

# Empowering parents/carers to support children and young people

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## The inspiration:

Over many years of working in various jobs supporting children, adults and families, I became more and more passionate about:

- The role of parents and carers in shaping a child and young person.
- The need for parents and carers to be empowered with the knowledge and support to give children and young people the best possible start in life.
- The role of childcare settings and schools to offer parents and carers access to that knowledge and support.

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# The role of Educational Psychologists

- I realised that Educational Psychologists could work to provide that knowledge and support in partnership with childcare settings and schools. That inspired me to train as an EP.
- The Welsh government's (2016) definition of the role of an EP, advocates for "working with others to help to achieve best possible outcomes for CYP".
- Apart from EPs working with professionals, parent and carers are surely key players in supporting CYP.

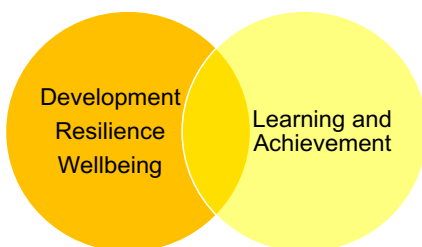
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# Research informed:

My doctoral thesis involved a survey of parent, teacher and educational psychologist views on supporting parent involvement in children's learning (including meeting basic needs).

Inspired by research findings that:

- Parent involvement in children's learning links to a wide range of positive outcomes for children and young people.
- There is a close connection between:



- Children and young people need to have their basic needs met for them to have any chance of reaching their potential.
- Reaching their potential has huge benefits for wellbeing.
- Parent-teacher partnership.



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## Thesis findings:

- Parents were keen to know that schools prioritised wellbeing as much as learning, for them to want to get involved in children's learning, and they wanted to know how to support their children in all areas of their development, wellbeing, resilience, learning and achievement.
- Teachers and EPs wanted to support parents with these things but wanted permission from management and time to do so.

## Listening to schools:

- For the last 4 years ALNCOs, teachers and parents have been telling me that they want to know more about how to support children holistically (in wellbeing and learning) and are interested in workshops for parents.

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## From working group to workshop

- Summer 2023 I started a working group with some of the EP team to discuss parent workshops.
- A senior EP organised funding from the wellbeing grant for an assistant EP to evaluate the workshops and for emotion coaching training for me.
- In liaison with the senior EP and reference to some EP workshops colleagues had created for flying start provisions, I created a workshop entitled '**Supporting children and young people with their feelings and behaviour**'. This included:
  - ❖ A Tibetan flute music and scenery video for parents to experience how a calm environment (sounds and sights) calms.
  - ❖ The importance of supportive relationships.
  - ❖ The importance of calm communication to enable the thinking brain to listen and make wise decisions.
  - ❖ Emotion coaching
  - ❖ Emotion calming strategies for parents to support themselves and their children.

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## Dare to dream big. Sell it like you believe in it.

I offered the presentation to all of my schools via emails to ALNCOs and Headteachers at two points during the school year 23-24 and several expressed interest. However, school's other commitments meant only two presentations took place.

**Summer 2024** I created a workshop entitled '**Ideas for supporting children and young people with uncertainty, worry and anxiety**':

- ❖ Tibetan flute music and scenery video at the start to experience how a calm environment (sounds and sights) calms.
- ❖ What we mean by these terms
- ❖ The power of positive relationships
- ❖ Emotion coaching
- ❖ Emotion calming

**September 2024:** I offered the presentation to all of my schools via emails to ALNCOs and Headteachers. This time more schools committed to dates and so far, **8** school workshops have been booked.

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## *Practice is progress not perfection:*

**Supporting children with feelings and behaviour:**

Primary school G: **13** parents (one dad), a baby and a toddler.

Catholic primary school M: **4** parents (one dad), one aunt and a toddler.

**Ideas for supporting children with uncertainty, worry and anxiety:**

- After a coffee morning welcoming parents of yr 7-8 learning support class pupils **14** (one dad).
- Catholic primary school S **6**.
- Primary school G **22** (two dads, one toddler).

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## What worked well

- 2-3pm timing. One hour duration.
- Schools informing parents about the presentation frequently via multiple methods.
- Leaving discussion to the end.
- Not using videos. Using photos of a diverse range of parents, children and young people.
- Using personal anecdotes.
- Class teachers, ALNCO and Headteachers attending.
- Having a QR code linked to Microsoft forms.
- Having printed handouts for parents to take with them that included the QR code.
- Thinking carefully about what the workshop title says to parents and so how widely it will appeal.
- Helping parents/carers remember that they have power to support their children and young people.

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## Even better if

- I could meet some parents' need for more information while not putting off parents who do not want to commit for longer than an hour.
- ? Share online videos/podcasts, more handouts after the presentation?
- ? More face-to-face presentations e.g. supporting feeling and behaviour part 1 then part 2?
- Parent mutual support groups could be set up in schools.
  - Handouts were fully informative, yet also easily accessible/not too long as parents have a range of literacy abilities.

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## The feedback:

Please write down three words that describe your thoughts after today's workshop.	What is one thing you have taken away from today that you would like to use in your daily life?	How will this workshop impact on your parenting or practice?	Is there anything you would like to know more about after today's workshop?
Gentle parenting Emotions Calming methods	Be more calming ask options	Going to try calming methods and ask my children about their feelings	No thank you
Insightful, helpful, informative	Some of the calming techniques	Has given me more info on calming techniques	Not really. It was very beneficial to attend as a parent. Would be interested in more parent workshops like this.
Positive Validated Prepared	Recognising why I respond to situations the way I do - respecting and accepting children's emotions and being prepared for situations.	Calmer parenting leading to calmer children	Specific strategies for neurodivergent children.
Helpful informative relaxing	More positive reinforcement	Will try and be more relaxed and positive	Any more useful parenting tips
Informative, easy to understand, helpful	Consistency in what I'm doing	I am already doing a lot of the things, so it reassured me I'm on the right track, just with a few tweaks here and there	Spoke at the session to the advisors who were very friendly and helpful
Thought provoking, re-affirming, helpful	Considering my approach when dealing with and reacting to situation with my child.	Hopefully I can be more aware of my own reactions/feelings before dealing with situations with my child.	References to the theory and literature discussed would be helpful please.

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- [Ideas for supporting children and young people with uncertainty, worry and anxiety \(office.com\)](https://www.office.com)

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Any reflections/thoughts ideas?