

## Parent Support Group Case Study

### *Supporting parents to address extra-familial risk*

As part of its Adolescent Pilot project<sup>1</sup>, South Kent set up a parent support group for parents of a group of young people (aged 12-16) following concerns that this peer group was at risk of exploitation and/or becoming engaged in criminal activity. Most of the young people were not attending education and had regular missing episodes. A few members of the group had also committed offences.

#### **How was the peer group identified?**

The peer group was identified by the South Kent Adolescent Pilot team through conducting a peer mapping exercise during its weekly Multi-Agency Discussion and Planning meeting (MADP). The peer group mapping exercise identified a core group of nine young people who were known to South Kent's Early Help service. When mapping young people, professionals looked at the relationships within the peer group, safeguarding concerns, and what work had already been undertaken with the young people and their families.

The MADP meeting also identified locations where these young people were congregating, many of which were in abandoned and unsafe buildings. There were concerns around escalating anti-social behaviour and altercations within the group including peer on peer violence and incidents of racially aggravated abuse. An action plan was developed focussing on desistance and preventative work.

#### **How did the parent support group start?**

As part of the intervention plan developed at the MADP meeting, the decision was made to hold an 'Empowerment Session' with parents of the young people that formed part of the peer group. The aim of this session was to raise parents' awareness of their children's activities and to help them recognise factors of risk, particularly around substance misuse, grooming (online and offline) and forms of child exploitation. Parents were helped to identify positive factors to support them safeguard their children from these risks. The police informed them of their children's activities and anti-social behaviours using photographic evidence. Parents were on the whole unaware of the risks their children faced.

The 'Parent Empowerment Session' was jointly delivered by Early Help and Police staff and staff from a local parent-led group called 'Family United' formed by parents

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<sup>1</sup> The South Kent Adolescent Pilot established a multi-disciplinary team to address extra-familial risk faced by adolescents. You can read more about this pilot [here](#).

with children on Child Protection Plans. 'Family United' offered to help parents set up their own support group and shared their first-hand experience. They explained how creating a support group helped them 'to keep on top of what was going on with their children'. They also encouraged parents at the 'Parent Empowerment Session' to form their own group at this early stage as this could help them develop a collective response to safeguarding their children and prevent them from being escalated to Child Protection Plans.

Crucially, the session allowed open discussion for parents to share their views and worries within a non-judgemental setting. In their feedback parents said they felt the session had enabled them to discuss issues of concerns regarding their children with each other without feeling uncomfortable, judged or blamed.

During the 'Parent Empowerment Session', parents set up a WhatsApp group to keep in touch and inform each other of their children's whereabouts. They even took a group photograph to show their children that they were now working together to protect them. Parents who have not been able to attend the initial session have been invited to join the WhatsApp group and feedback was shared with them.

### **How is the parent support group now working with Early Help workers?**

Parents in the support group have developed a plan with Early Help workers to ensure a joint safeguarding strategy including reducing anti-social behaviour, missing episodes and to promote positive activities for young parents and their parents. Early Help key workers are also liaising with key organisations and the police and continue to feed in information at MADP meetings.

### **Feedback**

#### **Feedback from a parent:**

(taken from phone text to an Early Help Worker who organised the session)

*'I thought it went really well, should of be done ages ago. So, I need to thank you for doing it cause if it weren't for you being our support worker and organising this it wouldn't have happened.'*

#### **Feedback from Ashford District Manager:**

*'It is exactly what we should be doing, and it is already having an impact. Great work with parents, involving the right agencies and giving them confidence to work together.'*