 87 LEAs, with over 1,000 schools taking part.

**Parentline Plus** is a UK registered charity which offers support to anyone parenting a child. Parentline Plus runs a free phone helpline, develops innovative projects and provides a range of information and courses for parents. Parentline Plus courses have been developed both to address parenting in general, and to assist with handling specific kinds of behaviour. Current courses include *Parenting Teenagers*, *It's Not Fair*, *Parenting Matters* and *Being a Parent*.

## The development of Share Plus

CEDC and Parentline Plus have long recognised the need for parenting programmes, and have both developed materials for working with parents. However, many courses are developed as set, structured programmes, which may deter some parents from participating. CEDC developed the Share programme as an alternative, more flexible programme, focusing on children's learning and the curriculum. This was well received by parents and the versatility of the flexible format was applied to general parenting skills in the development of Share Plus.

A Technical Working Party, attended by representatives of both CEDC and Parentline Plus, advised the development of Share Plus. A Development Officer, located within CEDC, was appointed in September 2001 to oversee the development and piloting of the Share Plus programme. The materials were revised in the light of comments made by those taking part in the piloting, and the finalised materials were produced in September 2002.

## 2 The Share Plus programme

*Share Plus* is a set of materials to be used with parents and carers to enable them to support their children better. The programme is aimed at parents of children aged 4 to 12 years, but many of the activities are applicable to those outside this age group. The Family Policy Unit at the Home Office funded the Share Plus programme.

Positive parenting benefits parents, children and local communities, and may lead to long-term outcomes such as enabling families to tackle the causes of disadvantage. Share Plus aims to encourage parents to work out positive ways of parenting. It is intended for use with groups of parents in a variety of settings, such as set courses, playgroups or for coffee morning discussions.

The materials address issues of concern to many parents, such as bullying, family communication and learning for children and adults.

Each pack consists of the following:

- ***Facilitators' guide*** this contains notes and guidance for facilitators. For each topic there is an outline of its objectives, various activities to promote discussion, additional activities to include where appropriate, suggestions about key points to highlight, and links with other topics in the Share Plus programme, if relevant.
- ***Parents' book*** this consists of a set of loose-leaf handouts for parents to use in conjunction with discussion on a particular topic. The activities contain examples of real-life situations that parents face. Some activities are for completion in the group, while others may be given to parents as 'homework'.

### Additional resources

- ***The Family album*** (by Esther Freeman, Dorit Braun and Scott Sinclair, published by Parentline Plus and Birmingham DEC): this consists of a set of 32 colour photographs featuring a variety of family settings, which can be used to stimulate discussion about family life and associated issues. Facilitators are advised to purchase this as an additional tool.
- ***Parentline Plus – Useful organisations for parents***: this is a resource list of national organisations and agencies which provide support services to parents in a variety of situations.

### Content of the Share Plus programme

The Share Plus programme consists of five units of related topics, each of which contains a number of separate sessions designed to promote discussion. The five units are:

- Being a parent
- Play, learning and getting on at school
- Growing children
- Health, safety and welfare
- Support network.

A full list of the topics included in the Share Plus programme is provided in Appendix A.

### The pilot

CEDC and Parentline Plus used a pilot programme in order to test the Share Plus materials with groups of parents in some of most disadvantaged authorities in England. This is in line with CEDC's remit to offer opportunities for health improvement, education and community regeneration to those who have previously benefited least from such developments. The pilot also aimed to ensure that the materials were appropriate for and accessible to a wide range of parents with differing levels of literacy and different needs as parents.

The Share Plus materials used in the pilot were at a draft stage, and did not contain any pictures or illustrations. Pilot sites were informed that illustrations would be added to the final product.

### The aims of the pilot

The aims were 'to ensure that the Share Plus materials:

- address the issues that are of the greatest interest
- use language that is clear and easily understood
- are accessible for basic skills
- are accessible for speakers of other languages
- include cultural diversity
- empower parents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CEDC (2001) *Share Plus* (publicity material)

# 3 Evaluation method

The purpose of the pilot was to assess how well the Share Plus materials would work in practice. The most useful evaluation of such a pilot is one that focuses on the content of the materials and the delivery of these materials to parents. Such an approach examines whether the content and delivery of Share Plus are as effective as possible for the parents who use it, and identifies any areas where improvements can be made.

## Evaluation questions

The evaluation aimed to address the following key questions:

- To what extent are the Share Plus materials clear and accessible for parents?
- To what extent are the Share Plus materials useful, relevant and appropriate for parents?
- How could the content and delivery of Share Plus be improved?
- How useful was the training provided to the facilitators, and how clear are the materials to work with?

## Data collection

The evaluation employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. We elicited the views of all the key stakeholders involved in order to understand their experiences of Share Plus. This included facilitators, parents and the Share Plus Development Officer.

The evaluation gathered data from parents and facilitators at nine pilot sites. More in-depth information was collected from a sample of four pilot sites, chosen to be as representative as possible of the total number of pilots.

The evaluation collected data through the following methods:

- a pro-forma completed by the facilitator of each group, with background demographic information on 69 parents participating in groups
- a feedback form completed by 49 parents at the final session of the Share Plus group<sup>3</sup>

- interviews with 11 facilitators (a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews as appropriate)
- focus groups or individual interviews with a total of 20 parents at four pilot sites
- an interview with the Share Plus Development Officer.

The pro-forma, focus group topic guide and interview schedule are provided as appendices.

The evaluation was carried out from April to September 2002. The collection of evaluation data followed a rolling programme of activities, reflecting the gradual roll-out of the pilot projects. Pilot sites were included in the evaluation wherever this was possible, depending on the time period within which groups were operating and the collaboration of facilitators.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately facilitators of two of the groups in the evaluation did not distribute this during the final session. Feedback forms were therefore received from parents in seven groups.

## 4 The pilot sites

In total, 21 groups were established and began to meet using the Share Plus materials.

Nine of these groups participated in the evaluation and are the basis for this report. The following provides a brief description of these groups.

### Group A – Luton

Members of the group were parents of children attending the nursery school where the facilitator is a Special Needs Teacher. Three of the parents had children with special needs, including Down's Syndrome, physical disability, partial sight and hearing, and developmental delay. Four of the nine women attending were from ethnic minority groups.

### Group B – Luton

This was a school-based group of nine women, four of whom had children with special needs. The group was recruited and co-ordinated by an agency working to improve training provision and support for local families with children under 5 years old. Workers were known in the school, put up notices and talked to parents they were already working with. Two facilitators jointly ran the sessions.

### Group C – Hertfordshire

This was an established group of six white women with children with special needs. The group was facilitated by a health visitor on a very flexible basis, and in conjunction with other health-related materials. The children's special needs included autism, Down's Syndrome, cerebral palsy, developmental delay and asthma.

### Group D – Hertfordshire

This was the largest group, attended by 12 women. It was jointly facilitated, and ran for 12 sessions. Some group members had special needs, including mental health problems, experience of domestic violence, and speaking English as a second language. The women had already attended another parenting course together.

### Group E – Coventry

The ten parents in this group, including one father, were recruited through word of mouth and

poster advertising in various community groups, and through health visitors and social services. Membership fluctuated, but a core three or four parents attended until the facilitators brought the course to an early close after 11 sessions. The children of four group members were living in care, while two parents were referred by social services. Two facilitators jointly ran each session.

### Group F – Kirklees

This was a small group of four women who were being supported by the agency concerned and were encouraged to attend the group. All the women had experienced social services intervention at some time. The agency provides support and courses to people with a range of problems, including domestic violence, child abuse and substance misuse. One parent was illiterate and had children in care. Two workers jointly facilitated the programme.

### Group G – Plaistow and West Ham

This school-based course was run with an existing group which had already been involved in an adult learning initiative relating to IT. The group consisted of five black and two white women and continued for ten sessions.

### Group H – Brent

This was an intensive, structured course, which was conducted over four weekly sessions of five hours each. Parents were recruited through a primary school, under the umbrella of a local-based initiative to reduce and prevent criminal behaviour. The small group was ethnically diverse, with one white, one black and two Asian women.

### Group I – Birkenhead

This was an existing group of nine women who had previously attended parenting workshops run by the organisation concerned. The group was asked to pilot the programme, and membership was opened up through school-based advertising. The two additional members who joined as a result of this did not continue to attend after the first session.

## Other groups not included in the evaluation

Unfortunately there were a number of groups using Share Plus which could not be included in the evaluation. Most of these sites either ended prior to the evaluation period or closed earlier than anticipated and without warning, usually due to a lack of attendance by parents. On occasion, pressure of work experienced by co-ordinators and facilitators meant that a group was not able to be included. A summary of groups which used the Share Plus programme but were not able to take part in the evaluation is provided below.

## Groups successfully established but not maintained as planned

Hertfordshire	Evening session time was not convenient for parents, so the group ended after six sessions.
Hertfordshire	Drop-in with speech therapists, not tenable due to lack of interest. Ran for four sessions only.
Luton	Primary school-based group fizzled out after a few sessions due to illness of children and religious holidays.
Luton	A trial group to see if the materials could be used in other languages – translation proved problematic and the group met for two sessions only.

## Groups which were successfully established and maintained

Walsall	Struggled to engage parents but ran for seven sessions.
Hertfordshire	Used briefly and intermittently with a young mothers' group.
Hertfordshire	Used on group and individual levels within two hostels, as appropriate and in an unstructured way.
Hertfordshire	Used intermittently as appropriate within work with a post-natal group.
Kirklees	Junior and infant school based group, in an area with high levels of unemployment and single parenthood. Ran for six sessions with fourteen women.
Luton	Primary school based group, which ran successfully for approximately ten sessions and continued as a support group without a facilitator.
Luton	Infant school based group facilitated by a school nurse for ten weeks. The group hoped to carry on as a support group without a facilitator.
Luton	Infant school based group with ten Asian women, facilitated by a school nurse for approximately twelve sessions.

## Groups which were not successfully established

In addition, a number of pilot sites hoped to run parents' groups using the Share Plus materials, but were not able to do so for a variety of reasons. Three groups struggled to recruit parents, while two groups with existing groups of parents were not able to find suitable venues. These groups hope to function in future.

Brent	There were problems with recruiting Asian women (the target group for the organisation).
Luton	No facilities were available, but the programme will run at a later date.
Nottingham	There was no interest from parents. Another organisation was already running parenting programmes in local schools.
Rotherham	This group struggled to recruit parents, despite lots of advertising and effort.
Tower Hamlets	It was hoped to run Share Plus with an established group of parents, but this was not possible due to the lack of a suitable venue.

# 5 Participants

CEDC aimed to pilot the Share Plus program within the 50 most disadvantaged local authorities in England.<sup>4</sup>

Out of the total 21 groups which took part in the pilot, seven were based within the 50 most disadvantaged authorities in England. 14 groups were run in Hertfordshire and Luton, which are comparatively less deprived, yet have pockets of deprivation, or a high proportion of ethnic minority populations. Four of these groups are included in the evaluation.

Both the facilitators and the Share Plus Development Officer agreed that there was a need for improved parenting skills in these areas, particularly as they do not receive other targeted funds. Prior contact between the agencies and CEDC and Parentline Plus enabled these sites to learn about Share Plus and express an interest in taking part in the pilot.

## Parents

A total of 69 parents regularly attended the nine Share Plus groups included in the evaluation and pilot. The groups varied in size, with the smallest continuing with four participants, while the largest had a membership of 12. As one would expect, attendance varied from time to time, but generally the 69 participants were fairly consistent members who attended most sessions of the groups. There were a few additional parents who did not continue attending past the first few sessions.

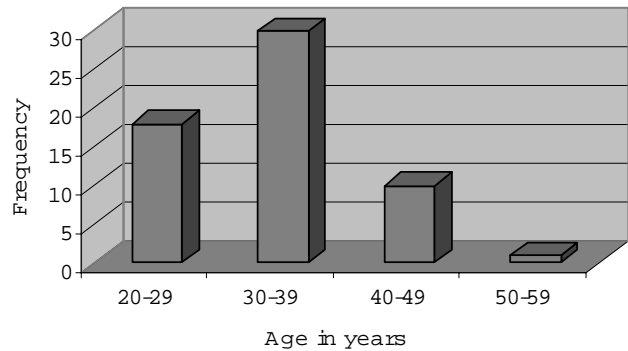
All but one of the participants were women. One father attended a group with his partner. Several facilitators expressed a wish to recruit men to the groups, but no specific strategies were developed to achieve this.

The parents involved in the groups came from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. The vast majority were primarily responsible for the care of at least one child, and included parents whose children were currently in care, several parents who also helped to care for grandchildren, a potential foster carer and a childcare worker. Most were in their twenties or thirties<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2000) *Indices of local deprivation*

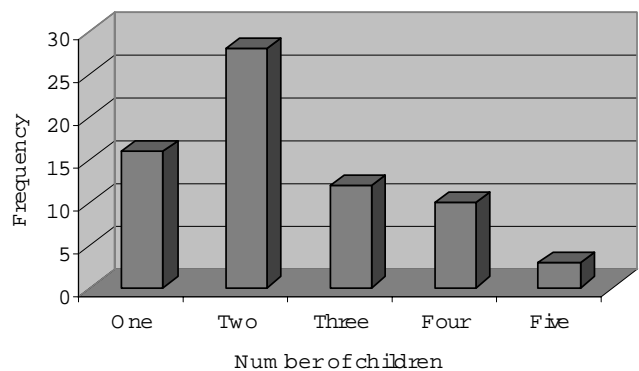
<sup>5</sup> Information about the ages of ten of the parents was not available.

Chart 1: Age of participants



Participants came from a diverse range of ethnic identities. The majority were white (74%), and the remainder were Indian, Pakistani, Asian, Black, Afro British, Caribbean, Jewish, Jamaican and Spanish. Nearly a quarter were lone parents, and several had special needs, including speaking English as a second language, literacy problems and mental health issues. The majority cared for two or more children.

Chart 2: Number of children



## Children

The parents participating in the Share Plus groups cared for a total of 160 children. In addition, two women also helped to care for the children of their teenage children. The children were aged from four months to the early twenties, and two women were expecting another child at the time of the evaluation.

Sixteen children had special needs, including Down's Syndrome, autism, physical disability, ADHD, behavioural difficulties, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and developmental delay. Eleven children were living in care at the time of the groups.

## Facilitators

Four groups were jointly facilitated, while five were run by a single facilitator. Interviews were conducted with 11 of the 14 facilitators involved in the evaluation. In the two cases where both facilitators of a group were interviewed, this was to explore the impact of differences in background and experience.

Facilitators worked in a variety of roles and agencies. Most had worked extensively with parents, although often on an individual basis, or through facilitating groups on issues not related to parenting. Facilitators came from a wide range of backgrounds; their current roles were:

- health visitor
- facilitator at parenting/family organisations
- administrator at a parenting organisation
- manager of early years provision initiative
- chair of governors at a primary school
- mentor for people of mixed race
- special needs teacher
- childcare services manager.

Six facilitators had significant experience of facilitation and had undertaken intensive facilitation training in the past. The remaining four had no facilitation experience, although one had been a trainer in a group setting.

Many were familiar with other parenting materials, either through extensive use, or while seeking a programme to work with prior to becoming involved in Share Plus. The materials used in the past were:

- Parent Network, Parent Link, Parentline Plus

- Share
- Webster Stratton
- Family Care Trust
- National Children's Homes
- Family Wise
- NSPCC set course
- Parenting Adolescents.

Those with experience of other parenting programmes agreed that most were set courses and not flexible enough to accommodate the different needs of parents. Facilitators explained that the main differences between these programmes and Share Plus is the level of flexibility and the discussion-based approach. Often facilitators chose to become involved in the Share Plus pilot because they were looking for a programme which was less formally structured and able to be adjusted to parents' specific needs, and Share Plus promised to do this. The opportunity for parents to be involved in choosing topics and the ability to change focus as the sessions continued were seen to be the main attractions of the Share Plus programme.

# 6 Training

The Share Plus Development Officer was appointed in September 2001 to identify sites and to train facilitators to participate in the pilot of the Share Plus programme. The recruitment of the Development Officer had taken longer than anticipated, resulting in a loss of approximately six months from the project's timescale by the time the appointment was made. The post was initially advertised as two job-share posts, and re-advertised as a full-time vacancy after a poor level of interest.

Prior to the appointment of the Share Plus Development Officer, CEDC had made some initial enquiries with established contacts to investigate interest in participating in the pilot programme. These were often agencies which had used other resources developed by CEDC, such as Share. There were few resulting expressions of interest, and some of these were subsequently found to be unsuitable as they were outside the brief set by the Home Office. For instance, some proposed groups were not situated in England, and others were located in affluent areas, rather than within the 50 most deprived local authorities in England. However, these responses illustrate widespread interest in the development of the Share Plus programme and will of course be useful for marketing purposes at a later date.

On appointment, the Share Plus Development Officer followed up these initial contacts and also contacted agencies with which she had established relations through a previous role. This generated further positive responses to the programme and provided a base on which to deliver training.

Agencies that expressed an interest in the programme were asked to identify individuals who would be willing to facilitate Share Plus groups within the piloting timeframe, and who would be able to attend training on facilitating the programme. Agency co-ordinators identified participants. The Development Officer discussed participants' backgrounds and experience with the co-ordinators in order to gauge the level of training required. No additional system was put into place to identify individuals' training needs.

As a result of the lengthy recruitment process, a very short period of time remained for the newly

appointed Development Officer to achieve the tasks necessary for the pilot stage to begin. This included finalising the materials, identifying potential participants, marketing the programme to them and planning and delivering training to potential facilitators. The Development Officer delivered the first training session in November 2001.

Evaluation of the sessions was not initially built into the training. However, the Development Officer designed a feedback form which she introduced in later training sessions, and made some alterations to her training delivery in the light of participants' comments.

The Share Plus Development Officer provided training sessions to 12 groups of potential facilitators from a variety of agencies<sup>6</sup>. A total of 93 people attended these training seminars. Not all of those who attended training attempted to establish a pilot group.

Of the nine groups in the evaluation, all but one were facilitated by someone who had attended a Share Plus training session. In some cases, groups were jointly facilitated by a worker who had not attended, but had been updated by the colleague.

In the remaining case, the facilitator had not been offered any training and was surprised to hear from the evaluator that any training had been provided. It became apparent that, in this one isolated case, a vacancy within the co-ordinating agency had resulted in a breakdown of communication and management.

Recommendations for training had not been passed on, and the facilitator not been offered any training or support. The Share Plus Development Officer had not been informed that this group had been established until the evaluator identified it, and so had been unable to remedy the situation.

## Participants in the training

Those attending the training came from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. There was much variation in both the level of experience of facilitation and the level of experience in working with parents on parenting issues, whether in

<sup>6</sup>Training was carried out in the following areas: Walsall, Nottinghamshire, Luton, Brent, Tower Hamlets, Wirral, Croydon, Hertfordshire, Rotherham, Coventry, Kirklees and West Ham.

groups or individually. Some had extensive experience of facilitation on parenting issues and in other areas, and had attended intensive facilitation training in the past.

Some of those attending training had never facilitated a group before, and/or had never worked with parents. A few had teaching backgrounds, while others were parents themselves and wished to become more involved in the school community.

## The content of training

Training sessions were typically held over one day, lasting approximately five hours. They were designed to include small group discussions and practical sessions using the Share Plus materials. The training was delivered using the Share Plus Approved Trainer Training manual, written by the Development Officer. The focus of training was the Share Plus programme, outlining the aims and objectives of the programme, how to recruit parents to take part in a pilot group, and how to use the material. There was a small amount of discussion about general facilitation skills.

Some topics in the training manual were not included in every session. This varied according to the needs of those participating and the length of time allocated to the session. The Development Officer identified the needs and experience of participants through discussion with the co-ordinator who had invited the participants to attend. While the focus varied according to the perception of what was required by each training group, the following subjects were covered in every training session:

- the aims of Share Plus
- recognising the agenda of parents
- establishing ground rules
- confidentiality and its limits, and child protection
- dealing with disclosures – for example, about domestic violence
- the role of the facilitator
- equal opportunities and the inclusion of socially excluded groups
- work materials/content
- materials needed
- session practice
- the first session

- monitoring and evaluation.

Each training participant received a copy of the *Share Plus facilitators' handbook: guidance notes for facilitators*, which outlined various approaches and issues to keep in mind when working with parents' groups.

## The delivery of training

Most facilitators agreed that the material covered was useful, and that it was clear and well delivered. In particular, the emphasis placed on how to discuss confidentiality and set up ground rules was very useful in practice, and enabled facilitators to improve their facilitation of the groups they subsequently ran. The amount of time devoted to some related topics was seen as less useful by a small number. Funding, venues and the recruitment of parents, for instance, were not always relevant topics for those with allocated funding and established groups. Others, however, found these very useful when they came to put the ideas into practice.

Facilitators agreed that the training was extremely rushed and could have been more extensive. One facilitator labelled the training session a 'meeting' rather than training. Another said: 'I wouldn't say it was training that I had.' In one case, 25 people attended a single training session, which contributed to the pressure on time. Given the short time-frame, however, most agreed that the Development Officer covered the most important issues. Ideally however, most facilitators thought that the training sessions should be of more depth and of longer duration, and that they should allow more familiarity with the material and aim to improve participants' general facilitation skills. Some more experienced facilitators believed that this would be particularly important for those who had little or no experience of facilitation, or who had not previously facilitated parenting groups. These experienced facilitators believed that more training should be made available to those who needed it, particularly relating to general facilitation skills, but also in order to enable facilitators to become familiar with the Share Plus materials and the kinds of issues that are likely to arise in any parenting group:

*'It is quite intimidating when you start running a group and you are supposed to know what you are talking about, so, if you had never done it, I would imagine it would be terrifying.'* (Huddersfield)

*'If I had gone in cold [without previous experience with parenting facilitation] I would not have had the confidence to start a group on that amount of training.'* (Luton)

However, it is interesting to note that the two least experienced facilitators within the evaluation did not feel that they required any further training. One of these had neither heard of nor received the training, but had relied on the *Facilitators' guide* to help plan her sessions. She felt that running the course was a matter of 'common sense' and that there was no need for training. The other facilitator with little experience felt that the training was brief through necessity, and that there was little to be gained by more in-depth Share Plus training, as this was something that needed to be learnt through practice. Another facilitator with no experience of groupwork found the training very helpful, but believed that further training would be of benefit in future.

Facilitators indicated they would like to have had more training in the following areas:

- preparation
- key points to get across
- the content of each section, how it could be used and how it could be adapted to suit the parents' group
- other people's perspectives on each section
- the specific needs of a parents' group as opposed to other adult groups
- more in-depth training on universal issues to do with parenting – for example, communication
- more on handling group dynamics and emotional issues.

Facilitators at several sites have now requested further training, before they establish any more groups with which to use the Share Plus programme. This had been anticipated in planning the programme. The Development Officer is soon to provide a two-day intensive facilitation training session. This will be attended by some of those who took part in the previous training, and others who may in future facilitate a Share Plus group.

## Other forms of support

Facilitators indicated that, if training was improved, there would be no need for any further

support from the Development Officer. Facilitators generally had their own support network or line of referral established for child protection issues and for general support. This source of support was often either the co-facilitator, if relevant, or a manager or colleague within their organisation. This was more frequently the case in established organisations, but even those with little facilitation experience, and those who worked fairly autonomously, felt that only a minimal level of support was required once parents' groups were established.

# 7 The recruitment of parents

The groups taking part in the pilot evaluation varied in the methods they used for recruiting parents and the types of groups they developed.

## Recruitment methods

The recruitment of parents to a Share Plus pilot group usually took place within the contact that facilitators had with parents in the course of their usual activities, and facilitators used multiple methods to publicise the programme. Most common was the use of school facilities to contact parents. Six groups were established by agencies whose remit usually requires them to support and work within their local nursery or primary schools. The methods used at these sites varied from talking to parents in the school playground, telephoning or sending flyers to parents identified from the school database, advertising in the school newsletter, putting up posters in the school grounds, and inviting members of an established group or course at the school.

Other agencies which did not work so closely with local schools advertised with posters at their own venues or those of associated agencies, and talked to parents with whom they were already working in some capacity.

In two cases, parents in existing parenting groups agreed to take part in the pilot and the course was also advertised to a wider community. This generated little additional interest. In one of these groups, neither of the two people who responded continued to attend the group after the initial sessions. The facilitator felt that the group had already formed a clique which excluded others and prevented them from feeling comfortable, which was especially problematic in a programme with discussion-based methods of facilitation and learning.

Facilitators reported that generally the recruitment of parents was fairly successful, though a lot of effort was required to recruit a relatively small number of participants. Talking to parents face-to-face worked well both for those who spoke to parents already known to them and for those who approached unknown parents. The approach of Share Plus enabled facilitators to market the programme as a less formal method of learning about parenting than the more usual

structured groups, as a discussion group rather than a set course on specific pre-chosen issues and as a way for them to become better parents. Cold calling, on the other hand, did not generate any interest.

All groups provided crèche facilities where necessary, although on occasion children were temporarily brought into the group setting, usually when they would not settle in the crèche or where parents were reluctant to leave them. All groups provided refreshments, usually at the beginning of each session, as parents arrived.

The timing of the sessions had an impact on parents' attendance. One group which was set up to meet during the daytime found a greater number of parents would have liked to attend if the course had been available during the evening. This may be due to the high proportion of working parents in this area. However, this will always be dependent on local needs. Another group which was not able to maintain attendance beyond four weeks attributed this to the evening time-slot, which was not thought convenient by most parents in the group.

# 8 The content of Share Plus

The level of flexibility in the material and the opportunity for parents to be involved in choosing topics relevant to their needs and the needs of their children attracted many of the facilitators to Share Plus. In practice, the choice of topics to be included was approached in various ways.

Most groups offered parents the menu of topics available in Share Plus and discussed which would be most useful. Others began by asking parents what they thought their needs were, and then selected topics thought to be appropriate. One group allowed parents choice in half the sessions, having already determined for the remainder which topics were most suitable for the needs of the local community. In two cases, facilitators did not offer parents a choice. The facilitator of one of these groups explained that limited time meant she was not able to involve parents in choosing topics, but knew the group and their needs so well that she was able to select the most appropriate topics. In future she hopes to have enough planning time to involve parents in choosing the subjects covered.

Most parents (86%) confirmed that they had a say in which topics were covered in the sessions and that the materials covered topics they were interested in (89%). The vast majority (91%) agreed that the topics were relevant to their families and 86% said they were able to use the materials at home.

Parents were asked what they had hoped to gain from Share Plus. Of the 47 parents who responded, most had wanted advice and guidance on specific areas of parenting. These included communication, sleeping problems, managing children's behaviour, finding enjoyable and educational activities for children to do, help with children's fighting, and generally better ways of parenting:

*'To feel happier in myself and find ways of dealing with the children without losing my temper too much.'*

*'To learn to deal with my children in a more positive way.'*

12 parents identified topics which they would have liked to discuss which were not covered in their groups. These included:

- information on teenagers and older children

- teenage drugs and sex
- children with disabilities or ill health
- step-families
- practical ideas on how to deal with problem behaviour at school.

Facilitators regarded the topics as very relevant to the needs of parents and often reported that enabling parents to choose topics resulted in relevant issues being discussed:

*'This is the best course on parenting around because you can pick the topics.'*

One facilitator also felt that the range of topics and the tone of the material were less judgmental than those of other parenting materials and that this allowed parents to become more involved in the sessions:

*'I think you can attract more parents to a course that is just about being a parent rather than about challenging difficult behaviour or when things are going wrong. That's the strength of Share Plus.'*

## The Share Plus materials

In general, both parents and facilitators felt that the Share Plus programme was very useful and clear, and covered a good range of relevant topics. Groups varied in their use of topics, the duration of sessions and the group's needs, and facilitators varied in their facilitation experience and knowledge of parenting issues.

## The *Facilitators' guide*

Facilitators reported that the *Facilitators' guide* was a valuable aid for preparation. Most found it relatively easy to plan each session, though some said that it was sometimes difficult to find the time necessary. They estimated that each session required an hour's preparation time and suggested that this should be emphasised in both the guide and in training:

*'You can't just pick it up and go.'*

They suggested that the preparation time would decrease once they were more familiar with the materials. Two facilitators also thought the guide should clearly flag situations where parents needed to have completed preparation or another topic before a particular session.

The *Facilitators' guide* was considered to be clear and user-friendly. In particular, the stated objectives of each session helped facilitators to remain focused on what they were hoping to achieve in each session. Most facilitators felt that the guide gave good direction and helped to steer them towards relevant areas and discussions, yet still allowed flexibility over which activities to focus on:

*'Lovely to have the outline to work to, although the biggest talent as a facilitator is being able to change track if you need to. This is like jumping off a cliff with a safety net.'*

Facilitators sometimes used the guide as a base for preparation, but brought in other material and previous experience with parents' groups to plan a session which would best meet the needs of their groups. On occasion, some used excerpts from other parenting materials, and resources such as games and activities which fitted well with the topics under discussion. Facilitators suggested that a resource list of such materials would be an extremely useful addition to Share Plus. Some would like to see more direction in the guide, especially relating to the context or theory of complex topics. As with training, facilitators with extensive experience of other parenting programmes expressed some concern that the guide was not comprehensive enough for those with little experience. One facilitator spoke of helping her co-facilitator to plan the group sessions:

*'She was saying that, if she hadn't been doing it with me, it would have been quite difficult, because she's not an experienced facilitator.'*

In addition, one facilitator felt that too much flexibility allows facilitators, especially those with little experience, to plan courses which do not address important issues. While some flexibility was seen to be advantageous, this facilitator felt that there are core issues which should be included in any parenting course curriculum:

*'It is almost falling over backwards not to be restrictive – in danger of being woolly and unclear.'*

However, others felt that the flexibility in planning and working with Share Plus was one of its major attractions:

*'Share Plus suits me. I think it allows me to work at my best and allows me to facilitate at my best, which I don't think the other parenting courses that I have used do.'*

## The *Parents' book*

Most facilitators thought the *Parents' book* was a positive tool, as it gave parents something concrete to take away and use as a reference in the future. One facilitator reported that in the past she would have been cautious about using handouts, but that the *Parents' book* was very clear and the parents in her group loved it. Some facilitators would read the relevant sections of the *Parents' book* during the sessions and found they stimulated discussion.

However, facilitators were concerned that some of the material was too wordy and complicated for parents to understand easily. This was primarily because there were no pictures or illustrations in the draft materials being used in the pilot. Facilitators felt that the inclusion of appropriate illustrations would make the materials easier to understand, particularly for those with poor literacy skills or English as a second language. In addition, they suspected that pictures would help to illustrate some of the more difficult concepts in the materials – for example, those relating to different kinds of play.

Some facilitators did not provide parents with handouts from the *Parents' book* because of such concerns about clarity:

*'It's aimed at very middle-class parents and we always end up having to adapt things ... we would not actually give that to a parent because our parents wouldn't have understood it.'*

(Huddersfield Group F)

Facilitators acknowledged the inherent problems in using written materials with those with poor literacy or English as a second language, but felt that, if materials are simple enough, they can play a useful role. In order to ensure that parents understood the written materials, most facilitators tended to run through this verbally where time permitted, while others provided extra assistance to those with literacy difficulties.

Fortunately, parents themselves did not find the book problematic. Parents indicated that they found the written materials easy to understand: 60% strongly agreed and 33% agreed with this statement. One parent said that the facilitator had helped her to understand the written materials, while a small number said that pictures would make the handouts clearer. Overall, parents were happy to be given the handouts, even if they did not anticipate using them immediately:

*'They were a memory jogger if you wanted one, so it didn't need to be more detailed. I wouldn't want to read lots of stuff. It's more discussion based.'*

Three groups were regularly set homework based on either the activities in the *Parents' book*, or on general discussion with their families. Completion of homework activities varied within groups, usually because of parents' limited time, but sometimes because the activities themselves were demanding within families. For example, one parent found some activities difficult to complete with her children:

*'Personally I found some of the issues – talking about the past or whatever – I find it quite difficult, because my child asked rude questions, and wanted to know more and I am saying no, no, no.'*

87% of parents said that they were able to use the materials at home. One parent had used an activity with friends and work colleagues and reported back to the group the positive impact the activity had on them. Facilitators reported that parents had completed activities with their families, and found these successful. Sometimes these generated further discussion, or enabled parents to change some practices and behaviour with their children, such as monitoring television viewing. Other parents hoped to use the materials in future:

*'Materials were brief, to the point and useful. Feel some of it can be useful for me to use with my family in the future, others maybe not.'*

## **The Family album**

Four Share Plus groups used the *Family album*, on one or two occasions only. Both parents and facilitators found the photographs useful for generating ideas and discussion. This was particularly the case when discussing cultural diversity and how families differ. Those who did not use the album explained that it was difficult to build it into the sessions because of a lack of understanding about where it would be useful. They suggested that the *Facilitators' guide* should indicate appropriate topics and activities for its use.

# 9 The delivery of Share Plus

Nearly all parents (96%) said they would recommend Share Plus to a friend. Most found it enjoyable: 89% reported that the sessions were very enjoyable, with a further 9% saying it was 'a bit enjoyable'. In particular, parents were very pleased to be given the opportunity to share ideas with other parents and to meet people in similar situations:

*'Nice to be in a group everybody trusted you ... right from the start everybody knew it was confidential and that was really important because you felt like you could talk about things.'*

*'It was nice to be able to have a laugh as well while we were doing it. The fact that we could laugh at each other and ourselves without someone taking offence.'*

Parents were also generally very positive about their facilitator's approach. The vast majority (98%) agreed that the facilitator made them feel welcome, encouraged them to join in discussions and made things easy for them to understand.

Many parents suggested that the facilitators' own experiences as a parent were invaluable. Some said the group would not have functioned well if the facilitator had not been a parent, or had not shared his or her experiences as a parent with them. It was important to the parents that the facilitator was not judgmental or condescending:

*'It worked really well and that was mainly due to [facilitator]. She was really down to earth. She would discuss things about herself, talk about her own experience, which helped the group to understand it's OK, everyone has problems. Made it relaxed. She would relate things to herself first, then get us to open up.'*

One group expressed some criticisms about their facilitator, saying that she did not enable parents to contribute to the discussion as much as they would have liked and that she sometimes appeared to set written tasks so that she could take a break. This facilitator had not received Share Plus training and had no previous facilitation experience.

# 10 The benefits for parents

Facilitators' initial aims in using Share Plus were to enable parents to share their concerns, learn from each other, and increase in confidence, both generally and in their parenting skills:

*'A lot of these parents have been ground down so much, so to promote parenting you need to get their confidence and self-esteem up first and foremost.'*

Facilitators reported that the groups worked well in practice, that parents were able to share and disclose their experiences, and that they developed into cohesive and supportive groups. Focusing on confidentiality in the first session, as strongly recommended in the *Facilitators' guide* and in training, was particularly successful with parents and facilitators alike, and provided a strong basis for open discussion.

Facilitators reported many positive changes in the parents' groups since the start of the sessions. In all groups, facilitators reported that parents' confidence had increased a great deal:

*'They have come out of their shells and started to open up and talk about things.'*

*'By the end of the four weeks they were so much stronger.'*

*'You can see the actual worry lift and the satisfaction of being able to help their other group members.'*

The needs of the parents in the groups varied widely. As discussed, there were a number of parents with English as a second language and with poor literacy skills. Parents came from a wide range of ethnic groups, and cared for children aged from a few months to early twenties, some of whom had special needs.

Facilitators felt that the flexibility of Share Plus meant that it could be used to meet the needs of a variety of groups. This was made possible by the ability to select suitable topics, and by the discussion-based approach. This conversational method worked particularly well for those with low levels of literacy, those speaking English as a second language and those lacking in confidence in a training setting, who might otherwise be excluded. As discussed, nevertheless some difficulties did arise for parents with language or literacy issues, who required additional support or resources from the facilitator when using written materials or learning complex concepts.

Parents of children with special needs reported

that the groups were helpful, even if special needs were not a focus for discussion. Universal parenting issues were relevant for their children, and the ability to raise concerns for discussion with other parents was beneficial.

Parents reported that they had taken part in Share Plus in order to learn more about parenting and to share experiences with others in similar situations. Parents wanted to:

*'learn ways to control my children and to see if I was the only person with problems.'*

*'know if someone was worse off than me.'*

The Share Plus groups enabled them to do this. Many parents identified the best thing about Share Plus was being in a supportive group:

*'Being able to talk about your own situations with your children and getting feedback from others.'*

*'Getting to know others and finding out you are not on your own.'*

*'It was very useful and it was nice to share your problems with other people and to feel like you are not on your own and like you have all been through the same type of things.'*

Throughout the sessions, parents reported to facilitators that the groupwork had had a positive impact on their relationships with their children, and sometimes with other family members. Most parents reported that attending the groups was very useful (74%) with a further 19% saying this was a bit useful.

Communication skills were often the key aspect of the programme that parents implemented at home, especially in actively listening to their children and talking more with them:

*'I have tried to become more patient with my eldest daughter ... It's just through talking about other people's experiences and what they do and you relate back to what's happened with you and your child. It's so difficult in the heat of the moment but if anything it's opened your eyes and you try to work through that with other people's experiences.'*

*'He suddenly decided that he didn't want to go to nursery any more and he was hanging around my legs ... we sat down and had a talk, but before I had thought you don't talk to 3 year olds, and we had a discussion and the next morning he went to nursery with a smile on his face and I thought, Jesus, that was easy.'*

*'They tend to talk more. So instead of just shouting at him I ask him why he is doing it and he will tell me even if its just "I don't know" – it's more than I used to get out of him.'*

*'They are not going to get a smack. You can discuss it or do something else – just let them know that they can speak to you without worrying about what is going to happen.'*

*'I have more of a laugh with them now. You understand them better.'*

Parents also made a number of other changes in their families, such as modifying their children's diet, monitoring their television viewing, taking time out for themselves and trying to be more positive with their children and their partners.

Nearly all parents were very positive about what they had gained from attending Share Plus. The exception was the group mentioned above, whose facilitator had no previous experience and had not received training, and as a result had not enabled parents to join in to the degree they would have liked. This group enjoyed the sessions, but did not feel they had learnt any useful parenting skills.

Parents and facilitators agreed that the success of a group is dependent on the quality of the facilitation. As one facilitator said: *'If it doesn't work, it won't be the fault of the material.'*

A significant number of parents would have liked to attend more Share Plus sessions. 39% of respondents to the questionnaire said that the number of sessions was too few. Those who met for a total of more than 21 hours were more likely to feel that the number of sessions were satisfactory.

## **Future plans**

Nearly two-thirds (60%) of parents indicated that they intend to seek more parenting support in the future. In addition, 45% said they plan to start another course, and 35% plan to join another type of group.

Facilitators in six groups in the evaluation are planning to use Share Plus again with other groups in the near future.

# 11 Conclusions

The evaluation questions set out at the beginning of this report are addressed in order to assess whether the pilot met its aims and objectives.

## ***To what extent are the Share Plus materials clear and accessible for parents?***

The Share Plus materials appear to be clear and comprehensible for parents from a wide range of ethnic groups, and with differing literacy skills. Parents reported that they found the materials easy to understand. In a few sections of the programme, the language used was thought to be too professional for the parents' group: this has already been addressed in the revision of materials prior to publication.

Parents with poor literacy skills and those who speak English as a second language required additional assistance from facilitators in order to understand the materials fully. Written materials are inherently difficult to use for this group, and part of the facilitator's role is to help parents to understand them.

Parents with basic skills may be reluctant to use written handouts. Facilitators in the pilot groups tended to read through the written material with the group rather than simply distributing the handouts. This and any resulting group discussion seems to have helped those with basic literacy skills to understand the materials. In addition, both parents and facilitators believe that the addition of illustrations, if appropriate and stimulating, will help to make the materials much clearer, particularly for more complex concepts.

Traditional parenting programmes are delivered as structured courses, with a set of topics which must be worked through consecutively to meet established aims and objectives. Share Plus offers a far more flexible approach, based on discussion and conversation within groups. This method may attract parents who would otherwise be prevented from participating, perhaps because of lack of confidence or basic literacy skills.

A total of 69 parents took part in the groups evaluated here. Groups were established within a range of agencies, including primary schools, infant and nursery schools, health agencies, church groups, parenting organisations and family centres. In addition, outside of this evaluation, a number of groups used Share Plus

on an *ad hoc* basis – for example in a hostel, at a post-natal group and at speech therapy sessions. These groups were not evaluated. However, they do indicate the versatility of the programme.

A number of other groups were not successfully established or maintained. As these groups could not be included in the evaluation, it is difficult to speculate on the causes. It is interesting to note, however, that one of these groups was formed to test whether Share Plus could be used for those with no English. This proved extremely difficult, as written materials were not usable and translation was problematic.

Access to Share Plus groups for parents who may benefit most is an issue which should be addressed by agencies using Share Plus in the future.

## ***To what extent are the Share Plus materials useful, relevant and appropriate for parents?***

Share Plus covers a broad range of topics which are relevant to parents from a variety of backgrounds and who care for children with differing needs.

While Share Plus is aimed at parents of children aged 4 to 12 years, in practice the materials were relevant to parents of children of a much wider age range. Parents reported that the materials are relevant to parents of children of any age, although a few wished that additional topics had been included, particularly on parenting teenagers. Parents of children with special needs found the materials relevant to their children. The groups were attended by parents from a variety of ethnic groups. The materials were felt to be appropriate for these groups and the *Family album* was useful for discussions on cultural diversity.

Parents and facilitators felt that involving parents in choosing the topics to be discussed was highly advantageous, as it ensured that the topics were relevant to their needs and helped to give parents a sense of involvement and ownership. The flexibility of the delivery was also important, as groups could change topic or direction when required and topics could be discussed as they arose in parents' lives.

The quality of facilitation is the key to the extent that parents benefit from Share Plus. Parents suggested that facilitators who encouraged them to participate, who related their own parenting

experiences and who were non-judgmental greatly helped them to contribute and to learn from others. The overall values of Share Plus were seen as important, since these encourage parents to work in a positive way with their children, but are not judgmental about their existing parenting skills. This contributes to building parents' confidence in themselves and in their parenting skills.

The vast majority of parents found Share Plus useful, and reported a range of changed behaviour with their children and families. Facilitators described significant increases in parents' confidence. Some parents wanted more sessions with Share Plus and the majority indicated that they wish to have access to more parenting support in the future.

### ***How could the content and delivery of Share Plus be improved?***

The pilot groups found the content of Share Plus to be relatively clear, relevant and appropriate. The few changes outlined below would create a parenting package with excellent content, yet a flexible approach:

- Include illustrations to make the materials more visual, which will aid comprehension and enjoyment.
- Use simpler language in explaining complex concepts, avoiding professional language.
- Include a resource list of additional materials, which the facilitator could use if appropriate for the parents' group. This might include games, visual aids, videos and so on.

The delivery of Share Plus by the facilitator is the key to the effectiveness of the programme for parents. Share Plus should make the programme as effective as possible by improving the *Facilitators' guide* and the training, in the following ways:

- Include more direction in the *Facilitators' guide* about key topics to include in any parenting group, what to expect from discussions on some topics, the preparation required, which topics go well together and which need to follow on from other topics.
- Recommend co-facilitation for those with little or no experience of facilitation.
- Carry out a training needs analysis before the training starts, in order to ensure that it meets the needs of participants.

- Provide more direction about the purpose and content of training to co-ordinators who identify participants for training. Alternatively, contact and invite training participants directly so that their numbers and level of experience can be identified and controlled.
- Provide longer training sessions, which allow participants to explore the materials in greater depth.
- Provide more in-depth general facilitation training to those with little or no facilitation experience.
- Offer follow-up training/support if required.

### ***How useful was the training provided to the facilitators, and how clear are the materials to work with?***

Facilitators generally found that the training was useful and well delivered, which is impressive, given the restricted time available to the Development Officer for planning and delivering a training programme. However, they agreed that it was rushed and that a longer and more comprehensive training session would be preferable. This may be most important for those with little facilitation experience. One facilitator with no prior experience did not attend training, and in practice the parents in her group found they were not encouraged to participate fully and did not learn many parenting skills.

The *Facilitators' guide* is very clear to work with, and is useful to both experienced and non-experienced facilitators. The clear objectives, and the direction given on how to approach various issues were seen to be very useful in practice. The emphasis on confidentiality proved invaluable in allowing parents to participate fully.

The *Parents' book* is a useful tool for working with parents and gives them a concrete reference to their discussions, which may be referred to in the future. The clarity of the *Parents' book* will be greatly increased by the inclusion of illustrations as planned.

# 12 Summary

The pilot of Share Plus has tested the programme in a range of sites around the country, and with a variety of parents' groups and facilitators. It appears that Share Plus is a valuable set of materials which covers a good range of topics that are relevant to all parents, and which have been developed in a way that makes them relatively accessible and easy to use. Share Plus has the potential to be a very useful tool for parenting groups and the pilot indicates that both parents and their families may benefit from participating:

*'I would strongly recommend this course to any parents. It has given me lots of confidence and made me feel that I am a good parent.'* (parent)

*'I do want very much for this to be rolled out much more extensively because I do feel that the parents need to develop their skills and this is a perfect vehicle to enable them to do it.'* (facilitator)

# Appendix A: Share Plus contents

To help parents to support their children better

## Unit A Being a parent

- A1 **Different families 1**  
*What is a 'normal' family?*
- A2 **Different families 2**  
*What are your family customs?*
- A3 **Joys and challenges 1**  
*What do you find difficult as a parent?*
- A4 **Joys and challenges 2**  
*What is great about being a parent?*
- A5 **What is a parent?**  
*Roles and responsibilities*
- A6 **Changing roles**  
*How parents' roles change as children grow*
- A7 **Families and change**  
*Separation; joining families; new babies*
- A8 **Ways of being a parent**  
*Parenting styles: assertive; permissive; aggressive*
- A9 **Everyone's needs are important**  
*Your needs matter too*
- A10 **Communication in the family 1**  
*Listening and talking about your feelings*  
**Help page** Listening  
**Help page** Talking about feelings
- A11 **Communication in the family 2**  
*Let the children sort it out*  
**Help page** Dealing with anger
- A12 **Looking after yourself**  
*'Time out' for yourself*

## Unit B Play, learning and getting on at school

- B1 **Learning through play**  
*Creativity and curiosity*
- B2 **'Free' play**  
*Ways to have fun together which cost nothing*
- B3 **Taking turns**  
*Learning the rules and making them fun*
- B4 **Play for all**  
*Check out your games, see how your children learn*

- B5 **Bullying 1**  
*Find out what is really happening*
- B6 **Bullying 2**  
*Strategies to prevent bullying*
- B7 **Bullying 3**  
*My child could not be a bully!*
- B8 **Supporting learning 1**  
*Finding fun ways to learn together*
- B9 **Supporting learning 2**  
*Reading and writing without books*
- B10 **Supporting learning 3**  
*Maths and television*
- B11 **Supporting learning 4**  
*Learning is all around us*
- B12 **Computers 1**  
*Is your child on-line?*
- B13 **Computers 2**  
*Using computers safely*
- B14 **Choosing a school**  
*How to make the big decision*
- B15 **School information**  
*Making sense of 'school speak'*
- B16 **Relationships with schools**  
*What can you expect and what can you give*  
Help page
- B17 **Homework**  
*Have a positive attitude to homework*

## Unit C Growing children

- C1 **Ages and stages 1**  
*What to expect at different ages*
- C2 **Ages and stages 2**  
**Help page** Ages and stages
- C3 **Ages and stages 3**  
*Changing needs as children grow*
- C4 **Behaviour 1**  
*What do they really want?*
- C5 **Behaviour 2**  
*Discipline through co-operation*

- C6 **Behaviour 3**  
*Setting boundaries*
- C7 **Behaviour 4**  
*Establishing rules*
- C8 **Expectations**  
*Encourage them to grow*
- C9 **Communication 1**  
*We feel what we hear*
- C10 **Communication 2**  
*Understanding emotions*
- C11 **Communication 3**  
*Positive attention*
- C12 **Changing schools**  
*Helping children when they move school*
- C13 **Gender issues 1**  
*Boys like guns, girls like dolls?*
- C14 **Gender issues 2**  
*Boys and girls really are different*
- C15 **Teenagers – behaviour**  
*Boundaries are still important*
- C16 **Teenagers – communication**  
*Keep talking and listening*
- C17 **Teenagers and alcohol**  
*Things you never knew about alcohol*
- C18 **Teenagers – sex and drugs**  
*Help and advice*
- C19 **Teenagers – alcohol and drugs**  
*Finding out why*

#### Unit D Health, safety and welfare

- D1 **Safe house**  
*Hazards in the home*
- D2 **Personal safety 1**  
*Safety rules when your children are not with you*
- D3 **Personal safety 2**  
*Teaching children not to keep secrets*
- D4 **Personal safety 3**  
*Safety from other adults*
- D5 **Healthy eating 1**  
*Planning a menu*
- D6 **Healthy eating 2**  
*Knowing what our food contains*
- D7 **Prevention is better than cure**  
*Finding out more about immunisation*

**Help page** Immunisation; teeth; check-ups

- D8 **Sleep and exercise**  
*Stay fit together*
- D9 **Emergencies**  
*When do I need help?*
- D10 **Mental health**  
*Dealing with hidden worries*

#### Unit E Support network

- E1 **Can you keep things to yourself?**  
*The importance of confidentiality*
- E2 **When your child is ill**  
*Looking after a sick child*
- E3 **The ups and downs of life**  
*Find your strengths*
- E4 **Together we're stronger**  
*Sometimes it's hard to ask for help*
- E5 **All stressed out**  
*Dealing with stress*
- Help page** Learning to relax
- E6 **Looking after yourself**  
*Make sure that your needs are met*
- E7 **Where could I go for help 1**  
*Knowing where to turn*
- E8 **Where could I go for help 2**  
*How to approach other organisations*
- E9 **Who does what in the home?**  
*Sharing out the jobs*
- E10 **'Trust me, I'm a doctor'**  
*Stand your ground and get the information you need*

# Appendix B: Share Plus evaluation – Background information about parents

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number (day): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of job/lecturer: \_\_\_\_\_ When group meets: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if applicable) (day and time)

1. Please complete the following table for all the parents in your group who regularly attend sessions. This information will help us when running Share Plus and what needs are being met. Individuals will not be named in the evaluation report.

Name or initials	Gender (M/F)	Age (years)	Ethnicity	Does parent have a car?	Do parents have any special needs? (if any)	Number of children	Age of children	Do children have any special needs? (if any)

\* If English is your second language, please indicate in the 'Special needs' column whether you have any special needs. If you do, please specify what they are.



# Appendix C: Share Plus end-of-course feedback



## YOUR REASONS FOR JOINING

1. When you joined the group, what were you hoping to get out of the sessions?

## ABOUT THE SESSIONS

2. Please say whether you agree or disagree, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree

Please circle

	Please circle <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
The facilitator made me feel very welcome in the group	1	2	3	4	5
The facilitator made things easy for me to understand	1	2	3	4	5
The facilitator encouraged us to join in group discussions	1	2	3	4	5
The topics covered in the group were relevant to my family	1	2	3	4	5
The group had a way in which topics were covered	1	2	3	4	5

3. The number of sessions was: (please tick )

Too few

About right

Too many

## ABOUT THE MATERIALS

4. Please say whether you agree or disagree with the following, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree

Please circle

	Please circle <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
The written materials were easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
The material covered topics I was interested in	1	2	3	4	5
I was able to use the materials at home	1	2	3	4	5

5. Any other comments about the written materials?

**OVERALL**

6. How enjoyable was the course?  
7. How useful was the course?

(Please circle)

Not at all	Not very	Very

8. What was the best thing about the course?

9. Was there any subject that wasn't covered that you wanted to know about? If so, please say what it was:

10. Would you recommend the course to a friend? (please tick )

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

11. Any other comments at all about the group, the course or the Share Plus materials?

**FUTURE PLANS**

12. As a result of having done the Share Plus course, are you planning to do any of the following? (please tick )

- More parenting support  
 Join another sort of group  
 Start another kind of course or class  
 Something else, please write here: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you**

# Appendix D: Topic guide for focus groups with parents

## The group

- What has been happening in the group?
- How much say did the group have in which topics were covered each session?
- Who might this sort of group be most useful for?
- How useful has it been?
- Did most people keep coming to the group? Anyone ever think of not continuing?
- How useful were the materials?
  - the *Parents' handbook*
  - the *Family album*
  - any other things you used that were useful?
- Clear? Relevant?
- Anything that would improve them?

## Facilitator

- How was the facilitator?

## Overall

- Is there anything that you think could be improved for next time? (materials, delivery, structure)
- Looking back on all the sessions you attended, what did you get out of the course?

# Appendix E: Interview schedule for facilitators

## History/background

- How did you get involved with Share Plus?
- What experience did you have of facilitating a parenting programme?
- Why did you decide to use Share Plus? What were your aims or expectations of the material?

## Training and support

- What did the training consist of?
- How useful was the training provided?
- Anything in the training that could be improved?
- What sort of support was available? What might have helped you?

## The group itself

- Set up group/established group?
- Were you targeting any particular group or type of parent?
- How recruited?
- How did it all go?
- Regular attendance? Anyone who stopped coming? Why?
- What worked?
- Anything you'd do differently next time? Any problems,

## The materials

- What is your opinion of the Share Plus material (usefulness, user-friendliness, clarity)?
  - *Facilitators' guide*
  - *Parents' book*
  - *Family album*
- How do the Share Plus materials compare with others – any materials used before?
- What would you like to see changed?

## Parents' response to the materials

- Feedback from parents/how did they respond to the materials?
- What worked?
- Any changes noticed in the parents?

## Overall

- What worked?
- What could be improved?

# An evaluation of the piloting of the Share Plus Programme

This report provides an evaluation of the piloting of the Share Plus materials, which are designed to be used with parents and carers to enable them to support their children better. The Share Plus programme encourages parents to work out positive ways of responding to their children's behaviour. It consists of a set of activities which can be used with parents in a variety of settings.

The purpose of the pilot was to assess how well the materials would work in practice. The evaluation examined the effectiveness of the content and delivery of Share Plus, and sought to identify areas where improvements could be made.

The evaluation was carried out on behalf of CEDC and Parentline Plus by Amanda Mainey of the National Children's Bureau.



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