

Health and Community Care

National Corporate Parenting Training Programme Evaluation

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Since 2010 the Scottish Government has been funding Who Cares? Scotland to develop and deliver a national corporate parenting training programme. This training course is due to complete in March 2013 and there is the potential for a second phase of the programme. The Scottish Government commissioned an independent evaluation of the National Corporate Parenting training programme, with a focus on the impact of the programme to date. Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted among participants. The research was carried out between December 2012 and February 2013.

Main Findings

- There is widespread acknowledgment of the importance of corporate parenting.
- The purpose of the training was perceived to be to raise awareness of the issues facing looked after children and the role played by corporate parents. The training was seen as having achieved this aim.
- The two elements of the training recalled universally by respondents were the presentation by a care leaver and the film clips of discussions with young people, both of which were described as powerful and thought provoking. These were also considered to be key elements of the training.
- The training is seen to have:
 - Increased awareness of the issues and challenges faced by looked after children.
 - Raised awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities.
 - Helped to craft a culture around the need to normalise experiences for looked after children.
- There have been a number of positive impacts, including the sharing of information, higher levels of advocacy and support for looked after children and involvement of community partners.
- Most of the qualitative respondents viewed Who Cares? Scotland positively in terms of the content of the training, the way training is delivered and the presenters. The organisation is perceived to offer a number of key advantages including being able to offer a national and local perspective, providing details of good practice and provision of materials.
- Almost all of the qualitative respondents consider there to be value in the training and think it should continue to be delivered by Who Cares? Scotland.
- While Elected Members are perceived to be a priority audience for this training, a wide range of other audiences were also considered to be potential audiences for Phase 2 training.
- Key elements for future training are information tailored to the local area but set in the context of national information, inclusion of a presentation by a care leaver and the provision of good practice.

Background overview

Background

Since 2010 the Scottish Government (SG) has been funding Who Cares? Scotland to develop and deliver a national corporate parenting training programme. The aim of this programme is to raise awareness among corporate parents about their responsibilities so they can improve the support they give to young people in and leaving care. This training course is due to complete in March 2013 and there is the potential for a second phase of the programme.

The SG commissioned Why Research to conduct an independent evaluation of the National Corporate Parenting Training Programme, with a focus on the impact of the programme to date.

Methodology

Two strands of research were conducted: qualitative face-to-face or telephone discussions with individuals in Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway, Edinburgh and Renfrewshire who had participated in the programme. This was supplemented by a national short online survey.

The research took place between December 2012 and February 2013. A total of 25 individuals took part in the qualitative work; and 54 individuals responded to the online survey.

Overview of main findings

The following paragraphs outline the main responses to the consultation questions.

Motivations and expectations in attending the training

There is widespread acknowledgement of the importance of corporate parenting and for Elected Members, council staff and others to have a clear understanding of their role as corporate parents. That said, in some areas, a significant number of Elected Members have not yet undergone this training.

There is a need for a clear lead from the Chief Executive's office to encourage attendance at training sessions. There were some calls for mandatory attendance for all Elected Members.

In general, those who attended the training sessions did so because of an interest or involvement in Looked After Children, although some also attended because of an involvement in the training.

For individuals with some prior knowledge in this area, the training reinforced learning. Those attending and with little or no prior knowledge, felt they had learnt a lot.

Recall of the training

Recall of the training was limited for some respondents who had attended training almost two years ago.

The purpose of the training was perceived to be to raise awareness of the issues facing looked after children and the role played by corporate parents. The training was seen as having achieved this aim.

The two elements of the training programme recalled universally by respondents were the presentation by a care leaver employed by Who Cares? Scotland, and the film clips of discussions with young people. Recall of other elements of the training was higher among those who had attended training more recently.

Almost all the online survey respondents felt the training reflected local issues and priorities.

Impact of the training

The findings of the online survey show that awareness of their role in corporate parenting increased due to the training, the highest level of increase was among Elected Members. A large majority of these respondents also felt the information covered by the training was just enough. Qualitative respondents also found the training useful and most perceived this to be most useful for Elected Members or individuals with little or no knowledge or experience of corporate parenting.

Key elements of the training were the presentation by a care leaver and the video clips that were shown. Many of the respondents were previously unaware of the issues facing looked after children.

The provision of examples of good practice, illustrated by case studies, is also perceived to be an important element of the training programme. Respondents want to know what works elsewhere and whether it can be applied in their own area. Who Cares? Scotland are perceived to be in an ideal position to provide this information as they can provide a national picture.

The training is perceived to fit with national policy. While not all respondents were au fait with the names of initiatives such as the Changing Lives Agenda, they were aware of – and agreed with – the principles on which these are based.

The training is seen to:

- Increase awareness of the issues and challenges faced by looked after children.
- Raise awareness of the corporate parenting responsibilities of respondents and their organisation.
- Help to craft a culture around the need to normalise experiences for looked after children.

The training has had a number of impacts and these include:

- Formal and informal sharing of information with colleagues, although there is little sharing of information outwith their own area.
- Higher levels of advocacy and support for looked after children.
- Help for looked after children in accessing training/modern apprenticeships.
- Annual award scheme.
- Development of in-house materials and training sessions.
- Involving more community partners in corporate parenting.

The online survey shows that some of those who have not yet changed their practice, intend to do so.

Some non-Elected Members had received training on corporate parenting from other sources, although this was seen as complementary to the training delivered by Who Cares? Scotland.

Who Cares? Scotland

Most of the qualitative respondents viewed Who Cares? Scotland positively, in terms of the content of their training, the way it is delivered and the presenters. Respondents identified a number of key advantages to Who Cares? Scotland in their delivery of the training programme and these included:

- Offering flexibility in their delivery of the training programme.
- Offering a national perspective and providing both local and national data.
- Being in a good position to provide details of good practice, case studies and exemplars; and to discuss how these could be applied or modified in other areas.
- Having the ability to tap into established networks with looked after children and care leavers to include their views in the training.
- Being unbiased and independent, and experts in corporate parenting and the issues facing looked after children today.
- Providing additional publicity/training materials.
- Getting involved in further post-training work.

Future delivery

Almost all of the qualitative respondents participating in this evaluation felt there was value in this training and that it should continue to be delivered by Who Cares? Scotland.

These respondents perceive Elected Members to be a priority audience for this training, although a wide range of other audiences were also noted by both qualitative and online respondents. These included:

- Staff within the police and fire and rescue services.
- Teaching and support staff, particularly those involved in pastoral care and guidance.
- Students training to become social workers and teachers.
- Individuals on the periphery of social work/education/healthcare who might occasionally come into contact with looked after children e.g. GPs.
- Foster parents/potential foster parents.
- Community partnership groups.
- Third sector/voluntary groups who have an involvement with children and young people.
- Employers.

Respondents identified a number of elements they perceived to be essential as part of this training and these included:

- Information tailored to their local area and set in the context of national information.
- Inclusion of a looked after child; ideally one from the local area.
- Provision of good practice, case studies, exemplars, with critiques/suggested modifications.
- Updates on any changes in the area of corporate parenting.

While the depth of coverage was perceived to be right for Elected Members and those with little or no experience of corporate parenting, there were some suggestions that the depth of information is not enough for individuals already working with looked after children. These individuals would welcome more in-depth training, including more information on good practice and case studies.

There is a need to ensure flexibility in the delivery of this programme because of the logistical issues facing Elected Members in attending training sessions. There is also a need for data to be up-to-date and continually updated.

There are some suggestions for additional roles that could be adopted by Who Cares? Scotland and these include:

- Setting up events across local authorities, for example, sharing good practice events.
- Adopting an intermediary role, helping councils and partner organisations to network.
- Setting up a central web-based resource identifying examples of good practice and case studies, along with ideas for how good practice can be adapted or improved upon.

Conclusions

Corporate parenting was seen as an important issue by respondents participating in this evaluation and respondents were positive about the Corporate Parenting training programme delivered by Who Cares? Scotland. Most of those who have attended the training are positive and there is a perception that the training should be rolled out to a wider audience in a second phase.

Results from the qualitative research and the online survey show there have been a number of positive impacts of the training to date and the online survey shows that awareness of different aspects of corporate parenting rose after the training had been delivered.

There are a number of key elements to be incorporated in this training programme, including the personal experiences of a looked after child, the provision of local and national data and examples of good practice and case studies.

One key advantage for Who Cares? Scotland is their capacity to provide a national overview, and there were some suggestions that Who Cares? Scotland could adopt a proactive role in facilitating networking opportunities and running conferences/meetings across local authorities. This is of particular relevance, given that there appears to be relatively limited sharing of information to date.

Qualitative and quantitative respondents were positive about this training and felt this should continue to be delivered by Who Cares? Scotland.

In summary, the evidence gathered in this evaluation notes the importance of tailoring training to the needs of the audience. If training is to be extended to a wider range of individuals, their informational requirements will need to be considered. There is also a requirement for continued flexibility in terms of when training is delivered and for working closely with LA contacts to ensure training delivered meets the needs of those who are attending.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131 244-2111.