



Evaluation of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme 2004/5

Full Report

Jenny Wilding and Mark Barton

Funded by

social care
institute for excellence



**Evaluation of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities
Programme 2004/5**

Full Report

ISBN 1 873912 46 3

© Race Equality Foundation
July 2007

Race Equality Foundation, Unit 35 Kings Exchange, Tileyard Road, London N7 9AH.

Contents

		Page
	Acknowledgements	
	Executive Summary	1
Section One	Introduction	6
Section Two	The Evaluation Methodology	8
Section Three	The Parenting Courses	11
Section Four	Characteristics of the Participants – The Full Sample	17
Section Five	Characteristics of the Participants – The Paired Sample	25
Section Six	Course Attendance	30
Section Seven	The Facilitators' and Participants' Experience of the Course	34
Section Eight	The Impact of the Course – The Facilitators' and Participants' Views	48
Section Nine	The Impact of the Course – Results from the Paired Sample Pre and Post Course Questionnaires	56
Section Ten	Possible Improvements to the Programme	81
Section Eleven	Conclusions	85
	References	89
Appendices		
Appendix 1.	Attendance Figures from CSRs	90
Appendix 2.	Results of the Statistical Tests	94

Author's Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the evaluation:

- All the participants and facilitators who took time to complete the forms and questionnaires that formed the basis of the evaluation. We trust that we have represented their views fairly and accurately.
- Jabeer Butt, Deputy Chief Executive of the Race Equality Foundation, who commissioned us to undertake the analysis of the data and advised us on what was required.
- Leandra Box, Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme Manager at the Race Equality Foundation, for liaising with us and providing additional information.

Mark Barton and Jenny Wilding

June 2007

About this report

This evaluation was funded by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. To find out more about SCIE visit www.scie.org.uk. The Foundation would like to thank them for their support. The full report is available from www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk.

About the Race Equality Foundation

The Race Equality Foundation promotes race equality in social support (what families and friends do for each other) and social care (what 'workers' do for people who need support).

- We do this by exploring what is known about discrimination and disadvantage.
- We develop interventions that will overcome barriers and promote equality.
- We disseminate good practice through training, conferences and written material.

We are a registered charity and more information is available at www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk.

About Research Plus

Research Plus+ is a Norfolk based independent research and consultancy organisation. It specialises in undertaking research and evaluation on contemporary social issues and business research. It carries out projects for voluntary, statutory and commercial organisations both locally and nationally. It has experience of evaluating projects from a number of perspectives and of measuring performance against agreed standards.

Projects undertaken cover a wide range of topics including parenting programmes, housing, criminal justice, substance misuse, mental health, carers, health promotion, work related stress, sexual health, teenage pregnancy and disability. Most of the work has been used to inform the development of organisations' policies and practices.

For further details visit the **Research Plus+** website: www.research-plus.co.uk.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parenting courses held between January 2004 and March 2005.
- The data was collected in 2004/5 and Research Plus+ was commissioned by the Race Equality Foundation to collate and analyse it in 2006/7.

2. The Evaluation Methodology

- The evaluation was based on information from the Course Summary Reports (CSRs) completed on each course by the course facilitator(s) and three forms completed on or by the individual participants, as part of the programme's built in evaluation process.
- A number of limitations of the evaluation were pointed out.
- Information was provided on 82 courses.
- There was a CSR for 76 of the courses.
- Forms were provided on a total of 973 individual participants:
 - Registration forms were provided for 831 (85%) of the participants.
 - All three forms were provided for 400 (41%) of the participants.
 - An additional 45 (5%) of the participants had both the pre and post course forms returned.
- Therefore, data from 445 (46%) of the participants could be analysed to assess changes in responses to the assessment questionnaires before and after the course.
- Although the data was incomplete, information was provided on a large number of participants and courses and included a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data.

3. The Parenting Courses

- Information on the courses was provided in the 76 CSRs completed by the facilitators.
- The courses reached a wide range of ethnic groups. On almost three quarters of the courses (73%) the participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Just over a quarter of the courses (27%) had participants from a single ethnic background.
- Some courses were targeted at specific ethnic groups: mainly for Bangladeshis, but also for people of other ethnic backgrounds.
- Just over half of the courses were targeted at other specific groups. In many cases this was specific age groups, geographical areas (including Sure Start areas) or specific schools.
- A few courses were targeted at people under court orders or for parents of offenders; people who had experienced domestic violence; refugees; single parents or teenage parents.
- Just over a third of the courses (39%) had at least one male participant.
- The courses were run by a wide range of agencies – voluntary, statutory and partnership organisations, and community groups. Each type of agency was able to access a range of ethnic groups. In some cases, where local ethnic minority organisations and community groups organised courses, this clearly assisted with reaching specific ethnic groups.

- The majority of the courses (59%) commenced between April 2004 and March 2005. Two thirds of the courses (66%) were held in London. Other courses were held in Yorkshire or North East England, North West England, South West England and the Midlands.
- The courses were usually held on a weekday morning. Most courses consisted of 13 or 14 sessions. Additional sessions were held for a variety of reasons.
- The most common forms of recruitment to the courses were through flyers / brochures and announcements and by talking to parents / word of mouth.

4. Characteristics of the Participants – The Full Sample

- Registration forms were received on 831 participants. The timing and location of the courses attended by the participants reflected the CSR figures.
- 75% of the course participants were of minority ethnic origin and, between them, the participants mentioned a total of 89 different ethnic backgrounds.
- In terms of broad ethnic groupings nearly a third (32%) of the participants were 'Black' or 'Black British', 29% were 'White', 23% were 'Asian' or 'Asian British', and the remaining 16% were of 'Chinese', 'Mixed Heritage', 'Middle Eastern' or 'Other' ethnic origin.
- The largest sub groups within the broad ethnic groupings were 'White British' (25%), 'African' (18%), 'Bangladeshi' (15%) and Afro-Caribbean (11%).
- A total of 53 languages were mentioned as a first language. Nearly half of the participants (46%) had a first language other than English. Nearly a fifth (19%) spoke an Asian language and 10% spoke an African language.
- Based on their individual descriptions, the main languages, after English, were: Bengali/Sylheti, Chinese, Somali, French, Twi, Urdu and Farsi. The French speakers were predominantly of African origin.
- Whilst most of the participants were female, a small proportion was male (11%). The main difference between the male and female participants was in their ethnic background. More males were of minority ethnic background, particularly African and Bangladeshi, and this was reflected in their first language.
- Over a third of the participants were single parents (38%) and a few of the participants were grandparents (3%).
- Over 40% of the participants were aged between 30 and 39 years.
- For just over a tenth of the participants (11%) their education had ended by the end of primary school.
- Two thirds of the participants had a household income of £10,000 or less per year.
- Information on 940 children was provided on the pre course questionnaire. Just over half of the children were male. Over half the children (57%) were aged between three and ten years.
- A small proportion of the participants (11%) said that they had attended a parent education course in the past.
- Many participants (87%) stated that they were attending the course to become a better parent, a third (34%) said that they were having problems with a child, 16% came with the intention of learning about drugs and violence and 3% were ordered by the court.
- Participants had usually heard about the course through flyers and announcements (37%), been referred by an agency / were ordered to attend by a court (32%) or through friends or relatives. Few participants had heard about the course through a newspaper or the radio.

5. Characteristics of the Participants – The Paired Sample

- A total of 445 participants completed both the pre and post course questionnaires. This 'paired sample' was used to assess the impact of the course in terms of quantitative changes in the participants.
- In most respects the characteristics of the paired sample were very similar to the characteristics of the full sample.
- The main differences were:
 - **Location of the course:** there were slightly fewer participants from courses in London and Yorkshire / North East England in the paired sample.
 - **Ethnic background and first language of the participants:** there were fewer ethnic groups and first languages in the paired sample and this was reflected in the broad ethnic and language groups. In particular, there was a lower proportion of people of African background in the paired sample compared to the full sample.
 - **Household income:** the percentage with an income of under £5,000 was lower than for the full sample, and the percentage with an income of £20,000 to £45,000 was higher.
 - **Previous experience of parent education courses:** slightly more of the participants in the paired sample had attended a parent education course in the past than in the full sample.
 - **How participants heard about the course:** more of the participants in the paired sample had heard about the course through flyers and announcements than in the full sample.

6. Course Attendance

- Attendance information, that was internally consistent, was provided for 48 of the 82 courses.
- Out of the 48 courses, just over three quarters (77%) of those who attended at least two sessions also completed / graduated from the course. A further 8% attended at least half the sessions but did not graduate. The drop out rate was 15%.
- On nearly half of the courses some people had dropped out due to personal / family problems and on almost a third of the courses some people had dropped out due to a conflict in schedule.
- A number of actions were taken in order to encourage participants' attendance. Those most frequently provided were refreshments, phone calls and childcare.

7. The Facilitators' and Participants' Experience of the Course

- The facilitators provided detailed comments on how they presented the different components of the curriculum and the participants' response. The facilitators' comments on the curriculum indicated that:
 - The cultural component, the positive discipline component and the relationship enhancement / violence prevention component were usually emphasised 'more' than stated in the curriculum.
 - The rites of passage and the community involvement components were usually emphasised the 'same' as stated in the curriculum.
 - A few facilitators commented that they emphasised certain components of the curriculum 'less'. This was most common for the community involvement component.
 - A few facilitators commented that they had added to or modified specific components of the curriculum.

- On the relationship enhancement / violence prevention component it proved possible to emphasise some aspects of this component more than others and on 15 courses there was this mixture of emphasis.
- As part of the community involvement component a wide range of outside speakers were invited to speak to the participants to address a variety of issues. Some of the speakers / topics chosen were in response to concerns / requests expressed by the participants.
- The facilitators identified a number of inter-personal challenges within the group that they had to deal with. They also identified a number of other issues that hindered people's participation in the course.
- Specific comments were made about working with different cultural, ethnic and language groups.
- The size of the group (too small or large) also influenced the effectiveness of the facilitation process.
- For many facilitators their experience of facilitating the course could be summed up as 'enjoyable, challenging, exhilarating and hard work'.
- Their comments reinforced the benefit of having at least two facilitators for each course.
- The participants rated the course very highly:
 - Over 80% of the participants rated all aspects of the information presented in the curriculum as 'Very good' or 'Good', and some aspects were rated as 'Very good' or 'Good' by over 90%.
 - Over 80% of the participants rated all aspects of the way that the course was conducted as 'Very good' or 'Good', and some aspects were rated as 'Very good' or 'Good' by over 90%.
 - Nearly all the participants (99%) said that they would recommend the course to their family and friends.

8. The Impact of the Course – The Facilitators' and Participants' Views

- The facilitators' comments on the participants' response to the course were predominantly positive.
- The participants reported that they had benefited from taking the course in a variety of ways. This included:
 - They had learned new techniques to help them with their children, especially positive discipline and alternatives to smacking.
 - They particularly valued the concept of 'special time' and the charts.
 - They had improved their communication skills and had benefited from discussing issues with the other participants.
 - The course had also had a positive effect on other areas of their life.
 - They felt calmer / less angry and / or were more confident.
- Nearly three quarters of the agencies offered some form of parent support group after the training was completed.
- Nearly all of the facilitators (92%) reported that the parents had plans to continue meeting after the course finished. These took a variety of forms and were at various stages of development.
- More than three quarters of the participants (81%) said that they planned to participate in a parent group after graduation.
- Some of the facilitators identified specific parents for follow up and/or parents who were 'especially impacted' by the course. This included some participants who were interested in training to become facilitators themselves.

9. The Impact of the Course – Results from the Paired Sample Pre and Post Course Questionnaires

- Overall, the changes in the responses to the pre and post assessment questionnaires suggested that the course had a positive impact on the participants.
- The changes in the participants' responses to the statements in five areas were all statistically significant and the results suggested that the course led to:
 - An increase in family activities and discussions.
 - An increase in the use of positive discipline and communication strategies.
 - A decrease in the use of negative discipline and communication strategies.
 - An increase in both the participants' and the children's competence.
- There were no statistically significant differences in the changes in the participants' responses to the questions on community focus. This suggested that the course did not have an immediate impact on the participants' level of community involvement.

10. Possible Improvements to the Programme

- The facilitators and the participants had a wide range of suggestions for improving the programme.

11. Conclusions

- Based on the evidence presented in the report, the conclusions considered the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities Programme in relation to the range of locations and agencies running the courses, the ethnic and social mix of the participants, course attendance, benefits for the participants, benefits for the children, the use of positive discipline techniques, other parenting skills and community involvement and adherence to the recommended model.
- Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data indicated that, overall, the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme had a positive impact on the participants and the children and to some extent the wider family / community.

Section One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parenting courses held between January 2004 and March 2005. This section describes the development of the programme and sets out the objectives of the programme.

1.2 The Development of the Programme

The Race Equality Foundation's Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme is based on a culturally sensitive curriculum originally developed in the USA by Dr. Marilyn Steele, Jerry Tello, Ronald F Johnston and Marilyn R Marigna in the early 1990s. The programme was further developed by Dr. Marilyn Steele and Marilyn R Marigna and eventually became the 'Multi Ethnic Families and Communities: A Violence Prevention Parent Training Program'. The programme demonstrated positive results in the USA with participants from a variety of ethnic / cultural backgrounds.

In 1999 the Race Equality Foundation (at that time the Race Equality Unit) was funded by the Home Office to review and develop parenting materials appropriate and sensitive to the needs of black and minority ethnic parents. The 'Multi Ethnic Families and Communities: A Violence Prevention Parent Training Program' was identified as being suitable for adaptation for use in the UK. The Race Equality Foundation worked closely with Dr. Marilyn Steele, parents and professionals to adapt the programme for use in the UK and it was renamed 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities: An Inclusive Parent Programme'.

The programme is designed for parents / carers with children aged three to eighteen years. Information is presented within a cultural framework covering five areas: cultural / spiritual, rites of passage, positive discipline, enhancing relationships / violence prevention and community involvement. The course is designed to enhance parent competence, parent / child interactions, child competence, parent relationships and community involvement. The course is based on developing the participants' strengths using a facilitative approach. The course facilitators attend an intensive five day training programme to be trained as course facilitators. The first facilitator training in the UK took place in February 2000. By the end of 2006 there were over 2000 trained facilitators from across England. As the programme has progressed a number of parents, who originally attended the course as participants, have trained as course facilitators.

Agencies are now responsible for the setting up and delivery of the courses. The role of the Race Equality Foundation is to support the deployment of the programme. The Race Equality Foundation provides facilitator training, expert support and supervision; ensures that the quality assurance system is implemented and facilitates the evaluation of the programme. Although the Home Office originally funded the courses, they are now funded from a wide range of national and local sources, which are obtained by the agencies responsible for delivering the courses.

During 2006, the Race Equality Foundation obtained funding from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) for the evaluation of the courses in 2004/5. Research Plus+ was commissioned by the Race Equality Foundation to collate and analyse the forms completed by the course facilitators and participants, which provided the basis for the evaluation of the programme.

1.3 Objectives of the Programme

The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme is based on the belief that *'a co-ordinated and supportive community involved effort that integrates parent education and community resource awareness will increase the use of and the delivery of comprehensive services that can enhance parent and child functioning'* (Steele et al, 2000).

The objectives of the programme as described in the Facilitators' Manual (Steele et al, 2000) are as follows:

'The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parent programme uniquely and creatively empowers parents. It provides techniques and strategies to achieve the following objectives:

- *Provide parents with information that will empower them with the courage and commitment needed to change any destructive parenting of their childhood, along with specific alternatives to the use of physical punishment as a primary teaching tool.*
- *Assist parents in understanding, reviewing and utilising a "Process of Discipline" to create guidelines for modelling and teaching respectful behaviour. To enhance parent ability to "respond" as opposed to "react" to disrespectful behaviour.*
- *Connect parents to the healthy aspects of their childhood, while also providing parents with strategies, skills, techniques and information needed to break the cycle of violence to self and others.*
- *Present information within a "cultural framework" that validates and takes into consideration different cultural learning styles, different ethnic/cultural/spiritual values, and different family and historical experiences.*
- *Provide parents with specific information and activities to assist them in teaching both younger and older children to understand and appreciate family/cultural values as they relate to the development of social skills needed to function successfully as an adult in this society.*
- *Assist parents in building special relationships with their children that provide support and guidance. This is achieved by encouraging parents to clarify their own emotions and in so doing, encourage their children to express feelings in a respectful manner.*
- *Decrease the sense of isolation by supporting parents in a parent programme, and provide parents with a mechanism for connecting to informal and formal community resources that are needed in order for meaningful and lasting changes to occur.'*

Section Two

The Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the evaluation methodology, the limitations of the evaluation, the information provided to undertake the evaluation and how it was analysed.

2.2 The evaluation design

As part of the programme's built in evaluation process a Course Summary Report (CSR) was completed on each course by the course facilitator(s) and three forms were completed on or by the individual participants.

The facilitator completed the CSR at the end of the course. It provided a combination of quantitative and qualitative information on the course. This included: name of the agency and individuals running the course, timing and location of the course, recruitment methods, number and ethnic background of the participants, course attendance numbers, measures to support attendance, reasons participants dropped out, modifications to the curriculum content, invited community speakers, participants' response to the course and their group plans for after the course, whether any participants were especially impacted by the course and / or identified for follow up, issues related to the facilitation process, the facilitator's experience of running the course, their agency's plans for future use of the curriculum and suggestions for improving / enhancing the curriculum.

Three forms were completed on individual participants – a registration form completed by the course facilitator, a pre course assessment questionnaire and a post course assessment questionnaire, both completed by the participant her/himself.

The registration form included the participant's contact details, age, gender, how long they had been in the UK, their ethnic background and first language, their relationship to the child(ren), their educational attainment, household income, whether they had ever attended a parenting course before, their reasons for taking the course and how they had heard about the course.

The pre and post course assessment questionnaires included questionnaires designed as 'before' and 'after' measures to test the impact of the course on the participants. The questionnaires covered community activities (5 questions), participant / child interactions (16 statements), participant competence / ability (10 statements) and child competence / ability (8 statements on up to two children). The relevant child(ren)'s age and gender were also requested. The post course assessment questionnaire included additional questions on the participants' views of the course, its impact on them and whether they planned to participate in a parent group after graduation.

2.3 Limitations of the evaluation and information provided for the evaluation

A strength of this evaluation model is that the information required for the evaluation was built into the process of running the course. However, in practice there were a number of limitations:

- There were difficulties in ensuring that all the required forms were completed and returned to the Race Equality Foundation.
- Some of the forms that were returned were not fully completed.

- This evaluation model mainly focuses on those who successfully completed the course and provides only limited information on participants who dropped out of the course.
- As the data was incomplete, it was not possible to use the information from the registration forms and the pre course assessment questionnaires to compare the characteristics of those who dropped out with those who successfully completed the course.
- There were some difficulties in interpreting the results of the pre and post course assessment questionnaires.
- There was no control group of parents to compare the impact of the course on the participants, compared with people who had not attended the course.
- There was no medium or long term follow up to assess the impact of the course on the participants.
- The objectives of the programme were written in a way that made it difficult to directly address some aspects of them using this evaluation model alone.

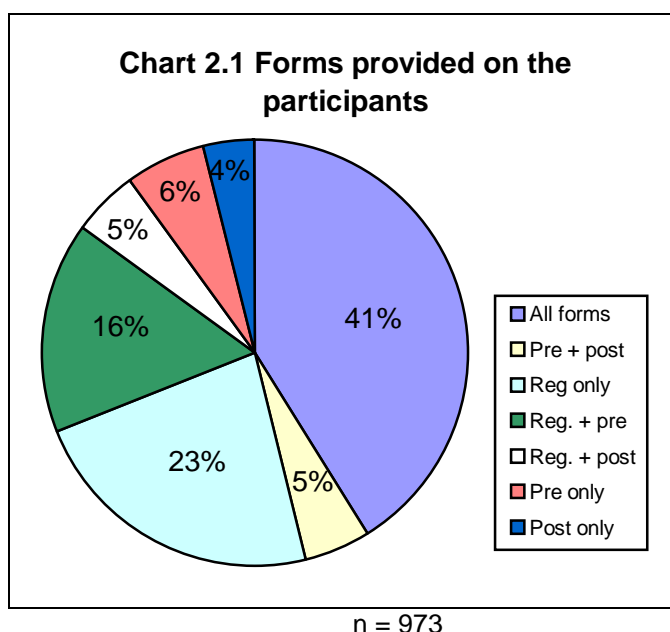
Information was provided on 82 courses out of 106 courses run during the period January 2004 to March 2005. Thus 77% of the courses are covered by this evaluation. A CSR completed by the course facilitator(s), was received for all but six of the courses. For three of the courses, although there was a CSR, no forms/questionnaires completed on individual participants were provided to the researchers.

Although three forms could be provided on each participant attending the course, in practice the number of forms provided on each participant varied considerably, both within courses and between courses. There were a variety of reasons for this.

Chart 2.1 below summarises the information provided on the participants. Forms were provided on a total of 973 participants:

- Registration forms were provided for 831 (85%) of the participants.
- All three forms were provided for 400 (41%) of the participants.
- An additional 45 (5%) of the participants had both the pre and post course assessment questionnaires returned, but no registration form.

Therefore, data from 445 (46%) of the participants could be analysed to assess changes in responses to the assessment questionnaires before and after the course.



Whether the missing data would have provided different information to inform the evaluation is not known. Although the data was incomplete, information was provided on a large number of participants and courses and included a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data.

2.4 Analysis of the data and statistical tests

The quantitative data (numerical figures) were analysed using Excel and SPSS, a computer software package for the analysis of statistical data. The qualitative data (written comments) were analysed manually and with the assistance of MaxQDA, a computer software package for the analysis of textual data.

Two statistical tests were used to test the statistical significance of the responses to the pre and post course assessment questionnaires – the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test and the McNemar test.

The Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test is the non parametric equivalent of the Paired-Samples Two Tailed T Test. The Wilcoxon test has less stringent requirements of the data than the parametric T test. The Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test ranks the absolute values of the differences between the data in two paired samples and calculates the number of positive and negative differences. It was assessed as being the most suitable test for testing the statistical significance of the responses to the pre and post course assessment questionnaires where the participants could choose from a range of response options. The McNemar test was used for the questions where there were only two response options.

2.5 Summary of Section Two

- The evaluation was based on information from the Course Summary Reports (CSRs) completed on each course by the course facilitator(s) and three forms completed on or by the individual participants, as part of the programme's built in evaluation process.
- A number of limitations of the evaluation were pointed out.
- Information was provided on 82 courses.
- There was a CSR for 76 of the courses.
- Forms were provided on a total of 973 individual participants:
 - Registration forms were provided for 831 (85%) of the participants.
 - All three forms were provided for 400 (41%) of the participants.
 - An additional 45 (5%) of the participants had both the pre and post course forms returned.
- Therefore, data from 445 (46%) of the participants could be analysed to assess changes in responses to the assessment questionnaires before and after the course.
- Although the data was incomplete, information was provided on a large number of participants and courses and included a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data.

Section Three

The Parenting Courses

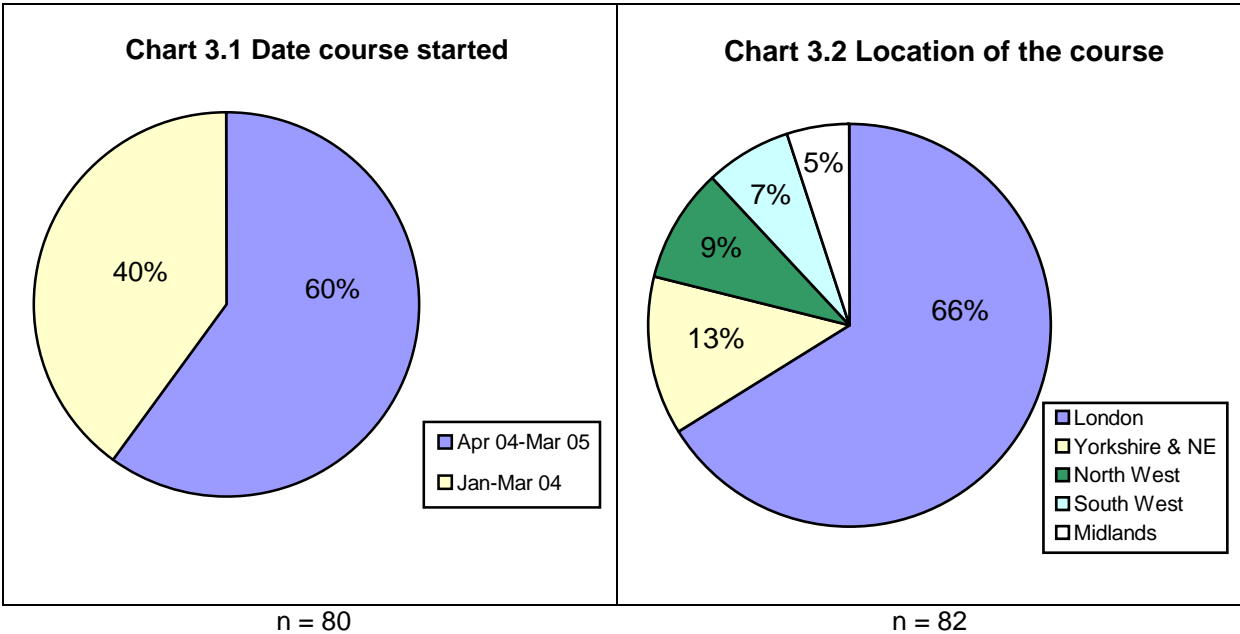
3.1 Introduction

This section presents information on the 82 courses. It covers the start date and location of the courses; the agencies running the courses; the timing and length of the courses; how participants were recruited and the resulting ethnic, language and gender mix of participants across the courses. The information in this section is primarily based on the information provided by the facilitators in the 76 completed Case Summary Reports (CSRs). Where necessary, this was augmented by information from the forms completed on the participants.

3.2 Start date and location of the courses

Data was provided on a total of 82 courses. The majority of the courses (48 courses, 60%) commenced between April 2004 and March 2005. Just over a third of them (32 courses, 40%) commenced between January and March 2004, see Chart 3.1. In addition the start date for two courses was not specified.

Nearly two thirds of the courses (54 courses, 66%) were held in London, eleven courses (13%) were held in Yorkshire and North East England, seven courses (9%) were held in North West England, six courses (7%) were held in South West England, and the remaining four courses (5%) were held in the Midlands, see Chart 3.2.



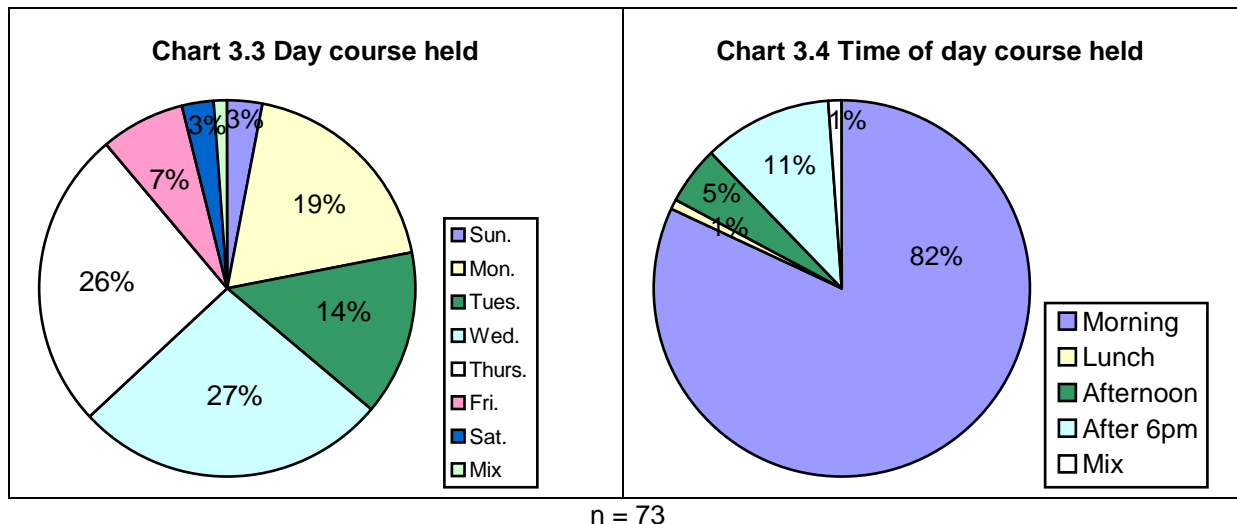
3.3 The agencies providing the courses

The courses were run by a wide range of agencies – voluntary, statutory and partnership organisations, and community groups. The statutory organisations included Social Services, Youth Offending Teams and Adult Education Services. The voluntary and partnership organisations included local agencies of wider national organisations / initiatives (such as Sure Start, Barnardos, Women’s Aid, Homestart and the Children’s Fund), and a range of locally based voluntary and community organisations. The local voluntary organisations and community groups included organisations serving specific ethnic groups and religious organisations. The largest number of courses, were run by the Newham African Caribbean and Asian Project

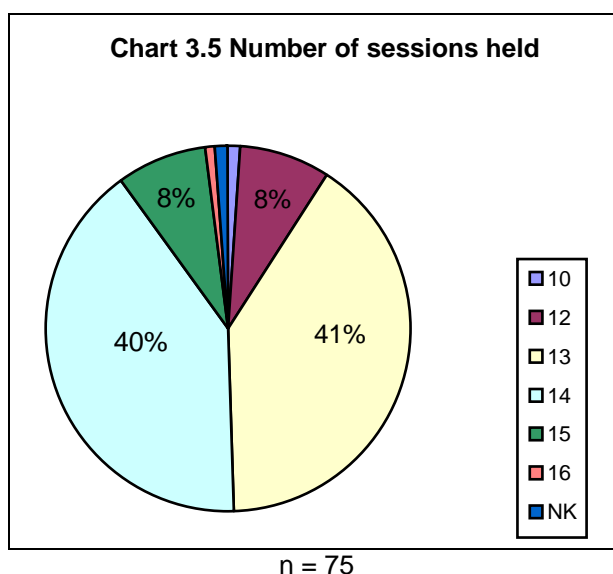
(NACAAP) in East London (9 courses) the Coram Strengthening Families Project in East London (8 courses) and On Track FSU in Bradford (4 courses).

3.4 Timing and length of the courses

The courses were usually held on a weekday morning, most frequently on a Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, see Charts 3.3 and 3.4. A few courses were held in the evenings or at the weekend.



The course format consisted of an Introductory Session followed by 12 three hour sessions taught in consecutive weeks, but in practice there was some flexibility. Most courses (81%) consisted of 13 or 14 sessions, see Chart 3.5. One course had only ten sessions and one course for Bangladeshi mothers was held over 26 weeks, although the precise number of sessions was not specified. Additional sessions were held for a variety of reasons including holding a separate graduation ceremony. Some sessions were longer than the recommended three hours. Some courses had a break to accommodate school or facilitator holidays.



Examples of extra sessions held:

'We did 3 extra sessions because in the beginning attendance was poor because of the bad weather (raining and snowing).'

'Fifteen sessions – the first session was dominated with registration etc.'

'Fourteen sessions including graduation.'

'Three sessions were held at a black women's training centre. A total of 13 sessions were held including the introductory sessions. Two of the sessions were extended sessions from 9.30 – 3.30 and one session from 9.30 – 2.30.'

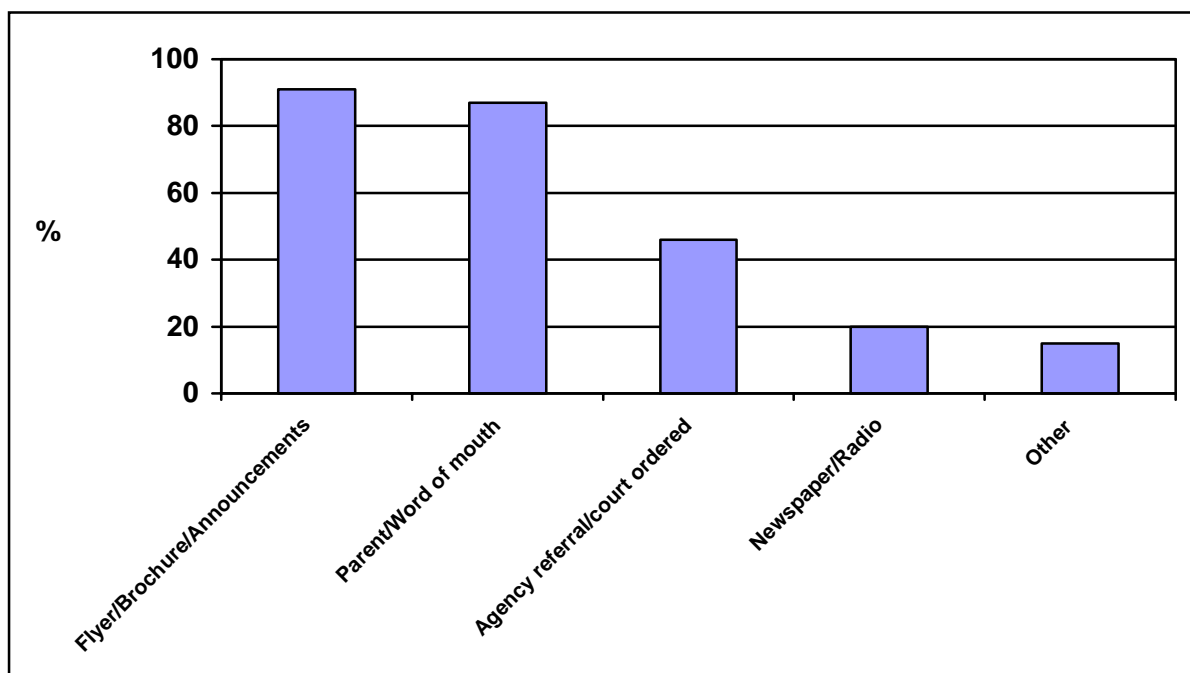
'Thirteen x 3 hourly session. Two x full day session.'

'Fifteen sessions – we held an extra session at the end of the course, where the participants were able to meet those who had attended the previous course. The idea came from the group themselves.'

3.5 Methods of recruitment to the courses

The most common forms of recruitment to the courses were through flyers / brochures and announcements, used for 91% of courses, and by talking to parents / word of mouth, used for 87% of courses, see Chart 3.6. Nearly half of the courses (46%), also had some parents referred to them by agencies, typically social services, or the courts. A fifth (20%), also made use of newspapers and / or the radio to find participants. A further 12% reported using other recruitment methods. In the written comments, five agencies mentioned recruiting through Sure Start projects, two agencies held taster sessions for potential participants and two mentioned visits to schools.

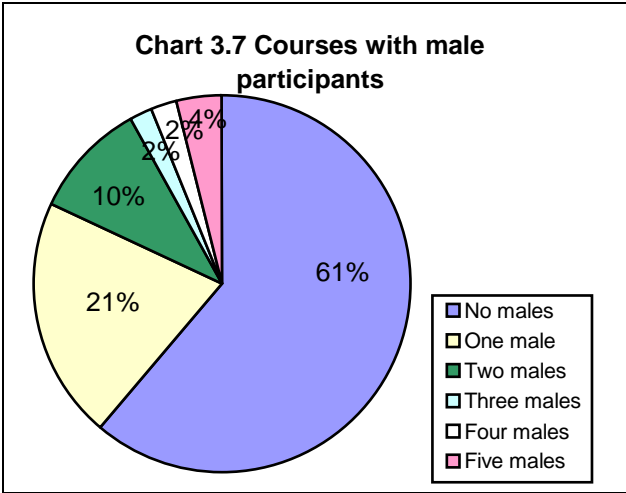
Chart 3.6 Recruitment methods



n = 76

3.6 Gender of the participants on the courses

The majority of the participants were female. Whilst males remained a small proportion of the participants, over a third of the courses (39%) included at least one male participant, see Chart 3.7. There was one man on 17 of the courses (21%) and two men on 8 of the courses (10%). A further 8% of the courses attracted three, four or five men. One course was just for Bangladeshi men and this attracted 5 participants.



3.7 Targeting of participants

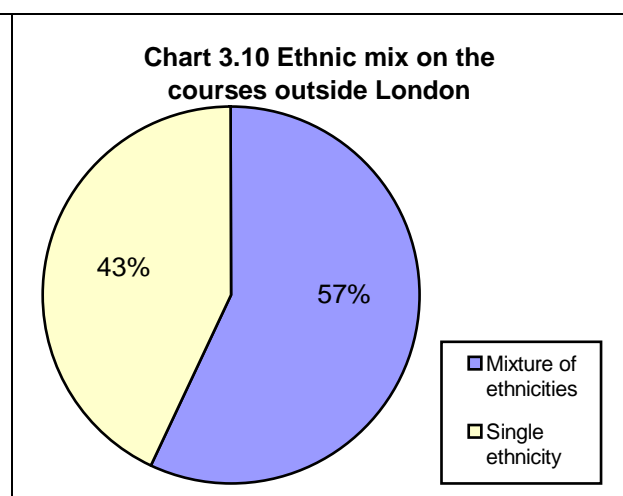
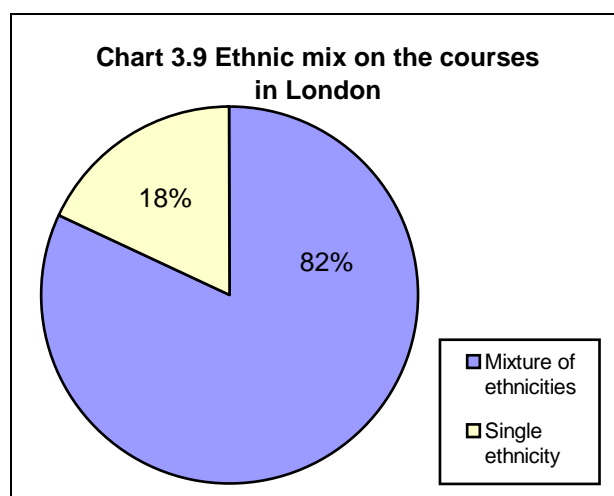
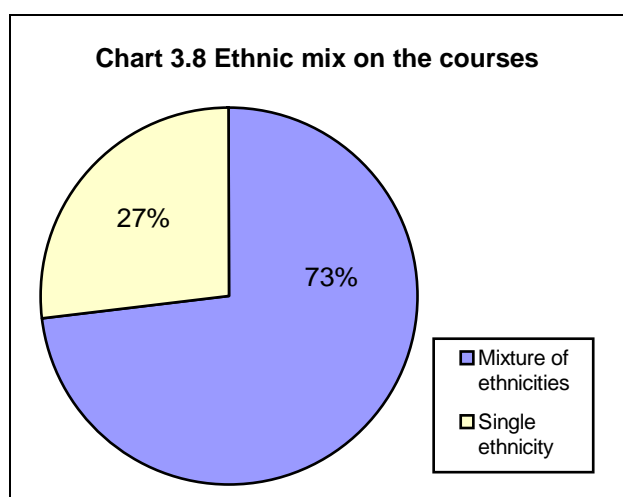
Just over half of the facilitators (55%) reported that the courses were targeted at specific groups, In many cases this referred to specific age groups, geographical areas (including Sure Start areas) or specific schools. Four courses (5%) were specifically for people under court orders or for parents of offenders. Three courses (4%) specifically mentioned people who had experienced domestic violence. Two courses were specifically for refugees. One course was for single parents and another was for teenage parents up to 25 years. Some courses were targeted at specific ethnic groups, as described in 3.8, below.

3.8 Ethnic mix of the participants on the courses

Based on information from both the CSR and the parents' registration forms, the ethnic background of the participants on each course was examined. Nearly three quarters of the courses (73%) had participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, see Chart 3.8. Just over a quarter of the courses had participants from a single ethnic background (27%). The picture was slightly different for courses within and outside London, see Charts 3.9 and 3.10. Outside London there were more courses with participants from a single ethnic background (43% outside London compared with 18% in London).

As an example of the ethnic mix of the participants, on one course in London there were two Bangladeshis, two Afro-Caribbeans, two Spanish, two British, one Black British, one Nepalese, one Chinese and one person of Mixed Heritage.

As the programme has expanded to cover a wider geographical area of England, the number of White British participants has increased. Amongst the 45 courses with an ethnic mix of participants, 15 of the courses (18% overall) had mostly White British participants.



Some courses were targeted at specific ethnic groups, Table 3.1 shows the number of courses with participants from one broad ethnic background only. The course facilitators reported that the targeting of specific ethnic groups had mainly been for Bangladeshis and also for people of Chinese, Somali and Iranian backgrounds. Although not recorded as being aimed at specific ethnic groups, one course had all Angolan participants and another had mainly Yemeni participants. Two churches ran courses for their members, who were mainly of Afro-Caribbean origin or Mixed Heritage. All the participants on two courses were White British.

Table 3.1 Courses with participants from one broad ethnic background only

Ethnic background	Number of courses	% out of all 82 courses
Bangladeshi	9	11%
African (2 Somali, 1 Angolan, 1 no country specified)	4	5%
Chinese	3	4%
Afro Caribbean / Mixed Heritage	3	4%
White British	2	2%
Iranian	1	1%
Total:	22	27%

n = 82

3.9 Ethnic mix of the participants on the courses by type of agency

The ethnic mix of the courses was examined by the type of agency providing the course (voluntary, statutory or partnership organisation or community group). Each type of agency was able to access a range of ethnic groups. In some cases, where local ethnic minority organisations and community groups organised courses, this clearly assisted with reaching specific ethnic groups. For example, all but four of the 46 Chinese participants were on the three courses run by a local Chinese organisation.

3.10 Summary of Section Three

- Information on the courses was provided in the 76 CSRs completed by the facilitators.
- The courses reached a wide range of ethnic groups. On almost three quarters of the courses (73%) the participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Just over a quarter of the courses (27%) had participants from a single ethnic background.
- Some courses were targeted at specific ethnic groups: mainly for Bangladeshis, but also for people of other ethnic backgrounds.
- Just over half of the courses were targeted at other specific groups. In many cases this was specific age groups, geographical areas (including Sure Start areas) or specific schools.
- A few courses were targeted at people under court orders or for parents of offenders; people who had experienced domestic violence; refugees; single parents or teenage parents.
- Just over a third of the courses (39%) had at least one male participant.
- The courses were run by a wide range of agencies – voluntary, statutory and partnership organisations, and community groups. Each type of agency was able to access a range of ethnic groups. In some cases, where local ethnic minority organisations and community groups organised courses, this clearly assisted with reaching specific ethnic groups.
- The majority of the courses (59%) commenced between April 2004 and March 2005. Two thirds of the courses (66%) were held in London. Other courses were held in Yorkshire or North East England, North West England, South West England and the Midlands.
- The courses were usually held on a weekday morning. Most courses consisted of 13 or 14 sessions. Additional sessions were held for a variety of reasons.
- The most common forms of recruitment to the courses were through flyers / brochures and announcements and by talking to parents / word of mouth.

Section Four Characteristics of the Participants – The Full Sample

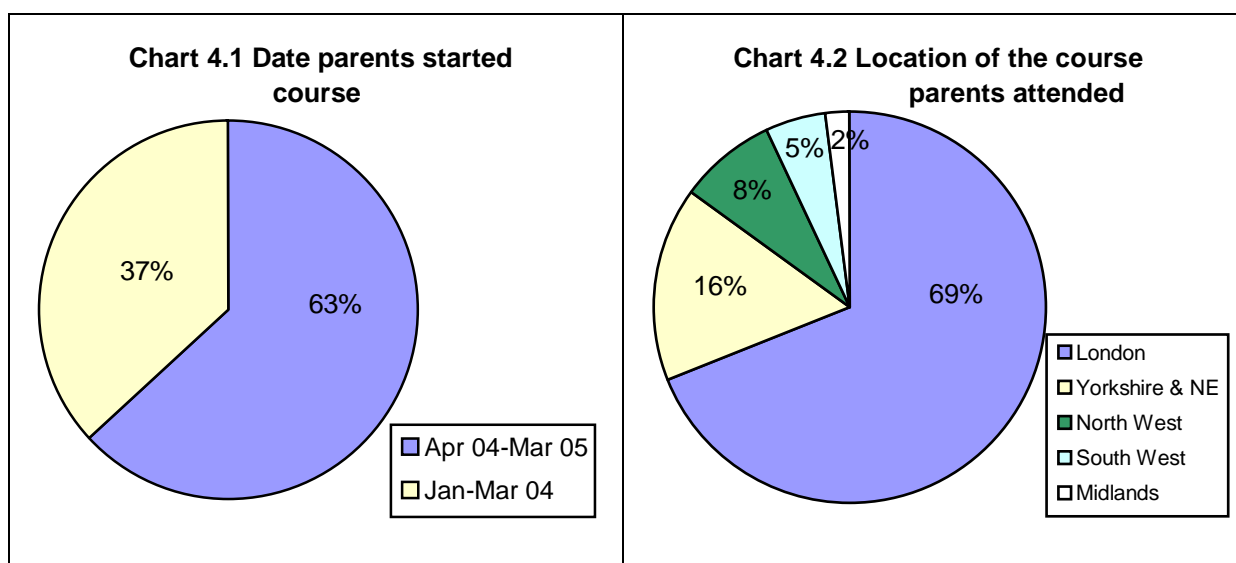
4.1 Introduction

This section presents information on the characteristics of all the participants. The information is based on the data from the registration forms that were returned on the participants. A total of 831 registration forms were provided. A few of the registration forms did not include all the questions and not all questions were completed on all of the participants. Information on the age and gender of the children is from the pre course questionnaire.

4.2 Location and timing of the courses

The forms from the participants for courses that started in the year April 2004 to March 2005 and between January and March 2004 were broadly similar to the proportion of CSRs received for courses that started during these two time periods, (see Chart 3.1 in Section Three and Chart 4.1, below).

The figures for the location of the course are broadly similar to the information from the CSRs on the location of courses (see Chart 3.2 in Section Three and Chart 4.2, below).

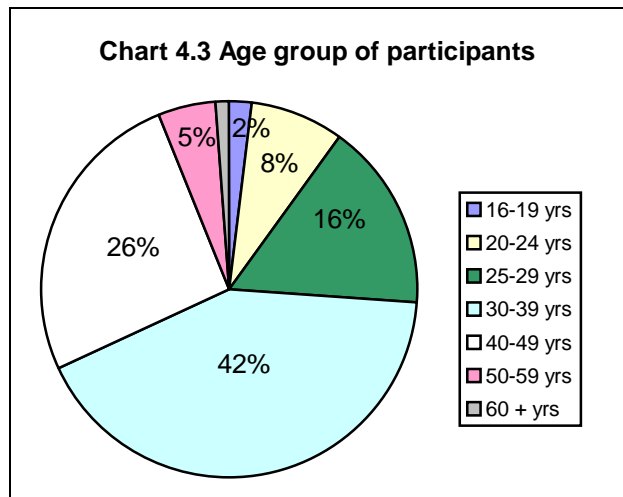


n = 973

4.3 Gender and age of the participants

Information on the gender of the participants was available on 861 people. Whilst most of the participants were female, a small, but significant, proportion were male (11%). The main differences between the male and female participants are explored in section 4.12.

The age range of the participants was from 16 to 77 years. The largest group were aged between 30 and 39 years, see Chart 4.3.

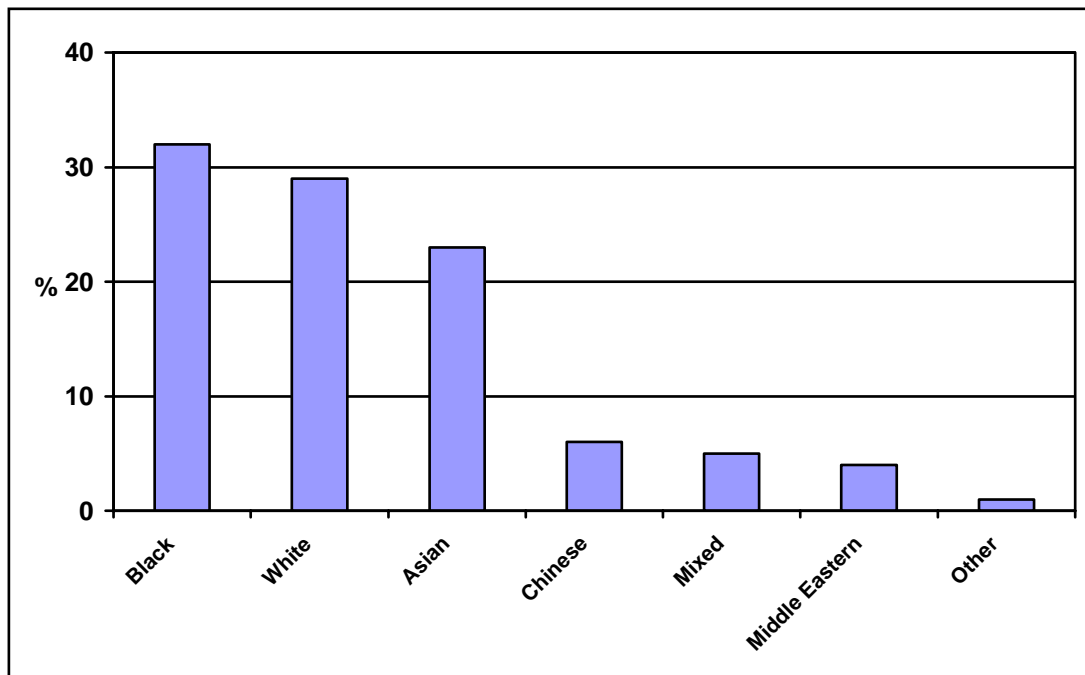


n = 809

4.4 Ethnic background of the participants

Overall, 75% of the participants were of minority ethnic origin. Chart 4.4 shows the ethnic background of the participants by broad ethnic group. Nearly a third (32%) of the participants were 'Black' or 'Black British', 29% were 'White', 23% were 'Asian' or 'Asian British', and the remaining 16% were of 'Chinese', 'Mixed heritage', 'Middle Eastern' or 'Other' ethnicity.

Chart 4.4 Broad ethnic background of the participants



n = 791

These categories covered a wide range of ethnic groups. The largest sub groups within the broad ethnic groupings were 'White British' (25%), 'African' (18%), 'Bangladeshi' (15%) and Afro-Caribbean (11%).

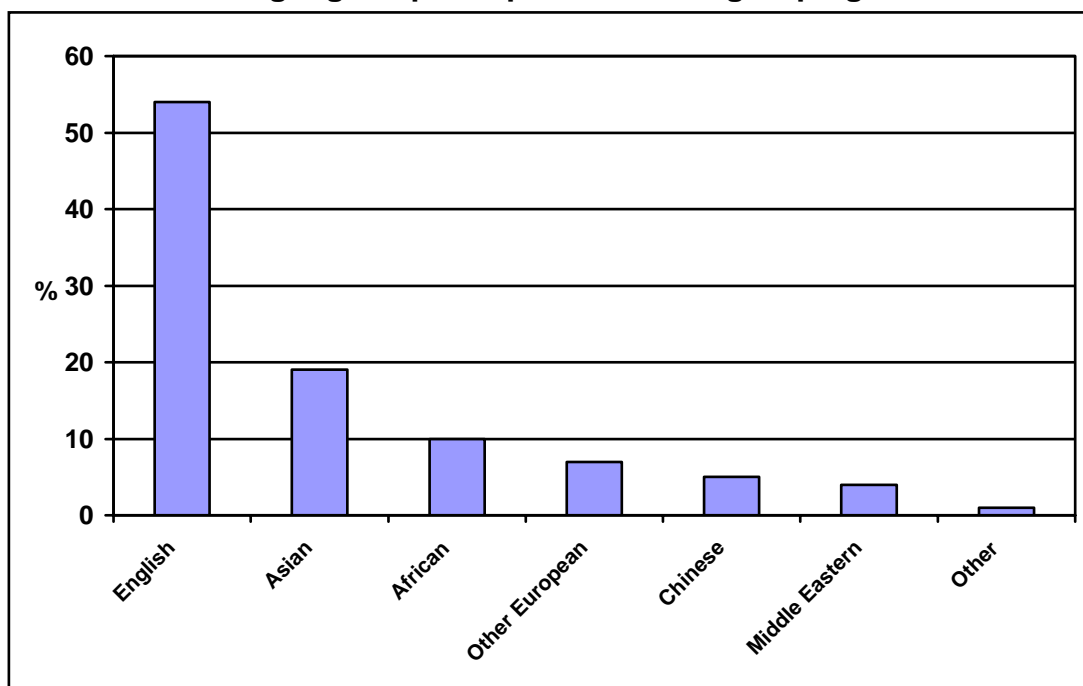
The participants described a total of 89 different ethnicities:

- The 'White' group included people who described themselves as English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh Spanish, Italian, Polish, Turkish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Turkish Cypriot, Maltese, Albanian, Greek, Greek Cypriot, Bulgarian and people who were a mixture of these.
- The 'Black' group included Africans from Somalia, Nigeria, Ghana, The Congo, Zambia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Morocco, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Angola, Senegal, Lesotho and Afro-Caribbeans who described themselves as Afro-Caribbean, West Indian, Jamaican, Guyanan and Bermudan.
- The 'Asian' group included people who described themselves as Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Nepalese, Filipino and Asian.
- The 'Middle Eastern' group included people from Iran, the Yeman, Iraq and Afghanistan.

4.5 Language of the participants

Nearly half of the participants (46%) had a first language other than English. Chart 4.5 shows the broad language groupings. Nearly a fifth (19%) spoke an Asian language and 10% spoke an African language.

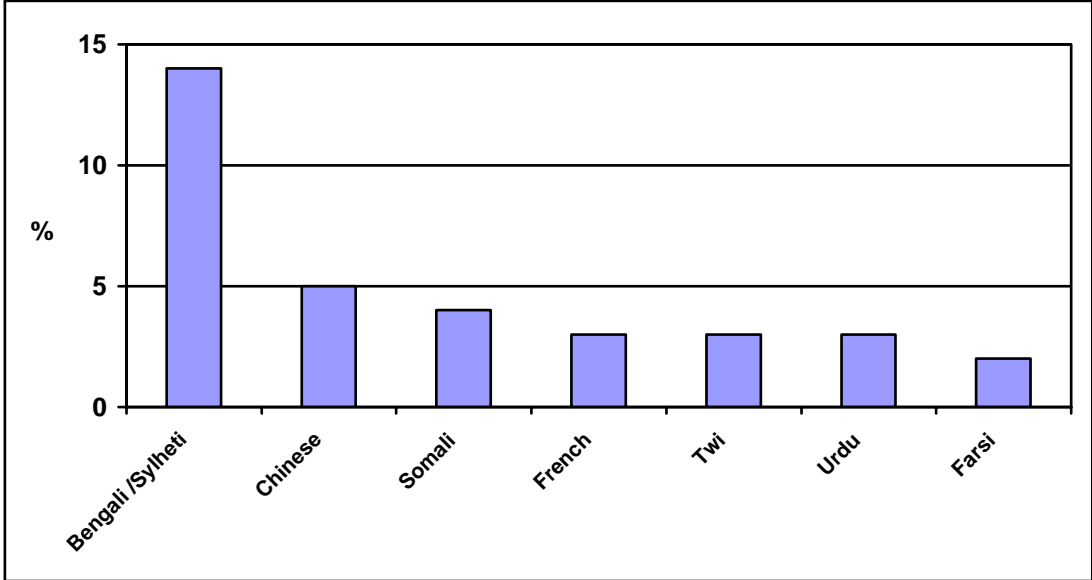
Chart 4.5 First language of participants – broad groupings



n = 835

A total of 53 languages were mentioned as a first language. Based on their individual descriptions, the main languages, after English, were: Bengali/Sylheti, Chinese, Somali, French, Twi, Urdu and Farsi, see Chart 4.6. All but one of the participants with French as their first language were of African origin.

Chart 4.6 First language of participants – main languages excluding English
(shown as percentage of total participants providing language information)

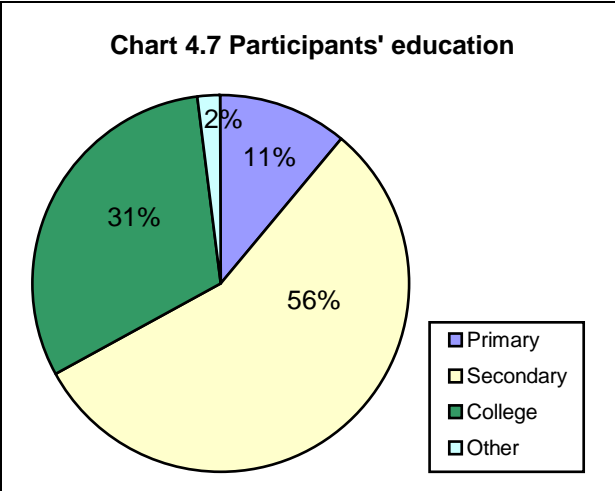


n = 835

4.6 Participants' education

Some participants provided information on their education. This question was missing on some of the registration forms. Some of the participants had a challenge answering this question as they did not receive their education in the UK and therefore the categories provided did not apply to them.

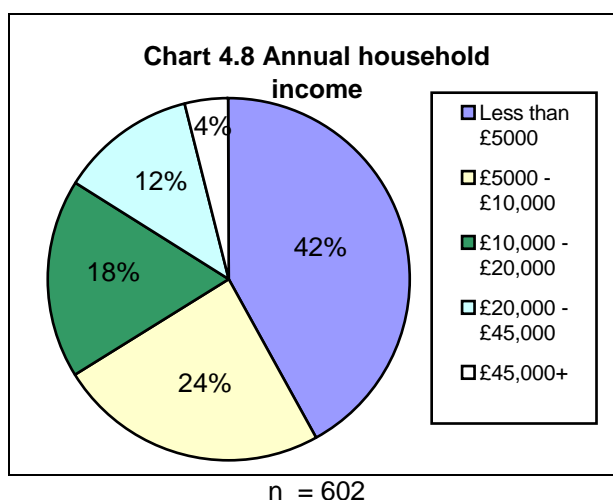
For just over a tenth of the participants (11%) their education had ended by the end of primary school. For over half (56%) their education had ended at the end of secondary school and nearly a third (31%) had completed a course at college, see Chart 4.7.



n = 680

4.7 Household income

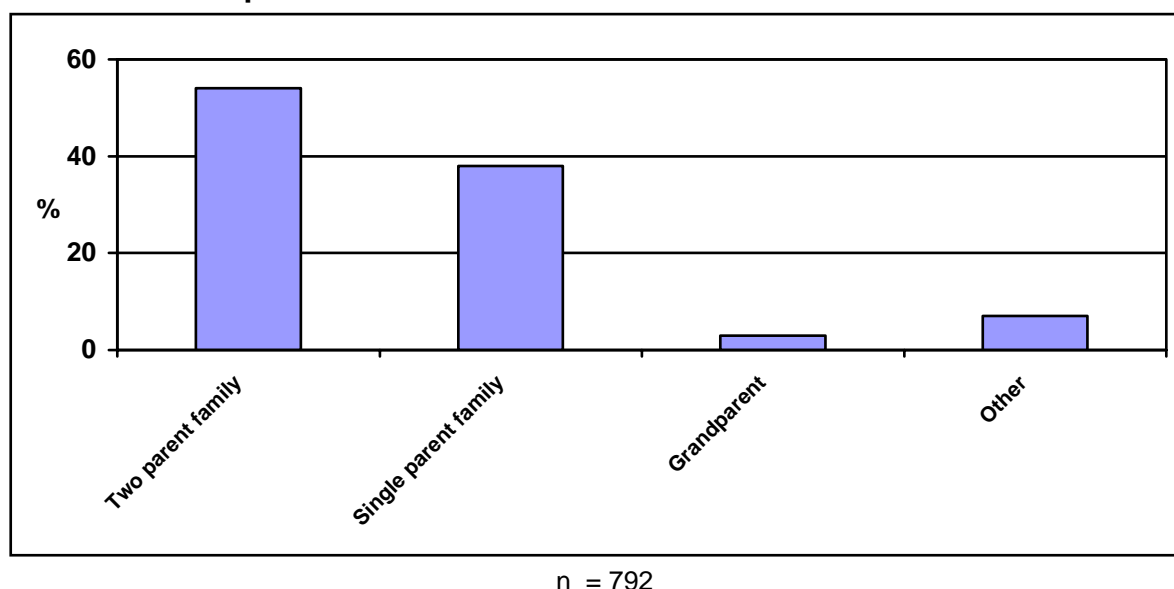
Some participants provided information on their household income. This question was missing on some of the registration forms and some of the forms had different income brackets and most were not mutually exclusive. The largest grouping (42%) had a household income of under £5,000 per year and almost a quarter (24%) had a household income of between £5,000 and £10,000, see Chart 4.8.



4.8 Participants' current status in relation to the children

The participants were asked about their relationship to the children. It was possible to answer 'Yes' to more than one of the responses, however most people did not. Over half (54%) were living as a two parent family, over a third (38%) were a single parent, 3% were grandparents, and 7% had other relationships with the children, see Chart 4.9. A few people were taking the course for professional reasons.

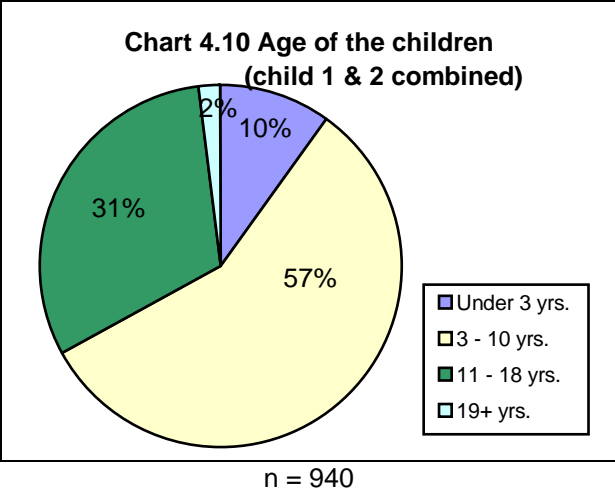
Chart 4.9 Participants' current status in relation to the children



4.9 Children's age and gender

Participants were asked to provide information on the gender and age of up to two children, aged 3 to 18 years, on the pre and post course questionnaires. Just over half of the children were male (first child: 52% male and second child: 54% male). Over half of the children (57%) were aged between three and ten years and nearly a third (31%) were aged between 11 and 18 years, see Chart 4.10. Some participants provided information on children who were under 3 years or over

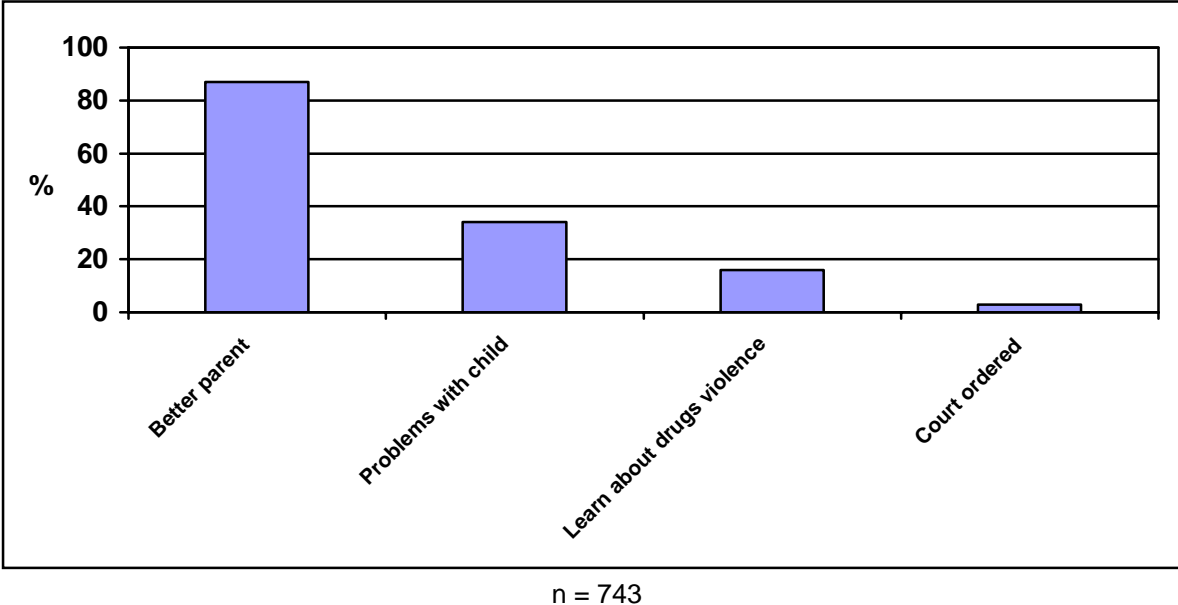
18 years. The ages of the first child ranged from under 1 to 32 years and the ages of the second child ranged from under 1 to 25 years.



4.10 Previous experience of parent education courses and reasons for taking the course

Just over a tenth (11%) of the participants had attended a parent education course in the past. The participants were also asked why they were taking the course, they could answer 'Yes' to more than one of the responses. Most people (87%) stated that they were attending the course to become a better parent, just over a third (34%) said that they were having problems with a child, 16% came with the intention of learning about drugs and violence and 3% were ordered by the court, see Chart 4.11.

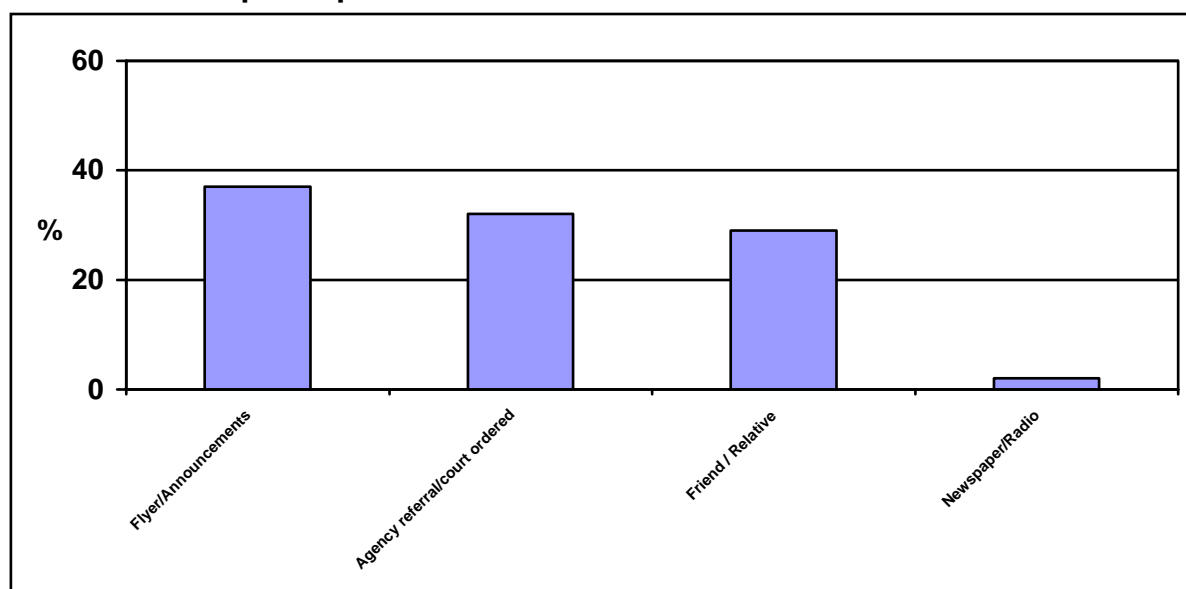
Chart 4.11 Participants' reasons for taking the course



4.11 How participants heard about the course

The participants were asked how they had heard about the course, again they could answer 'Yes' to more than one of the responses. Over a third of the participants (37%) had heard about the course through flyers and announcements and nearly a third (32%) said that they had been referred by an agency or were ordered to attend by a court. Participants also heard through friends or relatives (29%), see Chart 4.12. Few participants had heard about the course through a newspaper or the radio.

Chart 4.12 How participants heard about the course



n = 635

4.12 Characteristics of the male participants

There was a larger proportion of male participants on the courses that started in the year April 2004 to March 2005 (13% on the later courses compared with 7% on the earlier courses). The courses they attended had a very similar distribution across the country as the courses as a whole. The age distribution of the male participants was similar to the participants as a whole.

The ethnic background of the male participants was slightly different to the group as a whole. More were of minority ethnic background (81% compared with 75% overall). Nearly a third of the male participants were African (29% compared with 18% overall), and about a fifth were Bangladeshi (21% compared with 15% overall). The proportion of Afro-Caribbeans was the same as for the participants as a whole (11%).

The differences in ethnic background were reflected in the male participants' first language. Just under half had a first language other than English (49% compared with 46% overall). Bengali / Sylheti (16%) and French (12%) were the two other main languages (this compared with 14% and 3%, respectively overall).

The age at which the male participants left school and their household income levels were similar to the group as a whole. Fewer of the male participants were single parents and therefore more lived as a two parent family than the participants overall. Two parent families were 65% of the male sample and single parents were 23%. This compared with 54% and 38% overall respectively. The reasons why the male participants took the course were similar to the sample as a whole.

4.13 Summary of Section Four

- Registration forms were received on 831 participants. The timing and location of the courses attended by the participants reflected the CSR figures.
- 75% of the course participants were of minority ethnic origin and, between them, the participants mentioned a total of 89 different ethnic backgrounds.
- In terms of broad ethnic groupings nearly a third (32%) of the participants were 'Black' or 'Black British', 29% were 'White', 23% were 'Asian' or 'Asian British', and the remaining 16% were of 'Chinese', 'Mixed Heritage', 'Middle Eastern' or 'Other' ethnic origin.

- The largest sub groups within the broad ethnic groupings were 'White British' (25%), 'African' (18%), 'Bangladeshi' (15%) and Afro-Caribbean (11%).
- A total of 53 languages were mentioned as a first language. Nearly half of the participants (46%) had a first language other than English. Nearly a fifth (19%) spoke an Asian language and 10% spoke an African language.
- Based on their individual descriptions, the main languages, after English, were: Bengali/Sylheti, Chinese, Somali, French, Twi, Urdu and Farsi. The French speakers were predominantly of African origin.
- Whilst most of the participants were female, a small proportion was male (11%). The main difference between the male and female participants was in their ethnic background. More males were of minority ethnic background, particularly African and Bangladeshi, and this was reflected in their first language.
- Over a third of the participants were single parents (38%) and a few of the participants were grandparents (3%).
- Over 40% of the participants were aged between 30 and 39 years.
- For just over a tenth of the participants (11%) their education had ended by the end of primary school.
- Two thirds of the participants had a household income of £10,000 or less per year.
- Information on 940 children was provided on the pre course questionnaire. Just over half of the children were male. Over half the children (57%) were aged between three and ten years.
- A small proportion of the participants (11%) said that they had attended a parent education course in the past.
- Many participants (87%) stated that they were attending the course to become a better parent, a third (34%) said that they were having problems with a child, 16% came with the intention of learning about drugs and violence and 3% were ordered by the court.
- Participants had usually heard about the course through flyers and announcements (37%), been referred by an agency / were ordered to attend by a court (32%) or through friends or relatives. Few participants had heard about the course through a newspaper or the radio.

Section Five

Characteristics of the Participants – The Paired Sample

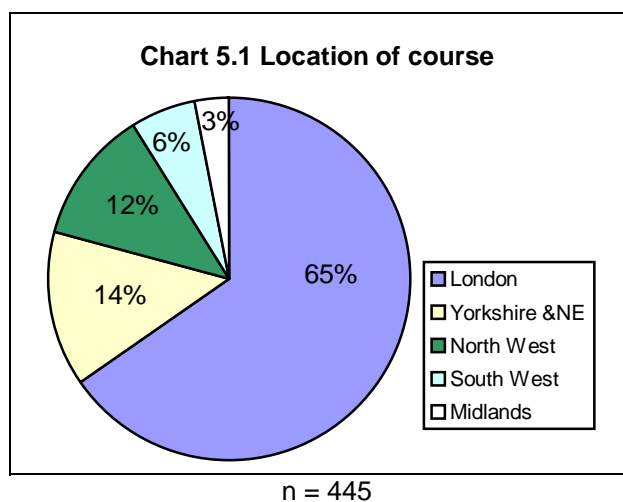
5.1 Introduction

A total of 445 participants completed both the pre and post questionnaires. This 'paired sample' was used to assess the impact of the course in terms of quantitative changes in the participants. This section looks at the characteristics of this sample to identify how similar it was to the full sample. Differences between the characteristics of the paired sample and the full sample are identified. The charts in this section can be compared with the charts for the full sample in Section Four.

5.2 Timing and location and of the courses

The timing of the course in the paired sample was almost identical to the full sample.

The location of the course in the paired sample was broadly similar to the full sample. There were slightly fewer participants from courses in London and Yorkshire / North East England in the paired sample, see Chart 5.1.



5.3 Gender and age of the participants

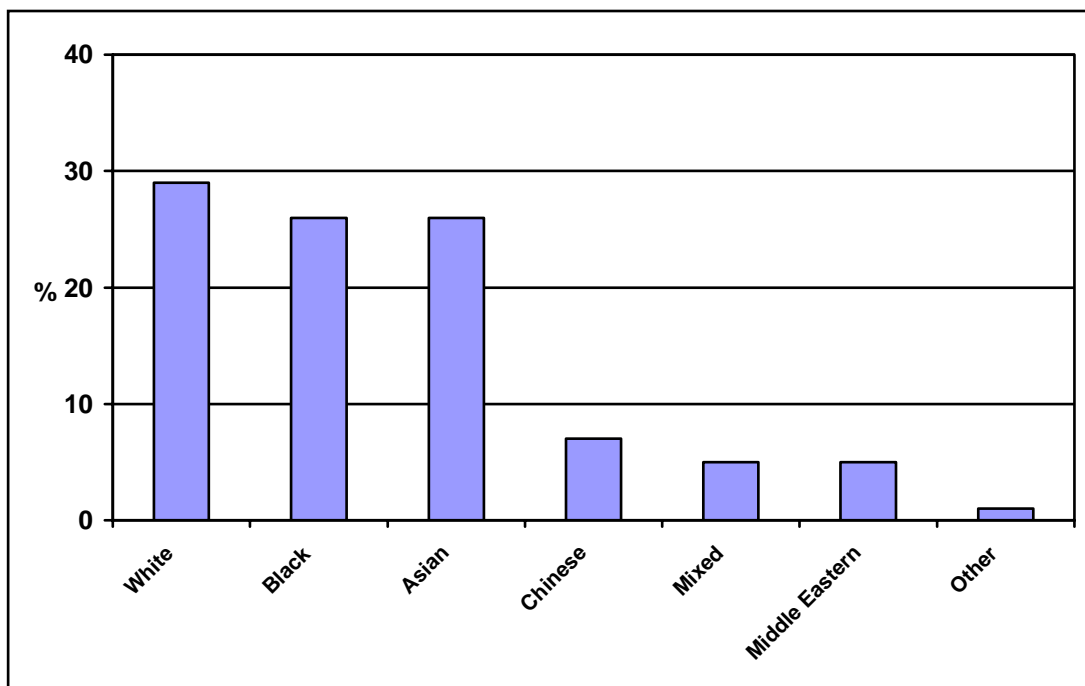
Information on the gender and age of the participants was similar to the full sample.

5.4 Ethnic background of the participants

Overall, amongst the paired sample participants, 74% were of minority ethnic origin. Chart 5.2 shows the ethnic background of the participants by broad ethnic group. The percentage of 'Asian' participants was slightly higher in the paired sample than the full sample (26% compared with 23%) and the percentage of 'Black' participants was slightly lower (26% compared with 32%). In the remaining categories the percentage of participants in the two samples was identical or almost identical.

The participants mentioned a total of 60 different ethnic groups compared with 89 in the full sample. Amongst the largest sub groups within the broad ethnic groupings, the greatest difference compared to the full sample was that the participants of African origin decreased from 18% to 8%. Other groups increased slightly in response to this.

Chart 5.2 Broad ethnic background of the participants



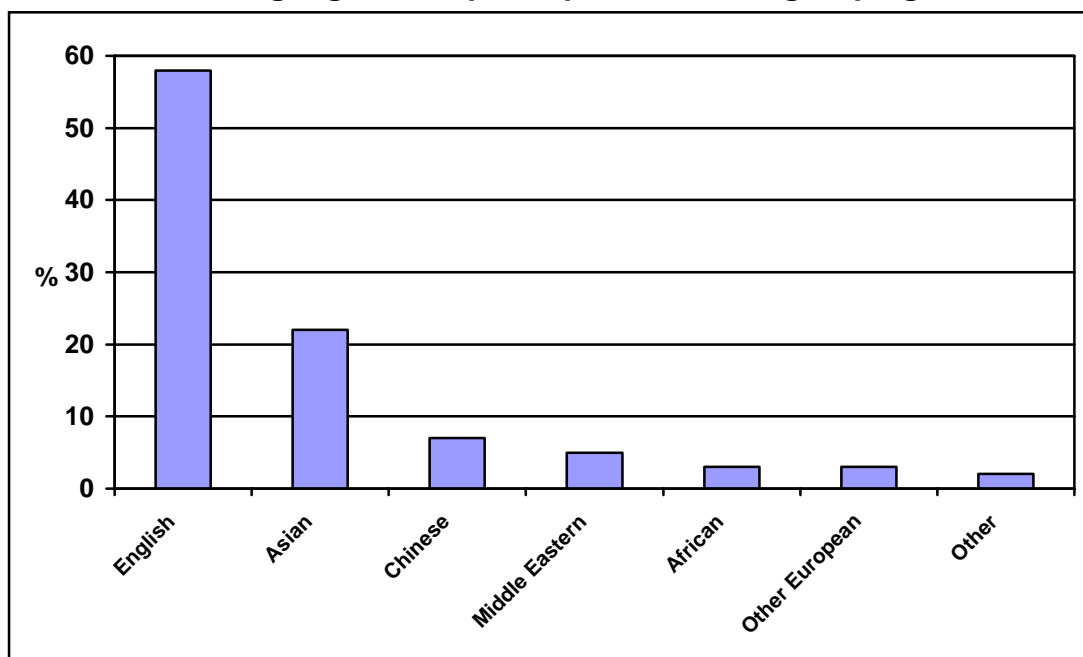
n = 387

5.5 First language of the participants

Forty two percent of the paired sample had a first language other than English. This was slightly lower than the full sample (46%).

The main language groupings are shown in Chart 5.3. In the paired sample, there was a higher percentage of participants whose first language was English, an Asian language or Chinese. There was a lower percentage of participants whose first language was an African language or an Other European language. Both of these decreases were largely due to there being a lower proportion of people of African origin in the paired sample.

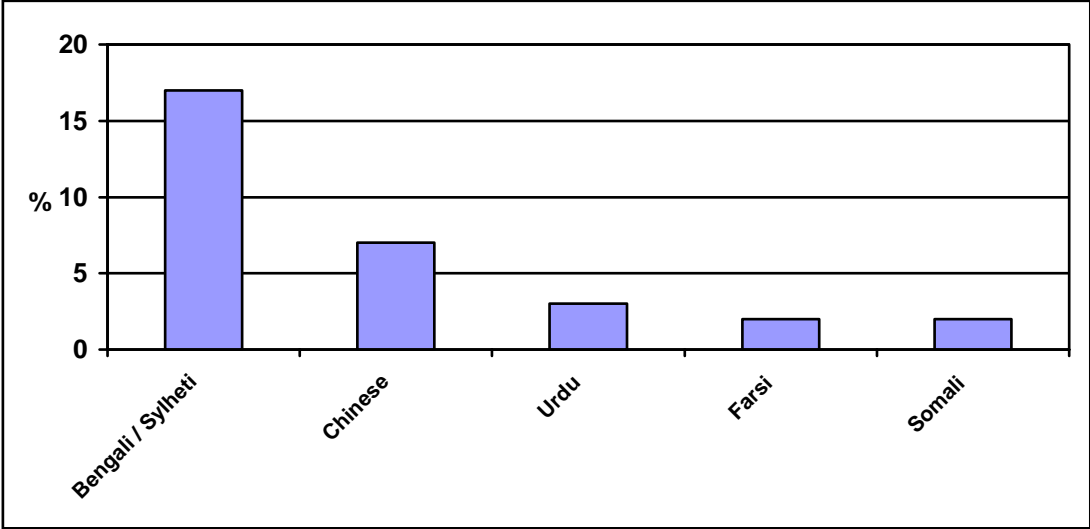
Chart 5.3 First language of the participants – broad groupings



n = 403

The participants mentioned a total of 32 languages as their first language. This was a smaller range of languages than the 53 spoken by participants in the full sample. Based on their individual descriptions, the main languages, after English, were: Bengali / Sylheti, Chinese, Urdu, Farsi and Somali, see Chart 5.4.

Chart 5.4 First language of participants – main languages excluding English



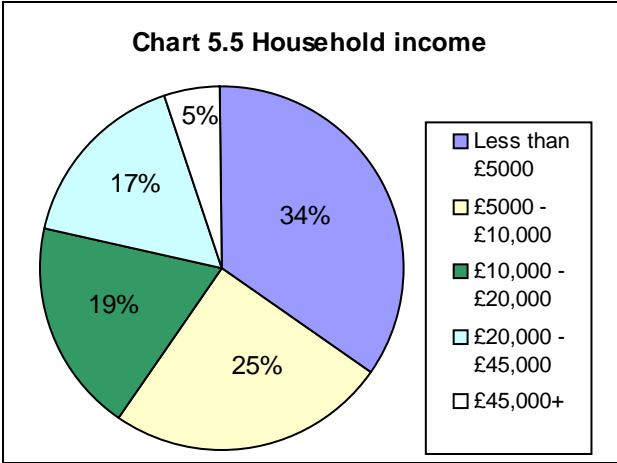
n = 403

5.6 Participants’ education level

All the figures for the paired sample were very similar to the full sample.

5.7 Household income

The largest grouping (34%) had an income of under £5,000 and a quarter had an income of between £5,000 and £10,000, see Chart 5.5. The percentage with an income of under £5,000 was lower than for the full sample (42%), and the percentage with an income of £20,000 to £45,000 (17%) was higher than for the full sample (12%).



n = 680

5.8 Participants’ current status in relation to the children

The figures for the paired sample were almost identical to the full sample.

5.9 Previous experience of parent education courses and reasons for taking the course

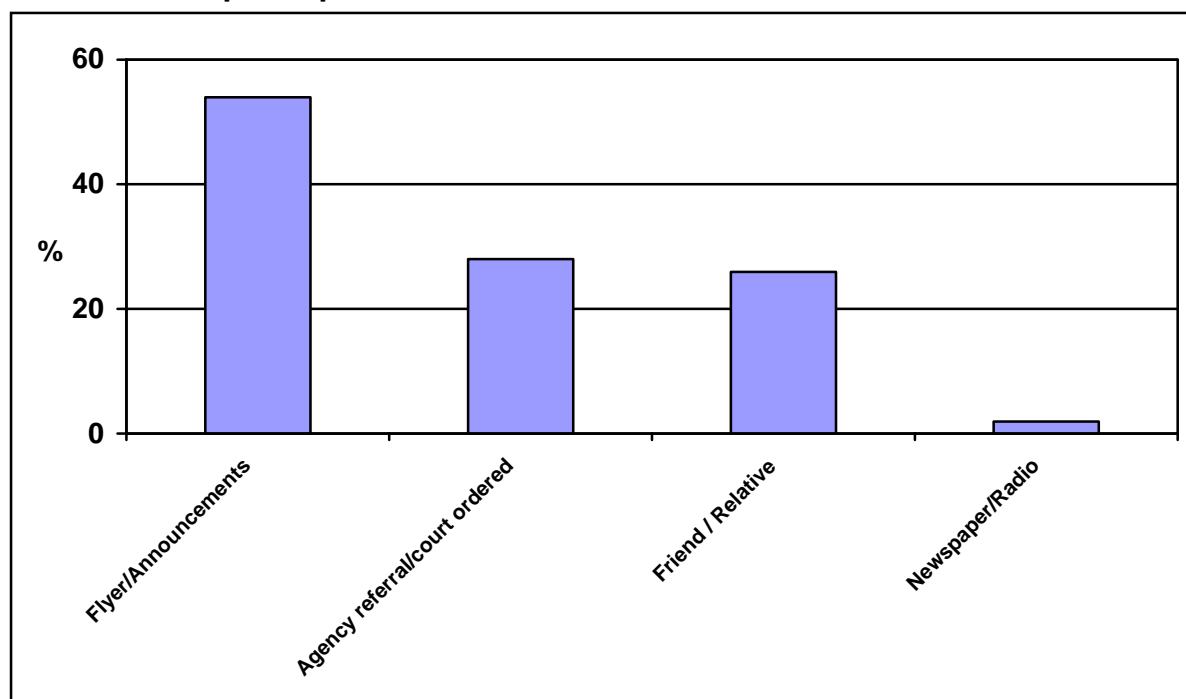
In the paired sample 368 people provided information on whether they had taken a parent education course in the past, 14% of them had compared with 11% in the full sample.

The participants' reasons for taking the course were almost identical to the full sample.

5.10 How participants heard about the course

Nearly half of the participants had heard about the course through flyers and announcements (46%), less than a third (28%) said that they had been referred by an agency or were ordered to attend by a court. Others heard by talking to friends / relatives (26%), see Chart 5.6. The main difference between the two samples was that more of the participants in the paired sample had heard about the course through flyers and announcements.

Chart 5.6 How participants heard about the course



n = 326

5.11 Summary of Section Five

- A total of 445 participants completed both the pre and post course questionnaires. This 'paired sample' was used to assess the impact of the course in terms of quantitative changes in the participants.
- In most respects the characteristics of the paired sample were very similar to the characteristics of the full sample.
- The main differences were:
 - **Location of the course:** there were slightly fewer participants from courses in London and Yorkshire / North East England in the paired sample.
 - **Ethnic background and first language of the participants:** there were fewer ethnic groups and first languages in the paired sample and this was reflected in the broad ethnic and language groups. In particular, there was a lower proportion of people of African background in the paired sample compared to the full sample.

- **Household income:** the percentage with an income of under £5,000 was lower than for the full sample, and the percentage with an income of £20,000 to £45,000 was higher.
- **Previous experience of parent education courses:** slightly more of the participants in the paired sample had attended a parent education course in the past than in the full sample.
- **How participants heard about the course:** more of the participants in the paired sample had heard about the course through flyers and announcements than in the full sample.

Section Six

Course Attendance

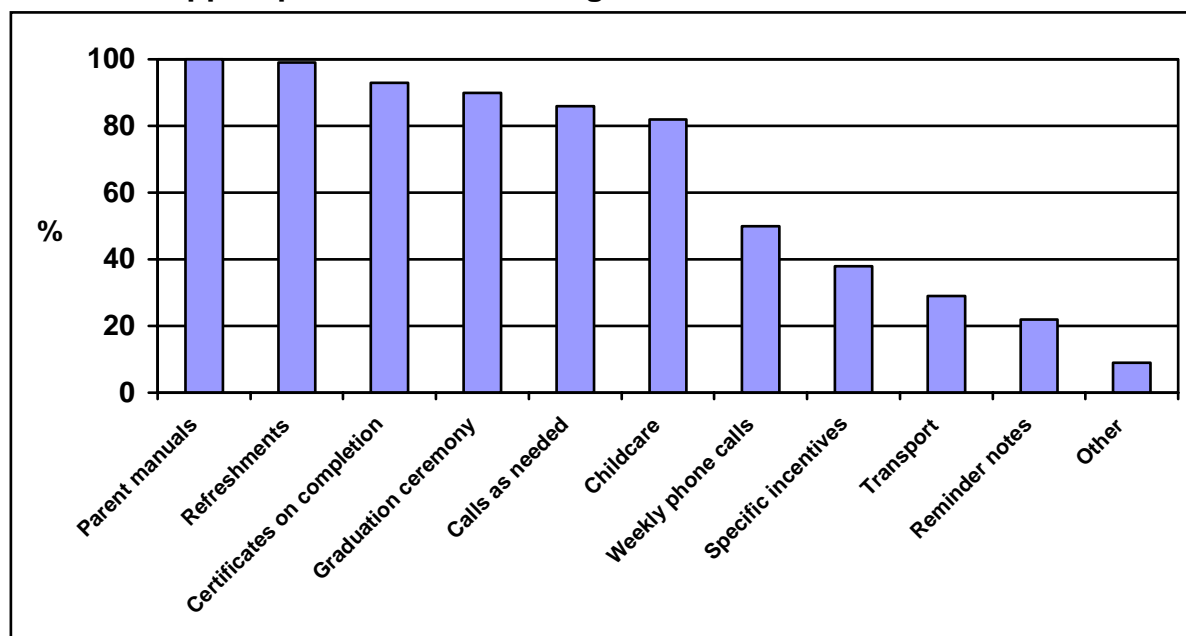
6.1 Introduction

This section presents information on the participants' attendance on the course – the support provided to encourage attendance, the attendance figures as reported in the CSRs and the reasons why some participants did not complete the course.

6.2 Support provided to encourage attendance

A number of actions were taken in order to encourage participants' attendance. All but one of the courses provided refreshments and over 80% provided phone calls as needed (86%) and childcare (82%), see Chart 6.1. Weekly phone calls (50%), special incentives (38%), help with transport (29%) and reminder notes (22%), were provided less often. Special incentives included stickers for arriving on time, energy saving light bulbs and additional support when needed. At the end of the course nearly all of the courses provided a certificate (93%) and held a graduation ceremony (90%).

Chart 6.1 Support provided to encourage attendance



n = 76

Examples of support provided to encourage attendance:

'The lunches were freshly cooked meals provided by a member of the local community and snacks produced by Fair Trade (who support third world farmers / producers).'

'Weekly phone calls stopped after week 7, replaced by text.'

'The parents received stickers [for] arriving on time. The children in the crèche also received stickers incentives and attendance certificates.'

'A lot of back up support was given where necessary or appropriate. Some individual support in response to specific issues.'

6.3 Attendance figures as reported in the CSRs

The facilitators provided information on participation in the courses. They recorded the number of people who were registered before the class started, the number who attended at least two sessions, the number who completed / graduated, those who participated but did not graduate and the number that dropped out.

The attendance figures for the 76 courses with CSRs were examined. However in some cases information was not provided for all questions (7 courses) and in some cases the figures provided were not internally consistent (i.e. the number that completed / graduated from the course, participated but did not graduate or dropped out did not add up to the number of people that attended at least two sessions).

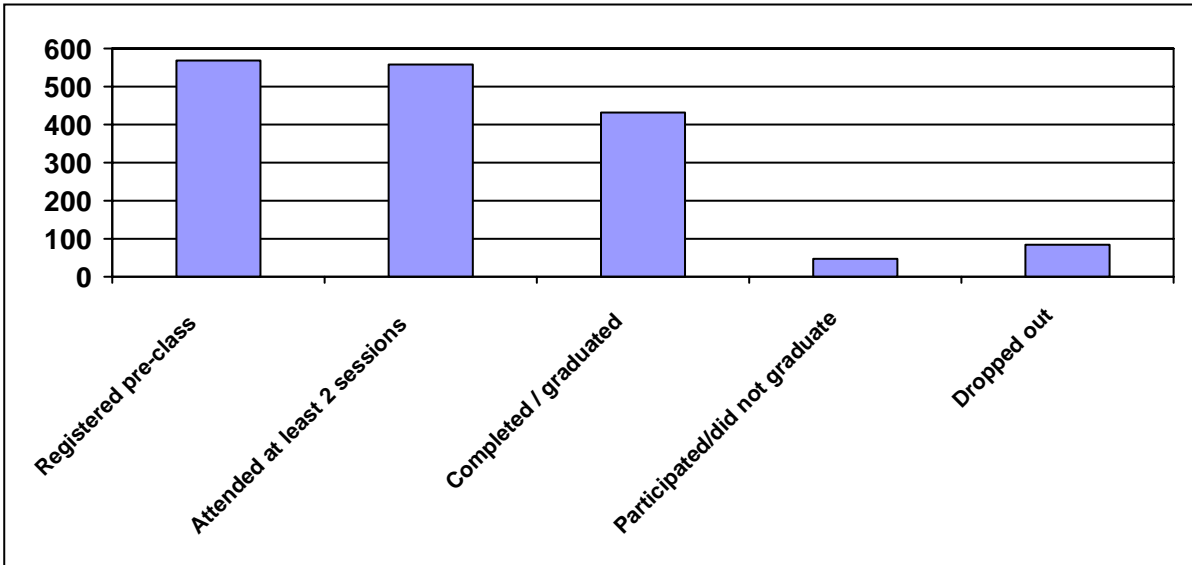
The information provided was internally consistent for 48 of the 82 courses. Charts showing the attendance figures for these 48 courses are provided in Appendix 1. Out of these 48 courses, a total of 566 people were registered before the class started (but some more would have been registered later), 559 people attended at least two sessions, 432 completed / graduated from the course, 45 attended at least half the sessions but did not graduate and 82 dropped out. Based on these figures 77% of those who attended at least two sessions also completed / graduated from the course. A further 8% attended at least half the sessions but did not graduate. The drop out rate was 15%, see Table 6.1 and Chart 6.2.

Table 6.1 Course attendance figures

	Number	% out of 559
Registered before start of course	566	
Attended at least two sessions	559	
Completed / graduated	432	77%
Attended at least half the sessions but did not graduate	45	8%
Dropped out	82	15%
Total	559	100%

Based on 48 courses that provided consistent information

Chart 6.2 Course attendance figures – Numbers participating



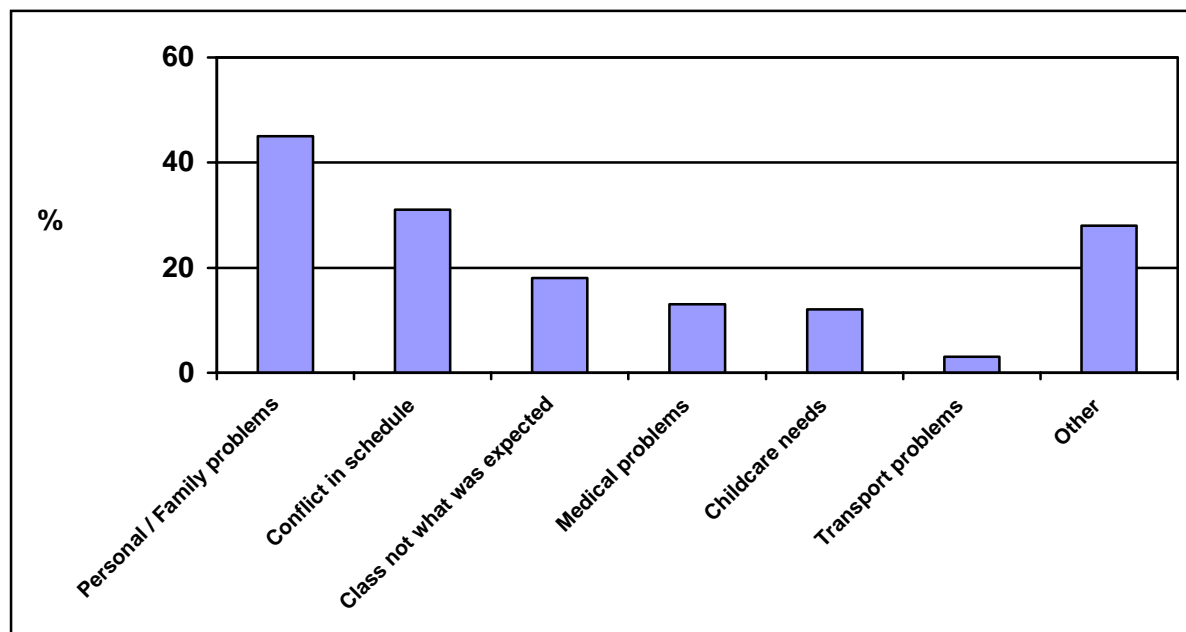
Based on 48 courses that provided consistent information. n = 559

6.4 Reasons for dropping out of the course

The facilitators reported the reasons why people dropped out of the course, see Chart 6.3.

On nearly half of the courses (45%) people had dropped out due to personal / family problems and on almost a third of the courses (31%) people had dropped out due to a conflict in schedule. On 18% of the courses people had dropped out as the course was not what they were expecting. On over a quarter of the courses people had dropped out for 'Other' reasons. The 'Other' reasons covered a wide range of reasons, including finding or returning to work. A selection of all the reasons is shown in the quotes below.

Chart 6.3 Reasons for dropping out of the course



n = 75 for the first two items and 76 for the remaining 6 items

Reasons for dropping out:

'Religious festival, Ramadan, coincided with course dates and prevented one participant from completing the course.'

'Gone away on long holiday 2 weeks before school holiday and were busy shopping for two weeks beforehand.'

'Was living in a refuge, returned home, was prevented from attending by spouse.'

'One parent found the content a reminder of her past in the sense that she was so badly treated by her parents, she felt learning how a child should be well treated would evoke too much pain for her. She could not continue and counselling was provided.'

'Parent got a job so was unable to continue.'

'Court ordered parent always felt programme was too late and daughter too old.'

'One woman had an 11 year old child with severe learning difficulties and felt the course was not appropriate.'

6.5 Summary of Section Six

- Attendance information, that was internally consistent, was provided for 48 of the 82 courses.
- Out of the 48 courses, just over three quarters (77%) of those who attended at least two sessions also completed / graduated from the course. A further 8% attended at least half the sessions but did not graduate. The drop out rate was 15%.
- On nearly half of the courses some people had dropped out due to personal / family problems and on almost a third of the courses some people had dropped out due to a conflict in schedule.
- A number of actions were taken in order to encourage participants' attendance. Those most frequently provided were refreshments, phone calls and childcare.

Section Seven

The Facilitators' and Participants' Experience of the Course

7.1 Introduction

This section presents an overview of the comments made by the course facilitators on their experiences of running the courses and participants' ratings on the quality of the course.

The comments by the course facilitators, as reported in the 76 CSRs, provide an insight into the actual operation of the courses and the extent to which the different components of the curriculum were followed or modified. The facilitators' comments on the course also provide more qualitative information about the strengths, needs and cultural mix of the participants and the challenges and rewards experienced by the facilitators.

The participants' views on the information presented in the curriculum and the way that the course was conducted is based on information from all the participants who completed a post course questionnaire (536 participants). However not all of them responded to all of the questions.

7.2 Overview of the content of the curriculum

The facilitators reported on each of the five curriculum component areas. They indicated whether they had emphasised the component more, less or the same as specified in the programme manual and whether they had modified or added to the component area. Table 7.1 summarises the facilitators' comments on this for each area of the curriculum. They indicate that the rites of passage and community involvement components were most often emphasised the same as stated in the curriculum. The positive discipline and the cultural component were more frequently emphasised 'more' and the community involvement component was more frequently emphasised 'less' than the other components. On the relationship enhancement / violence prevention component it proved possible to emphasise some aspects of this component more than others and on 15 courses there was this 'mixture' of emphasis.

Table 7.1 Extent to which the facilitators emphasised or modified the component areas of the course curriculum

Curriculum component area	Emphasised:				Modified / added to
	Same	More	Less	Mixture	
Cultural	17	33	2	0	8
Relationship enhancement / violence prevention	17	27	5	15	3
Rites of passage	33	10	7	0	9
Positive discipline	18	37	0	2	3
Community involvement	29	10	13	0	3

Based on facilitators' written comments, not an exact count

7.3 Cultural component area

Comments on the cultural component revealed that it was an important aspect of the course. This component was most frequently emphasised 'more' by the facilitators. The following quotes illustrate the ways in which this component helped participants to think about their approach to parenting, to take pride in their own ethnic background and to build relationships with participants from different ethnic backgrounds:

'Parents were able to discuss cultural issues and relate it to their own parenting styles. The group consisted of 2 women seeking asylum, from Africa, 3 Pakistani mothers and 2 of Irish Catholic decent. The group benefited from learning from each others' cultures.'

'This was an important part of the course, the parents found it important and useful and spent long periods of time talking about similarities and differences in their own parenting. With parent sharing we did this over 2 weeks. Firstly the facilitators shared and then the parents shared, we found this encouraged them and we allowed them more than three minutes to share.'

'We spent quite a lot of time on cultural as we had a quite mixed group they all appreciated learning about each others' culture. Also as some parents' children were mixed [heritage], they wanted to learn more about other partner's (ex) culture.'

'We tended to use this area to cement the concept of individuality and ownership on the course. In fact, we probably sold it as a unique programme based on individual cultures, spirituality and beliefs. During the information sessions this was emphasised time and time again. Once we began the programme, the participants got into the spirit of 'follow up activities', the examples of cultural discovery / awareness grew each week, as did the obvious pride in their cultures.'

'We emphasise more on this component area. As Chinese community we are still ethnic minority and it's important for us to keep our culture.'

'The cultural component of the course was highly emphasised as the women live in a very multi cultural part of Bristol. Also many of the women have Mixed Heritage children. It was also very important to help everyone see the value and importance of their own cultural background.'

'Due to the mix in this group, the cultural component was very much the basis of how the group members expressed themselves. They expressed that it was good to have the opportunity to express themselves and connect with their past and present experiences around their culture. There was an acknowledgement of the importance of cultural awareness both their own and others.'

'Due to the cultural mix within the group, this module was significantly emphasised so that individuals were more aware of differences and the knock on effect of this focus was acceptance of others. We added to this component usually at the beginning of our time together with the warm up exercises.'

'More, by giving examples on how this component can help dispel racism / stereotyping.'

Only a few facilitators reported modifying this component:

'We modified a bit to fit the Chinese parents.'

'It was modified as values have changed slightly and cultures have adopted practices from their multi - cultural surroundings'.

Some facilitators found the cultural component more difficult to address with 'White' participants:

'We included culture in every component of the course. We attempted to expand the concept of culture particularly as we had an all white group that could easily of assumed they all share the same culture because of similar race and country of origin. We identified drug culture as significant and ensured we considered people's values, beliefs and history.'

'This area was tricky. There was very little cultural diversity within the group and they live in a predominantly white area of Bristol and felt that culture was for "other people". We covered the topics thoroughly but simplistically drawing on music, film, food, sport etc to put it in relative terms.'

7.4 Relationship enhancement / violence prevention component area

The relationship enhancement / violence prevention component covered a wide range of topics including parent/child relationships, anger management, domestic violence, drugs, alcohol and violence in the community. This component was most frequently emphasised 'more' by the facilitators:

'This area was emphasised more as we had a lot of referrals from social services. One of the reasons why they were referred was because of the breakdown in the parent/child relationships.'

'We also emphasised this component area, as it seemed so very central to the curriculum and to building the childhood characteristics of self esteem, social competence and self discipline.'

'We emphasised and gave importance to issues relating to drugs, alcohol, domestic violence etc. as these are affecting Tower Hamlets, especially it is increasing in the Bengali community.'

'A lot of emphasis was placed on this area of the programme. All families had stories to tell and experiences they were happy to share. Parents valued the need to work with their children and the community to work towards a violence free society. Lots of discussions arose around peer pressure, drugs and violence.'

This component of the curriculum could be split into two parts. Many facilitators reported that they emphasised the relationship enhancement aspect more and the violence prevention aspect less, or vice versa. One or two facilitators did not appear to be comfortable talking about violence:

'Lots of input on relationship enhancement, less on violence prevention (not an issue with this group – on the whole).'

'Diluted "violence" to parental "irritation" raising of voice / tone of voice. Emphasised the responsibility of parents to look after themselves emotionally / mentally so they are more able to be on an even keel when with their children.'

'The emphasis was the same and at times more depending on the parents response. Topics such as domestic violence and community violence the parents were knowledgeable about and of a strong understanding. Topics such as developmental and thinking stages and power / equality wheel requested more examples from the parents thus leading the facilitation to solid relevant examples and to link in with other components.'

'Relationship enhancement emphasised more to provide reassurance, clarification and encouragement, particularly for those with drug using adolescents. Violence required a great deal of explanation to expand on the concept laid out i.e. violence is not only physical.'

'Domestic violence issues were emphasised, they related more to this issue.'

On some courses extra information was provided on child abuse, the law on reasonable chastisement, domestic violence and the impact of trauma.

7.5 Rites of passage component area

Most facilitators reported that they emphasised the rites of passage component the same as stated in the curriculum. Those who spent more time on it often did so as it needed more explanation:

'We emphasised this component area more as some parents could not understand the term "rites of passage" so extra time throughout the sessions were given.'

'We spent more time on this component as parents were very young, they did not understand rites of passage but when explained they wanted more and understood the importance of naming and knowing the word and teaching their children.'

'More – parents felt that this section / session was too spiritual / religious so we had to work more to clarify how children function within the physical and emotional dimensions and how this would make it easier for parents to understand how parent 'attention' can impact on child behaviour.'

A number of facilitators modified this component. In some cases this was to accommodate the needs of younger children:

'This was modified to meet the needs of the parents. There was a lot to say as there were parents from various cultures with different ideas.'

'The emphasis was the same although we did modify a little as some parents had children under three years and some grandparents who did not see the children often.'

'We covered this in a reflective way. Most people's children are too young to work with in these areas so we looked at our own upbringings and at what we would like to do with our children as they get older.'

Overall some courses covered this component less than in the curriculum, and some rites of passage were not covered at all. This was possibly due to additional time spent on other component areas. However the facilitators felt that this was an important part of the curriculum. They also compensated for the lack of time spent on this by providing information for the participants to do work on it themselves:

'This component was greatly respected on this course and all the group members very much saw them as tools for their future parenting of their children. The group members saw the rites of passage as very concerned with community responsibility.'

'This was covered and it was well received by parents. It provoked some really interesting, thought provoking discussions.'

'Due mainly to time restrictions, we did not emphasis this as much as we would have liked. In a future course, we would perhaps change the order, so that rites of passage came earlier in the session occasionally.'

'Less time was given to certain rites of passage because we simply did not have enough time to address the components in full. However, we did provide participants with additional handouts on all rites of passages to "compensate".'

7.6 Positive discipline component area

The positive discipline component of the course was perhaps the most popular. The participants showed a high level of interest in this component and it provided them with very practical skills for dealing with problems with children. The positive discipline component was most frequently emphasised 'more' by the facilitators:

'More. This was in response to what the parents wanted. As there was obvious concern (from session 1) that discipline was an area where parents felt they needed to know what it was that they were doing wrong, and how best to modify existing methods of discipline – if not change them completely.'

'Emphasised more. Parents keen to discuss this area and some were successful in implementing attention and incentive charts although they modified these. Ignore / praise and importance of eye contact was helpful for some. Parents mainly had younger children and didn't try family contracts, but some found current TV programme on this interesting and useful.'

'At the request of the parents, this area was most emphasised. Parents were asking for specific help with behaviour issues.'

'We spent more time on this component as parents /carers wanted to discuss further – through role play, discussions, follow up activities and telephone follow up calls.'

'More. Spent a lot of time emphasising the need to use positive discipline – often group stated that this is not in line with their culture – and needed to be reminded of raising self esteem and avoid teaching violent or unfair ways of handling dissatisfaction.'

'We emphasised this area more because a lot of parents had come along primarily to learn 'techniques' about how to deal with problems with their children.'

'The focal point of the course. This component was strongly emphasised. Constant repetition of the fact that that role modelling is the most powerful teaching tool.'

No one reported that they had emphasised this component 'less', and there were many positive comments on positive discipline. It addressed the sometimes tricky issue of smacking and even participants who already had a range of parenting skills found it useful:

'The best component of the programme. Parents were very amazed and found it very helpful. Different techniques learnt has increased their parenting skills and enhanced their relationships.'

'This was one of the key areas we looked at during the course. All parents participated whole heartedly and provided evidence / feedback, which was all positive.'

'Parents have fed back very positively on the use of positive discipline. All parents on our programme have adolescents and found this method of discipline helpful.'

'We had discussion about our childhood experiences of positive discipline methods and also about smacking. The group acknowledged early on in the programme that some of them had smacked because they did not know what else to do. By the end of the programme they said they had been given alternatives and now smacked less or not at all.'

'We emphasised this area a lot. The parents welcomed alternatives to smacking and tried and tested various methods and reported back to the group. We were able to discuss the effects of the methods used and relate it to consequences for the future. We discussed cultural methods of discipline i.e. smacking and consequences of that in this country.'

'The parents we worked with generally had a range of parenting skills, and whilst they listened and found the different methods interesting, they tended to use them as a menu and choose methods that worked for them and their children. Clear instructions, attention and incentive charts were found particularly useful.'

7.7 Community involvement component area

The community involvement component was most frequently emphasised the 'same' by the facilitators. A wide range of outside speakers were invited to speak to the participants to address a variety of issues. Some of the facilitators reported that the speakers / topics chosen were in response to concerns / requests expressed by the participants. The topics covered included:

- Drugs
- Domestic violence
- Child protection
- Social services
- Health and wellbeing (covering healthy eating, Sickle Cell Anaemia and Thalassaemia, mental wellbeing, complementary therapies, massage and relaxation and smoking cessation)
- Education for young people (covering the school curriculum, nursery education, special needs, child development, the Educational Psychology Service, bullying, sex and relationship education and parent's involvement in school)
- Education for adults (covering further education, training and employment)
- Police / community safety (including violence and anti social behaviour)
- Issues related to racism / diversity
- History of the project / local area
- Parentline Plus
- Projects working with young people / teenagers
- Information on benefits.

Some facilitators reported success in engaging participants on this topic and encouraging them to get involved in the local community:

'We felt the parents really enjoyed this part of the programme and the community vision done by the parents was fantastic.'

'The parents got very involved in this. They compiled a booklet of useful local facilities which will be useful for the project as a whole. They booked two speakers for session 11 and got quite into their community vision.'

'The parents felt very strongly about this subject. They now meet on a regular basis and go out socialising with one another.'

'Parents have now set up a parents support group to increase and maintain the circle of support, as a result of how this particular component area was discussed and the type of speakers that were invited.'

'Our parents are interested in meeting together as a group now our programme has finished. They have valued this component area and have shown interest in setting up together to reduce drugs in their local area.'

'When we first started this component they did not seem interested, or they did not think it was important, so it was less. Then as the course went on and they realised being with Sure Start they were involved in the community, in the end, most had joined Sure Start Parent Forum to make a difference, so we actually spent more time on it.'

'Less – As most of these parents are Sure Start Copenhagen parents, they are all actually involved, those who did not know the others actively got them involved. Joining Management Board so they can take control of what they want for their children.'

Compared with the other the components, it was more often emphasised 'less' than stated in the curriculum. In some cases this was due to time constraints:

'Unfortunately, this component was perhaps minimised too much and as a result I believe the group did not fully appreciate the resources within their community that they could use.'

'We did not emphasise this element due to time constraints alone.'

'Same – Modified this to not put too much "pressure" on the parents as they all had busy schedules, but emphasised the positive changes that could arise from this and the empowerment.'

The facilitators also reported that some participants were already involved in community activities and were unlikely to take on more. Other participants did not really relate to community involvement:

'Emphasised the same, a lot of the parents were already involved in positive community activities.'

'We emphasised this component the same but parents were not that recipient [receptive?]; about half our parents are currently involved in community groups and I think there is a feeling that they can't take on any more.'

'More. Group needed a lot of encouragement to identify community resources.'

'Less emphasis here – many parents did not feel involved in community outside family and friends.'

'The group did not take to this area. The Bangladeshi community is close knit and very supportive of their kith and kin and some of them were distantly related. But they were reluctant to get support from their community at large because they felt that their community was too judgemental.'

'Same. It was felt that families were adequately equipped in this area. It was felt that personal problems hindered too much community involvement.'

'Violence was discussed a lot, but the group on a whole felt disempowered from taking on community violence although could influence violence in the family. Action Council felt a bit unrealistic.'

'Living in a deprived area the parents struggled to find positive areas to get involved in. They enjoyed the community vision and made wonderful posters which we took photographs of. We had to look outside the immediate area for community involvement.'

Two facilitators reported that they did not have any outside speakers:

'The turn out was so low that we could not invite a speaker. I gave them a feedback from the speakers to the other groups.'

'Unfortunately we were not able to fit in a speaker.'

7.8 Participants' views on the information presented in the curriculum

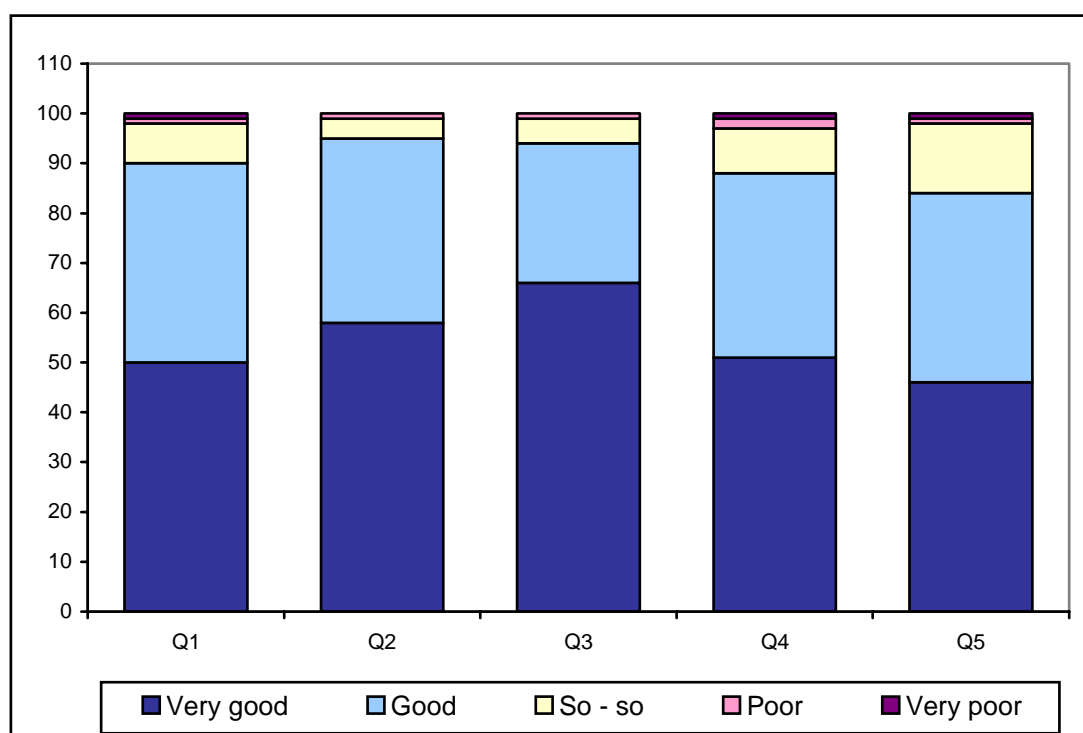
At least 90% of the participants rated three aspects of the information presented in the curriculum as 'Very good' or 'Good' – ethnic / cultural roots and traditions, enhancing relationships and positive discipline techniques. Over 80% of the participants rated the other two aspects as 'Very good' or 'Good' - the rites of passage topics and activities and the community involvement activities. Very few participants rated any aspect of the information presented in the curriculum as 'Very Poor' or 'Poor', see Table 7.2 and Chart 7.1

Table 7.2 Participants' views on the information presented in the curriculum

How would you rate the information presented in the curriculum:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
1. Ethnic / cultural roots and traditions	50	40	8	1	1	n = 475
2. Enhancing relationships	58	37	4	1	0	n = 461
3. Positive discipline techniques	66	28	5	1	0	n = 472
4. Rites of passage topics and activities	51	37	9	2	1	n = 461
5. Community involvement activities	46	38	14	1	1	n = 461

All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Chart 7.1 Participants' views on the information presented in the curriculum



n = 461 - 475

7.9 Issues related to the group facilitation process

The facilitators were asked to provide information on the issues related to the group facilitation process. Twelve of the facilitators reported that there had been no problems or issues related to the group facilitation process and a further nine made general comments that were mainly positive. Other comments revealed the challenges dealt with by facilitators when running this type of programme.

Six facilitators commented on class members being supportive of each other and three commented on class members not being supportive of each other. A number of inter-personal challenges were identified. These covered:

- Individuals dominating the group
- Personality differences between members of the group
- Cultural / political differences
- Participants being hesitant in opening up / sharing within the group
- The need for clarity over rules and boundaries
- Confidentiality issues.

A number of other issues were identified that hindered people's participation in the course. These included:

- Language difficulties
- Time keeping by participants
- The timing of the course
- A child with learning difficulties
- A child not settling in the crèche
- Family problems / other commitments.

The size of the group (too small or large) also influenced the effectiveness of the facilitation process. Other issues mentioned were a group that was hard to engage (this group was mainly court ordered), the ethnic mix of the group, reduced participation by some mothers due to orthodox religious practices, the appropriateness of the course for participants with younger children and the level of commitment required to do the course.

7.10 Facilitators' experience of the class

For many facilitators their experience of facilitating the course could be summed up as 'enjoyable, challenging, exhilarating and hard work':

'Thoroughly enjoyable, challenging, exhausting. Seeing the shift happening is brilliant. It also has a positive impact on reinforcing my parenting skills.'

'Challenging, exciting and satisfying. Great to witness the concepts of the programme received and practiced by eager parents who clearly benefited from it.'

'Learnt a lot! Both about myself as a facilitator and about parenting. Very valuable and empowering experience – also at times draining and emotional. Definitely a worthwhile journey.'

'Very rewarding, exhausting, informative, enlightening and helped me to address issues I had come up against in my own parenting. The group gelled really well and enjoyed the experience.'

'I felt excited in the beginning and was eager to get started, however it was hard work. Probably that's because I hadn't appreciated the weekly level of preparation, the physical and emotional levels required to run such a long course, but it was worth it. I am excited about becoming accredited and eager to take the programme to other communities and agencies.'

The comments reinforced the benefit of having at least two facilitators for each course:

'We both felt the choice of co-facilitator is vital. We felt we worked very well together with different skills and experiences, which complemented each other. We gave each other confidence and felt comfortable supporting one another.'

'Co-facilitating beneficial and supportive. Joint reflection after each session helped with this and planning the facilitation and sessions.'

'My colleague and I felt that as we represented different cultures as facilitators, this also enabled the members to feel a sense of belonging / connectedness.'

'Scary but enjoyable. I really enjoyed working with the other facilitators. We bounced off each other well and the sessions flowed. Brilliant, a really enjoyable experience, really enjoyed co-facilitating the group with the others.'

'Very challenging and positive. It was good to be able to work with another facilitator, being able to evaluate our strengths and weaknesses and being able to work well with the class. '

Some specific comments were made about the working with different cultures / ethnicities / language groups:

'Amazing! The group was a very mixed cultural group, but bonded together so well. 2 mums lived on the same street but prior to the programme did not know each other, now keep in regular contact, visit each other's houses daily and take each others' children to school.'

'I learnt a lot about the Arabic culture and fully enjoyed the togetherness of the group as a whole. The 1 father and 12 women were all individually very impressive people.'

'It was an interesting experience in co-facilitating in two languages (English and Farsi). Not being able to communicate in the language of the group highlights the limitations and if interpreting is used then the timescale of the programme needs to be much longer.'

7.11. Participants' views on the way that the course was conducted

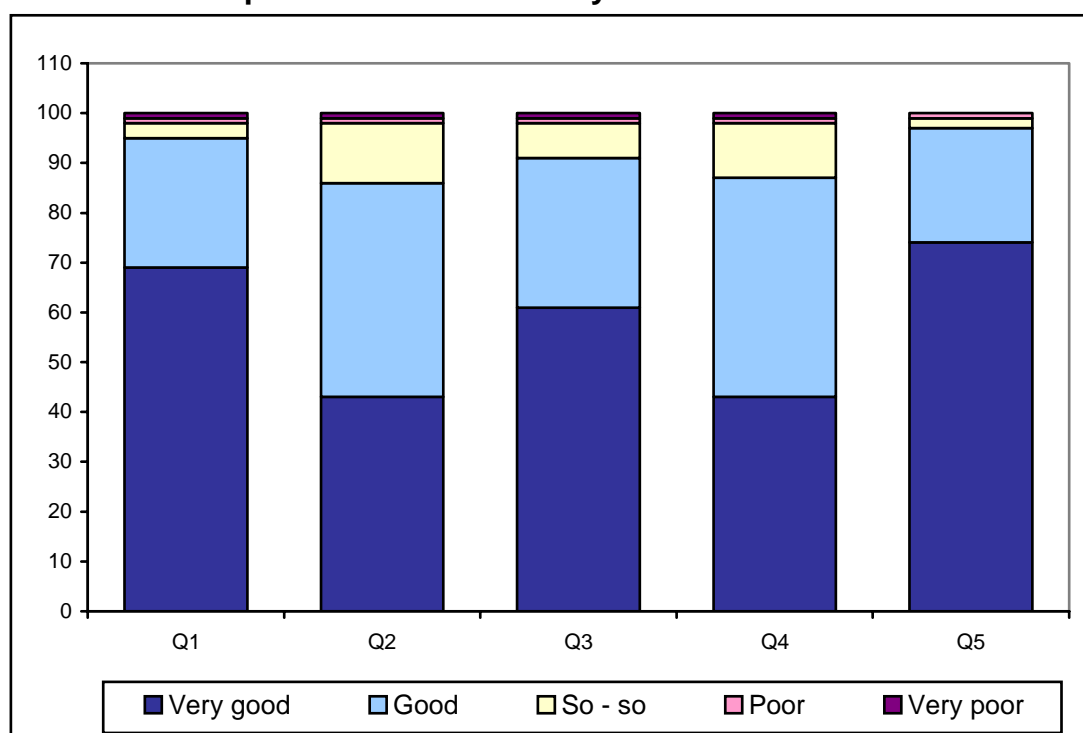
Over 90% of the participants rated three aspects of the way that the course was conducted as 'Very good' or 'Good' – the opportunity to exchange ideas and ask questions during the class, the parent manual and the instructor's knowledge and skill in conducting the class. Over 80% of the participants rated the other two aspects as 'Very good' or 'Good' – the role play activities and the follow up activities. Very few participants rated any aspect of the information presented in the curriculum as 'Very Poor' or 'Poor', see Table 7.3 and Chart 7.2.

Table 7.3 Participants' views on the way that the course was conducted

How would you rate the way the class was conducted:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
The opportunity to exchange ideas and ask questions during the class	69	26	3	1	1	n = 474
The role play activities	43	43	12	1	1	n = 448
The parent book	61	30	7	1	1	n = 464
The follow up activities	43	44	11	1	1	n = 462
My instructor's knowledge and skill in conducting the class	74	23	2	1	0	n = 470

All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row

Chart 7.2 Participants' views on the way that the course was conducted



n = 448 - 474

The participants were also asked whether they would recommend the course to their family and friends. Nearly everyone (99%) said that they would. It should be noted that only about half (49%) of participants answered these questions.

7.12. Summary of Section Seven

- The facilitators provided detailed comments on how they presented the different components of the curriculum and the participants' response. The facilitators' comments on the curriculum indicated that:
 - The cultural component, the positive discipline component and the relationship enhancement / violence prevention component were usually emphasised 'more' than stated in the curriculum.
 - The rites of passage and the community involvement components were usually emphasised the 'same' as stated in the curriculum.

- A few facilitators commented that they emphasised certain components of the curriculum 'less'. This was most common for the community involvement component.
- A few facilitators commented that they had added to or modified specific components of the curriculum.
- On the relationship enhancement / violence prevention component it proved possible to emphasise some aspects of this component more than others and on 15 courses there was this mixture of emphasis.
- As part of the community involvement component a wide range of outside speakers were invited to speak to the participants to address a variety of issues. Some of the speakers / topics chosen were in response to concerns / requests expressed by the participants.
- The facilitators identified a number of inter-personal challenges within the group that they had to deal with. They also identified a number of other issues that hindered people's participation in the course.
- Specific comments were made about working with different cultural, ethnic and language groups.
- The size of the group (too small or large) also influenced the effectiveness of the facilitation process.
- For many facilitators their experience of facilitating the course could be summed up as 'enjoyable, challenging, exhilarating and hard work'.
- Their comments reinforced the benefit of having at least two facilitators for each course.
- The participants rated the course very highly:
 - Over 80% of the participants rated all aspects of the information presented in the curriculum as 'Very good' or 'Good', and some aspects were rated as 'Very good' or 'Good' by over 90%.
 - Over 80% of the participants rated all aspects of the way that the course was conducted as 'Very good' or 'Good', and some aspects were rated as 'Very good' or 'Good' by over 90%.
 - Nearly all the participants (99%) said that they would recommend the course to their family and friends.

Section Eight

The Impact of the Course – The Facilitators’ and Participants’ Views

8.1 Introduction

This section provides a qualitative indication of the impact of the course on the participants. It explores the impact of the course based on the facilitators’ comments in the 76 CSRs and the participants’ comments in the post course questionnaires.

A total of 536 post course questionnaires were completed. However not all of the participants responded to all of the questions. Whilst most of the questionnaires were filled in by the participant some, especially the questionnaires from those who did not have very good written English, were completed by another person. It was not recorded if this was a facilitator, an interpreter, another participant on the course or someone else.

8.2 Facilitators’ views on the participants’ response to the course

The facilitators’ comments on the participants’ response to the course were predominantly positive:

‘Parents enjoyed the programme and were willing to look at themselves rather than the problem / child. They felt that realising that they were “not alone” helped them to feel better about themselves.’

‘Parents enjoyed the programme. They found it beneficial and are prepared to recommend it to family and friends. The majority of parents found rites of passage and the variety of discipline techniques invaluable.’

‘Very positive feedback re positive discipline, special time, rites of passage activities. Many verbal reports of improved relationships, calmer parents feeling clearer about parenting roles.’

‘These parents took the programme and curriculum very seriously. They tried out all the ideas and reported back to the rest of the group each week. As facilitators we could see dramatic improvements in the parents in terms of their confidence by approx session 6/7.’

‘Parents responded so well to the programme, they did not want to go home after some of the sessions! The parents said they felt empowered as parents and their confidence has increased significantly.’

‘Very positive, most expressed the regret they had not received such a wealth of information before, as they feel they would have been better in raising their children. They were keen to continue programme despite challenges.’

Four comments were mixed:

'Parents did find difficulties in grasping the curriculum, however the parents were intrigued by the components. Parents did hold some views at times that the components were technical.'

'Parents regularly attended the sessions and reported that they enjoyed the programme in all the curriculum component areas. In the evaluation they did however request more time for group discussions. The parent are recommending this programme to other parents.'

'Overall feedback from the participants has been excellent in terms of knowledge / information and skills acquired / developed throughout the programme. Participants did feel that it was very intensive programme and more time would have been helpful. Also input by more specialists working with children would have been useful, e.g. child psychologists and other specialists working with children.'

'Definitely more interested and enthusiastic about positive discipline and practical strategies and to some of the rites of passage. Some parents obviously found discussing violence and depression difficult. Good response for community speakers.'

Four reported particular difficulties:

'Although the programme acknowledges clearly it is a parent education programme, participants felt the fact the focus is on parenting, requires a level of personal reflection and self awareness, which could be made more explicit perhaps at the start of the group.'

'In early stages of group there were attempts at sabotage. Parents were not open to try new methods. Problem focussed group.'

'Parents lacked self esteem, which impacted on the group dynamic.'
[a mainly court ordered group]

'Parents needed a lot of encouragement to do role play. Some parents referred themselves to tenancy support service.'

8.3 Identification of specific parents by facilitators

On over half of the courses (46 of the courses, 56%), the facilitators identified specific parents for follow up and/or parents who were 'especially impacted' by the course. The number identified was most often two parents (identified by facilitators on 22 courses).

It was not possible to distinguish clearly between how many parents were identified for follow up and how many parents were especially effected by the course, as a single question was asked about this. From the comments it was clear that some people personally benefited a great deal from the course, some need additional follow up support and some were interested in becoming facilitators themselves.

8.4 The participants' views on the ideas and skills that had benefited them most

The participants were asked 'What ideas or skills benefited you the most'. Overall the participants provided 739 comments on individual ideas and skills that they had benefited from. The ones that were mentioned most are described below.

The most frequently mentioned comments related to positive discipline. These included learning alternative techniques to smacking and 'praising and ignoring':

'Lots of suggestions regarding ways to discipline - alternatives to smacking.'
'Praising the child more.'
'Ignoring / praise.'

In relation to discipline the participants also commented on their ability to improve the behaviour and the respect shown by the children:

'Finding alternative ways to combat challenging behaviour!'
'Rules, responsibility and two way respect.'
'To introduce accountability to my son.'

Some parents particularly commented on the rites of passage component:

'Political Rites of passage.'
'Rites of passage exercises.'

Within the enhancing relationships / violence prevention component of the course, participants particularly valued 'special time' with their children:

'Special time / to improve child.'
'Special time has benefited my family. My children look forward to it.'

The participants found the various different charts useful:

'Sticker charts,'
'It was very useful the incentive chart.'

Some parents mentioned that they had improved their communication skills as part of the course:

'Communicating clearly with my child and explaining clearly.'
'The course taught me to stop shouting and to listen.'
'Ways to talk - deal with problems of my children. When to listen and when to talk.'
'Praise your child straight away and say at least three things and repeat what your child says to make her know that you are listening.'
'I can speak with both my sons.'

Another key benefit of the course for the participants was the opportunity to meet with other parents/carers and discuss amongst themselves how they dealt with certain challenges:

'The experiences of other members relating to the different topics proved most insightful.'
'Being involved in a big group, meeting everyone, learning about myself and others.'
'Being around others with the same experiences / problems as me.'
'Interaction with other group members.'

Not all the comments were positive. One person thought that the class they attended was not aimed at their child's age group:

'None really, my children are 13 and 16. The class is for younger children.'

8.5 The participants' views on the positive changes observed in themselves or their relationship with others

The participants were asked if they had observed any changes in themselves or in their relationships with other people as a result of participating in the programme. The participants provided 589 comments about this. One of the key areas people commented on was their ability to communicate better. This could be with their children, in other family situations or in a wider context. This included comments that they were more able to listen to others:

'Have a much more open communicative relationship with children.'
'Communicating in better way with children and family members.'
'Communicate more rather than just talk /shout / nag.'
'Can talk to people more and try to communicate with others and understand others more.'
'Communication skills, family discussions.'
'Listening more.'
'Listen more, more praising children / friends / family.'

Another key area where the participants said that they benefited was that they were calmer, patient and more able to control their anger. Associated with this, some parents said that they and members of their family felt happier and more relaxed:

'I aim not to hit my child / will encourage others.'
'Calmer and not quick to react to smacking.'
'Controlling my anger.'
'I am a lot calmer and I very rarely raise my voice anymore.'
'Tolerance and patience. Self control.'
'Calm when dealing with the child's behaviour.'
'Calmer, happier, prouder.'
'Since I finished a course my behaviour have better change.'

Some participants said that they had more understanding of their children, other people and themselves:

'More understanding towards my child's feelings and thoughts.'
'Children happier because I understand them more.'
'I find I can understand what people are feeling.'
'I have a greater understanding of the problems that other parents have with their children.'
'I have seen positive change the course has helped me to understand myself a lot better.'

Some of the participants commented specifically on the development of their 'parenting skills'. Some had introduced special time with their children:

'Taken my parenting skills to a higher level.'
'The course has given me the confidence to make choices in how I bring up my children, stay with them and be happy about them.'
'I can kiss and hug my child.'
'Valuing and spending more time in family meetings and letting go.'
'Closer relationship with children.'
'Different outlook on parenting because "I know I am doing a good job".'
'My attitude towards one of my child has improve I feel. We get on better.'

Some of the parents said that they had become more confident in general or more confident in certain situations:

'The course has given me the confidence to make choices in how I bring up my children.'
'Being assertive enough to take control of discipline techniques within family unit.'
'I feel positive and empowered.'
'Am more proud of my roots - more confident about who I am - can speak more confidently in a group setting.'
'Given me more confidence to approach the school about any worries I have and actively ask for changes for the better.'
'Respecting myself more.'
'More positive because when I started the class I was little shy person.'

Some of the participants said that taking the course had had effects in other aspects of their lives:

'My whole approach to the way I deal with children has changed. I am also able to offer advice to others.'

'I am a lot more positive. I am empowered. I have made changes in my life. I am going on to further education. My family has benefited and continues to benefit.'

'Positive changes that have with others is how I could be able to express my emotional feelings.'

'I have become calmer, now able to focus more, no more power struggles able to open up and share more with my family, now able to deal with things better.'

'I have acquired a range of strategies for dealing with a variety of situations. I feel more empowered.'

'I have a better relationship because my family take me more seriously.'

'I have found myself more able to turn to people around me for help and support.'

Some of the participants said that they had been able to make friends in the course and had gained additional support from the group setting:

'Meeting the group members and sharing backgrounds, ideas, approaches etc has given me another perspective on my own approach / views which has been invaluable.'

'I enjoyed mixing with other people.'

'Enjoy working with a group rather than being on my own.'

'Building relationships with others.'

'Nice way to get to know others.'

'Closer relationship with other parents.'

'Making friends in class.'

As with the previous question there were some negative or mixed comments, but these were very much the minority:

'It is still the same.'

'Not a huge improvement.'

8.6 Other comments made by the participants

Many of the participants (330) also made additional comments. About half of them were general comments – the participants said that they had enjoyed the course and / or said thank you for the course. Some of the participants said that they would promote the course to others in future:

'Thank you.'

'I have felt supported and enjoyed the love shared in the room.'

'Fantastic course - one I've been waiting to come along to for a long time.'

'This programme was very informative and useful.'

In addition to these comments there were further comments in praise of the facilitators:

'It is very good how they teaching us.'
'Very supportive staff ... made you feel comfortable to talk, share experiences and opinions.'
'The tutors were very patient and communicated effectively well done to both.'
'An excellent course provided by excellent facilitators - well done!'
'Excellent life enriching course with wise instructors, patient and loving.'

One person did not appreciate the facilitator:

'A few times the facilitator made a few points which I found very offensive which was about their personal things.'

8.7 Continuing support to participants after the course and participants' plans for after the course

Nearly three quarters (72%) of the facilitators stated that their agencies offered some form of Parent Support Group after the training was completed. The type of support offered varied considerably. It included: providing support for an ongoing parent support group, providing a venue for any ongoing group that might be formed, follow up workshops, one to one support to individual participants or their families, access to other support available through the agency and signposting and referral to other agencies.

Nearly all of the facilitators (92%) reported that the parents had plans to continue meeting after the courses finished. These took a variety of forms and were at various stages of development. Some had exchanged telephone numbers and planned to keep in touch informally; the majority were reported to be still in the planning stages of setting up a group; some had set up a group and were already meeting and some would be, or already had, joined an existing support group based at the agency running the course. Two groups did not want to continue meeting. One had mainly court ordered participants and the other group had not bonded.

The participants were asked whether they planned to participate in a parent group after graduation. More than three quarters (81%) said that they did. It should be noted that only about half (48%) of participants answered this question.

8.8 Summary of Section Eight

- The facilitators' comments on the participants' response to the course were predominantly positive.
- The participants reported that they had benefited from taking the course in a variety of ways. This included:
 - They had learned new techniques to help them with their children, especially positive discipline and alternatives to smacking.
 - They particularly valued the concept of 'special time' and the charts.
 - They had improved their communication skills and had benefited from discussing issues with the other participants.
 - The course had also had a positive effect on other areas of their life.
 - They felt calmer / less angry and / or were more confident.
- Nearly three quarters of the agencies offered some form of parent support group after the training was completed.

- Nearly all of the facilitators (92%) reported that the parents had plans to continue meeting after the course finished. These took a variety of forms and were at various stages of development.
- More than three quarters of the participants (81%) said that they planned to participate in a parent group after graduation.
- Some of the facilitators identified specific parents for follow up and/or parents who were 'especially impacted' by the course. This included some participants who were interested in training to become facilitators themselves.

Section Nine

The Impact of the Course – Results from the Paired Sample Pre and Post Course Questionnaires

9.1 Introduction

This section provides a quantitative indication of the impact of the course on the participants. It explores the impact of the course based on the pre and post course assessment questionnaires completed by the participants. This is based on figures provided by the 445 participants who completed both a pre and post course questionnaire. Some participants stated that their children were too young for an answer to be provided for some of the questions, such as talking about sexual responsibility and talking about drugs and violence. The percentage figures are based on those who responded to the statements.

In each sub section a brief comparison is first made between the response to the pre course questionnaire by the full sample and by the paired sample in order to identify if there were any noteworthy differences in the responses by the two samples. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires by the paired sample are then presented in two tables and two charts. These are followed by a single chart, which compares specific differences in the pre and post responses. A further chart shows how many individual participants changed their response between completing the pre and the post questionnaires. It also shows how many participants responded 'Yes' or 'Always' or 'Never' (depending on the question/statement) on the pre course questionnaire and therefore could not 'improve' on their response in the post course questionnaire. Different colour schemes (shading) are used for the different charts to assist the readers' understanding of them.

To test whether or not any differences were statistically significant, the responses to the Community Focus questions were tested using the McNemar test. The responses to the statements on participant / child interactions and participants' and children's competencies were tested for statistical significance using the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test. The changes in the responses were tested for statistical significance at the 95% confidence level, i.e. to test if the significance value (p) was 0.05 or less. The results are commented on in each sub section and the full findings on statistical significance are set out in Appendix 2.

9.2 Community Focus

In the pre course questionnaire, 72% took part in community activities, 40% participated in youth group activities, 66% participated in spiritual / religious activities, 79% were actively involved in their child's education or school and 82% said that they had a support network of friends and family to help in times of need, see Table 9.1 and Chart 9.1 below. These figures were very similar to the full sample.

Table 9.2 and Chart 9.2 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. The percentage who responded 'Yes' in the post course questionnaire increased slightly for four of the five questions, see Chart 9.3. For participation in spiritual / religious activities the percentage decreased slightly (from 66% to 61%). No reasons for this decrease were found in either the quantitative or qualitative data.

Chart 9.4 shows that for all five questions over 60% did not change their response in either direction. For four out of the five questions the number of those who changed their response from 'Yes' to 'No' was more than the number who changed their response from 'No' to 'Yes'.

The McNemar Test confirmed that these small changes were not statistically significant. These results suggest that the course did not have an immediate impact on the participants' level of community involvement.

Table 9.1 Community Focus – Pre course responses (Paired sample)

Participation in:	Yes	No	Sample size
1. Community activities	72	28	n = 435
2. Youth group activities	40	60	n = 421
3. Spiritual religious activities	66	34	n = 437
4. Children's education / school	83	17	n = 425
5. Support network of friends & family	82	18	n = 436

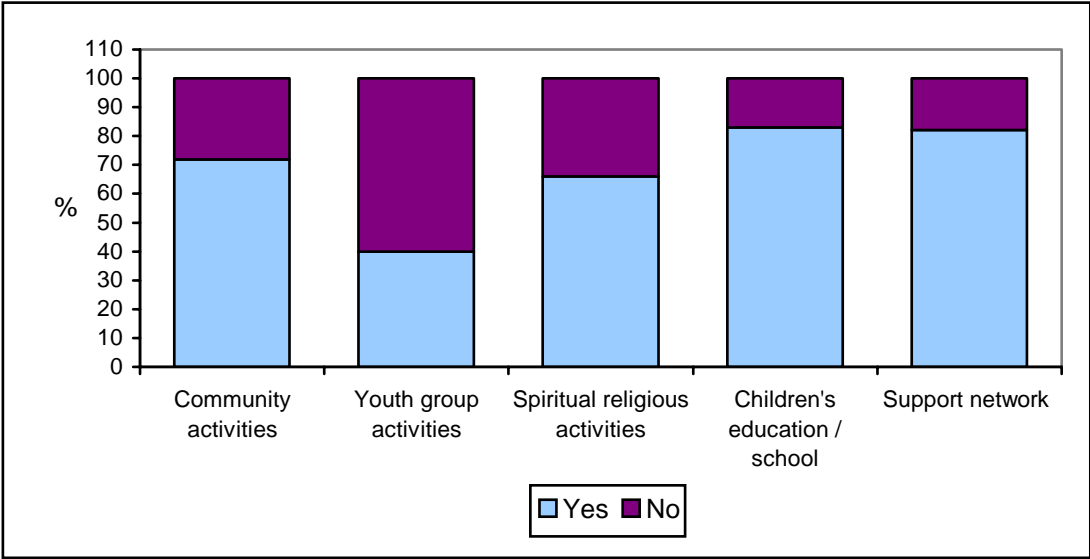
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Table 9.2 Community Focus – Post course responses (Paired sample)

Participation in:	Yes	No	Sample size
1. Community activities	76	24	n = 425
2. Youth group activities	42	58	n = 412
3. Spiritual religious activities	61	39	n = 425
4. Children's education / school	85	15	n = 419
5. Support network of friends & family	83	17	n = 432

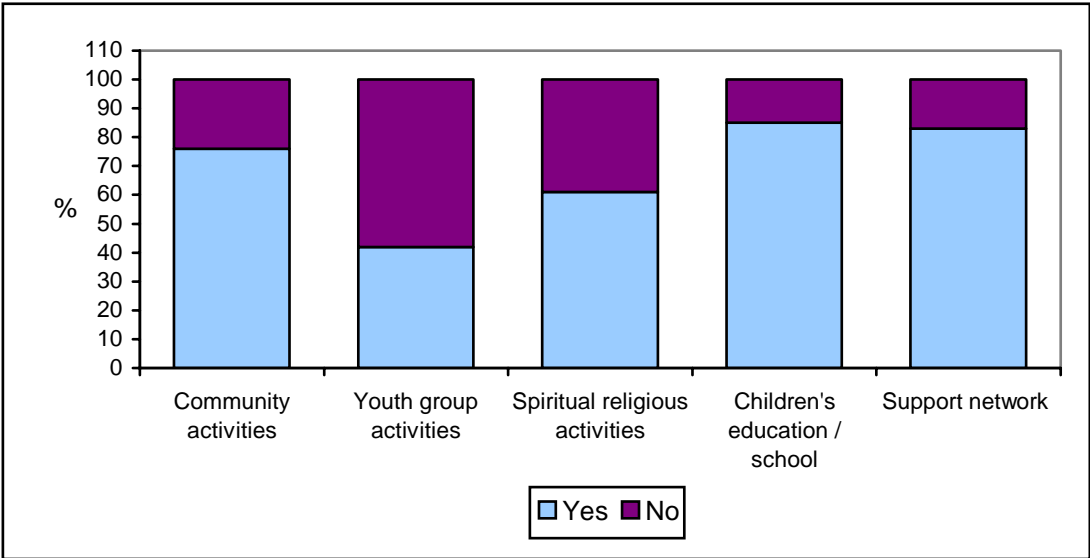
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Chart 9.1 Community Focus – participated in activities
Pre course responses (Paired sample)



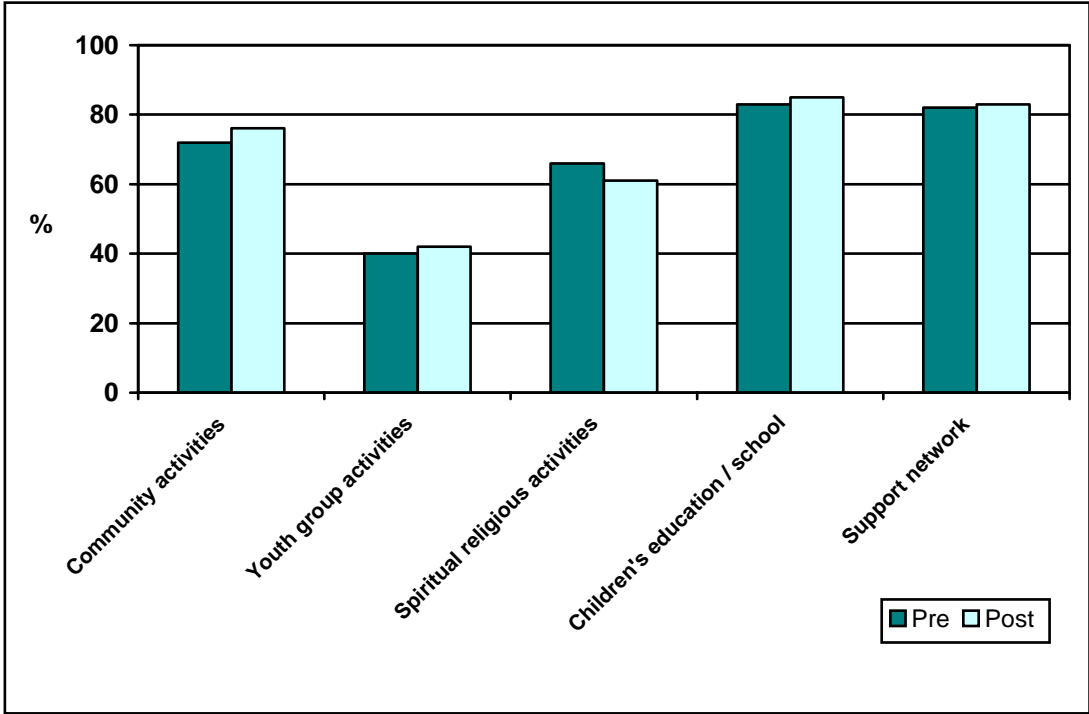
n varies between 421 and 432

Chart 9.2 Community Focus – participated in activities
Post course responses (Paired sample)



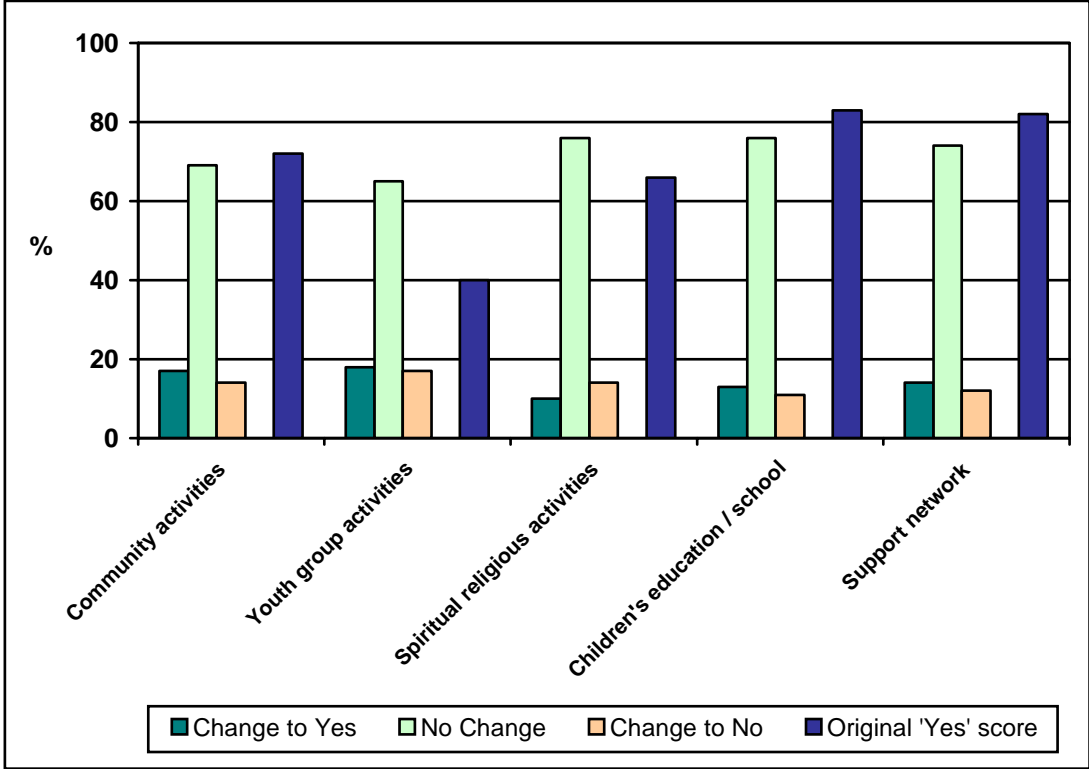
n varied between 412 and 432

Chart 9.3 Community focus – Comparison of pre and post ‘Yes’ responses (Paired sample)



n varied between 412 and 436

Chart 9.4 Community focus – Changes in the pre and post scores (Paired sample)



n varied between 395 and 423

9.3 Participant / child interactions

The participants' responses to the statements relating to participant / child interactions covered three topics:

- Family activities and discussions
- Positive discipline and communication strategies
- Negative discipline and communication strategies.

9.3.1 Family activities and discussions

In the pre course questionnaire over half of the paired sample participants (60%) reported that they 'Always' / Usually' had fun together as a family, see Table 9.3 and Chart 9.5. Less than half of the participants reported that they 'Always' / Usually' talked about the dangers of drugs/gangs (33%), went to cultural events together (27%) or talked about sexual responsibility (22%). These responses by the paired sample were very similar to the responses by the full sample.

Table 9.4 and Chart 9.6 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. Chart 9.7 shows that the percentage who responded 'Always' / Usually' in the post course questionnaire increased for all four statements. Chart 9.8 shows that for all four statements the number of those who responded with an increased score was more than the number who responded with a decreased score. For three of the four statements over 40% did not change their response. To test whether or not these differences were statistically significant, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was run. All of the differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that the course led to an increase in family activities and discussions.

Table 9.3 Family activities and discussions – Post course responses (Paired sample)

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
1. Have fun together as a family	25	35	29	9	2	n = 438
2. Talk about dangers of drugs/gangs	17	16	29	14	24	n = 377
3. Go to cultural events together	14	13	36	20	17	n = 430
4. Talk about sexual responsibility	9	13	24	17	37	n = 369

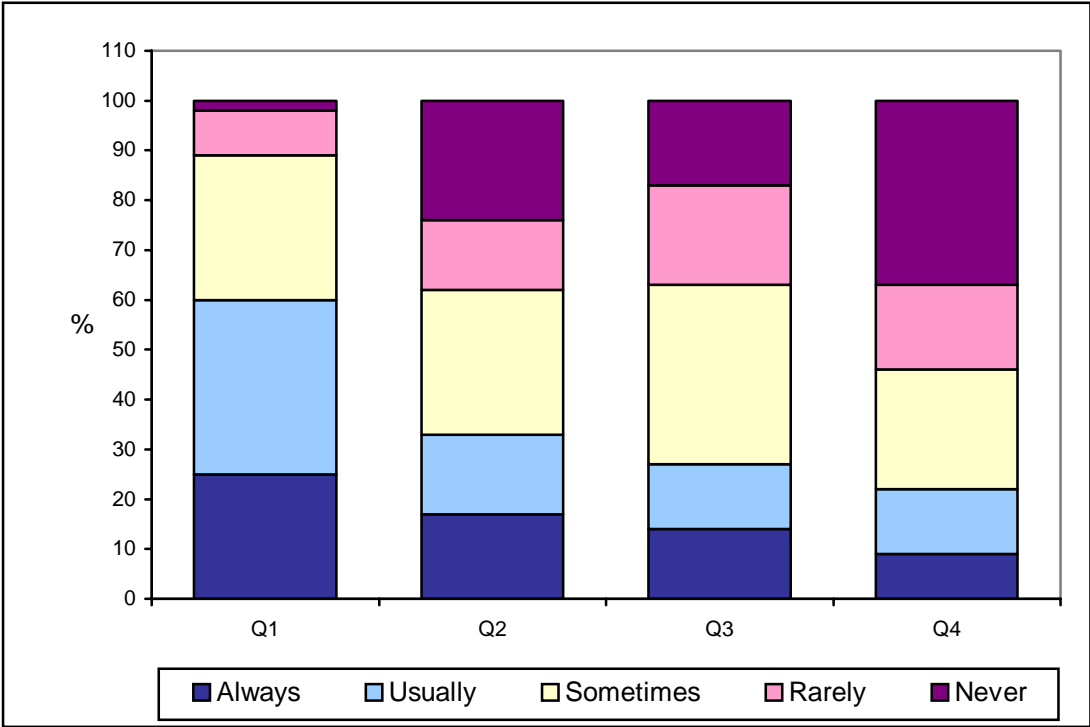
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Table 9.4 Family activities and discussions – Post course responses (Paired sample)

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
1. Have fun together as a family	26	45	22	5	2	n = 428
2. Talk about dangers of drugs/gangs	21	17	27	15	20	n = 401
3. Go to cultural events together	16	23	37	16	8	n = 426
4. Talk about sexual responsibility	11	14	27	16	32	n = 386

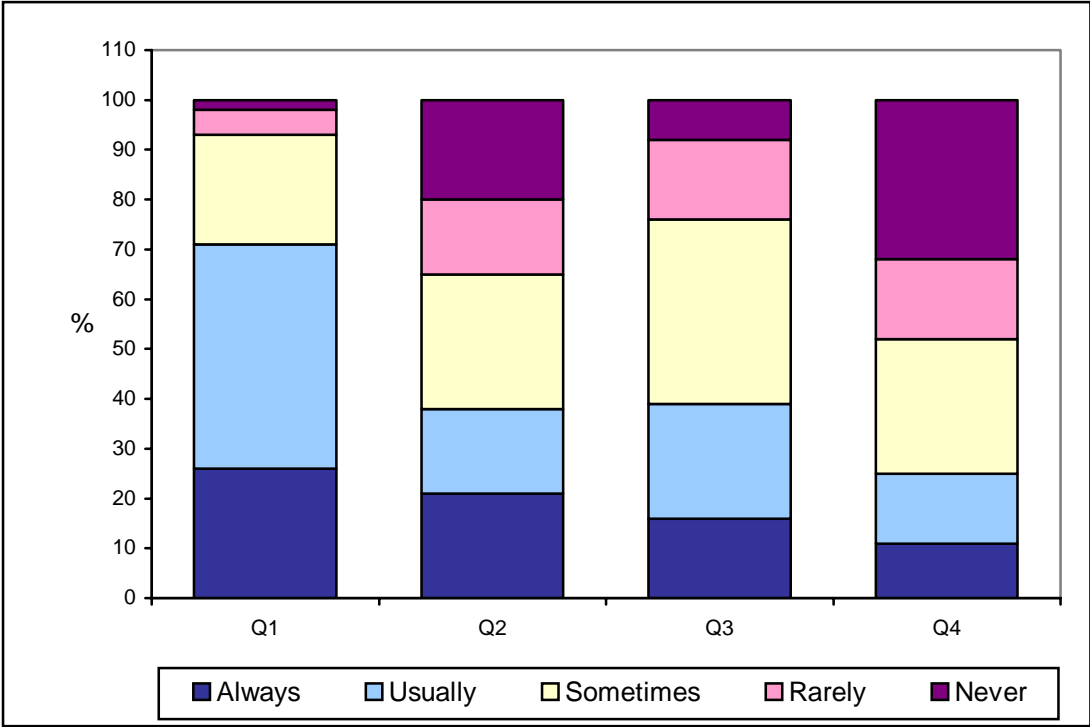
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Chart 9.5 Family activities and discussions – Pre course responses (Paired sample)



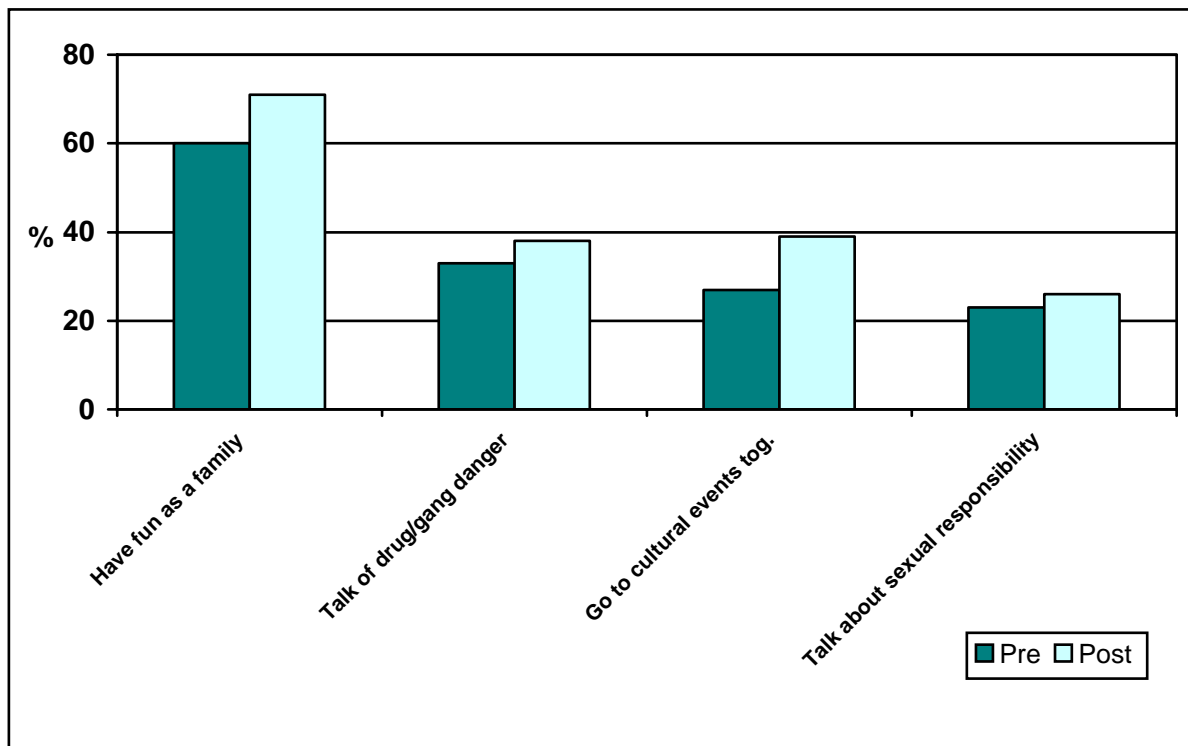
n varied between 369 and 438

Chart 9.6 Family activities and discussions – Post course responses (Paired sample)



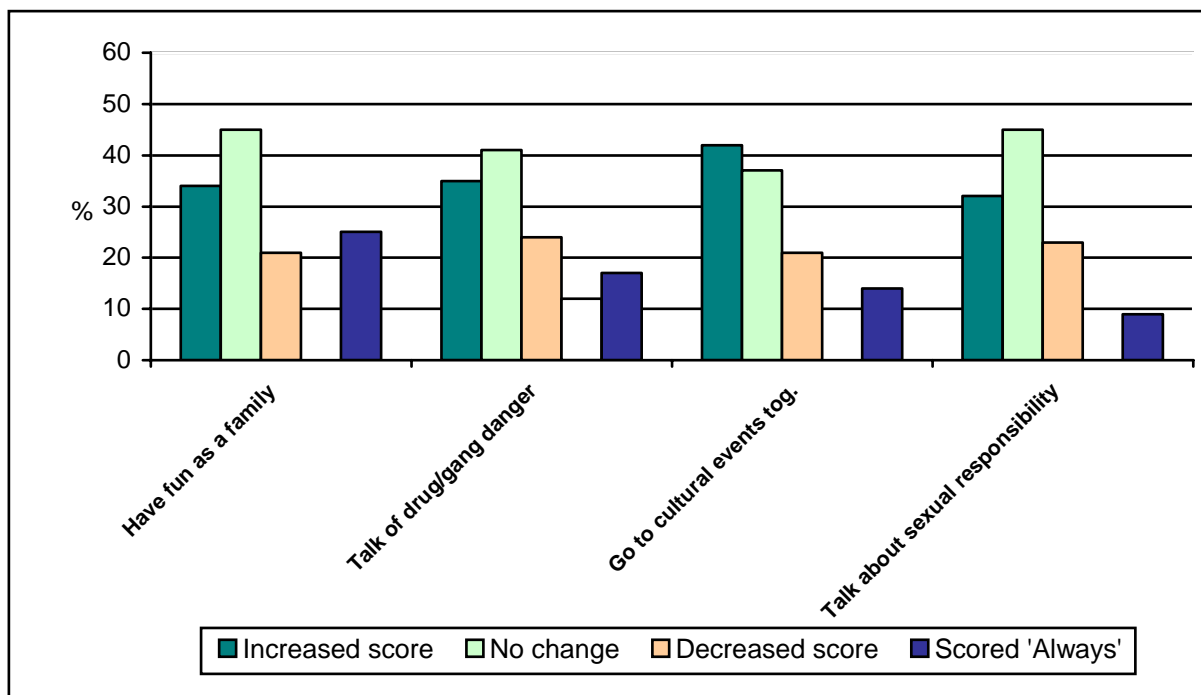
n varied between 386 and 428

Chart 9.7 Family activities and discussions
Comparison of pre and post responses ('Always' / 'Usually' combined)
(Paired sample)



n varied between 369 and 438

Chart 9.8 Family activities and discussions
Changes in the pre and post scores
(Paired sample)



n varied between 336 and 423

9.3.2 Positive discipline and communication strategies

In the pre course questionnaire, over 80% said that they 'Usually or Always' hugged or kissed their child (81%) and acknowledged or praised them for good behaviour (82%), see Table 9.5 and Chart 9.9. Over half said that they 'Usually or Always' gave their children rewards, (57%), listened to or asked for the child's opinion or ideas (60%) and spent time with individual children (54%). Considerably fewer (21%) said that they 'Usually or Always' ignored their children when misbehaving. These responses by the paired sample were very similar to the responses by the full sample.

Table 9.6 and Chart 9.10 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. Chart 9.11 shows that the percentage who responded 'Always' / 'Usually' in the post course questionnaire increased for all seven statements.

Chart 9.12. shows that for all seven statements the number of those who responded with an increased score was more than the number who responded with a decreased score. For three of the seven statements over 40% did not change their response. In response to the statement on kissing and hugging their children, 66% did not change their score. This statement also had 60% who responded 'Always' for the pre course questionnaire.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test confirmed that all of the differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that the course led to an increase in the use of positive discipline and communication strategies.

Table 9.5 Positive discipline and communication strategies
Pre course responses (Paired sample)

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
1. Kiss or hug your children	60	21	15	3	1	n = 442
2. Give children rewards	24	33	36	5	2	n = 432
3. Spend time with individual children	28	26	30	14	2	n = 434
4. Ignore children when misbehaving	6	15	46	19	14	n = 434
5. Acknowledge (praise) for good behaviour	43	39	14	3	1	n = 433
6. Have family discussions to establish rules	16	23	31	20	10	n = 422
7. Listen to/ask for child's opinions and ideas	23	37	28	8	4	n = 425

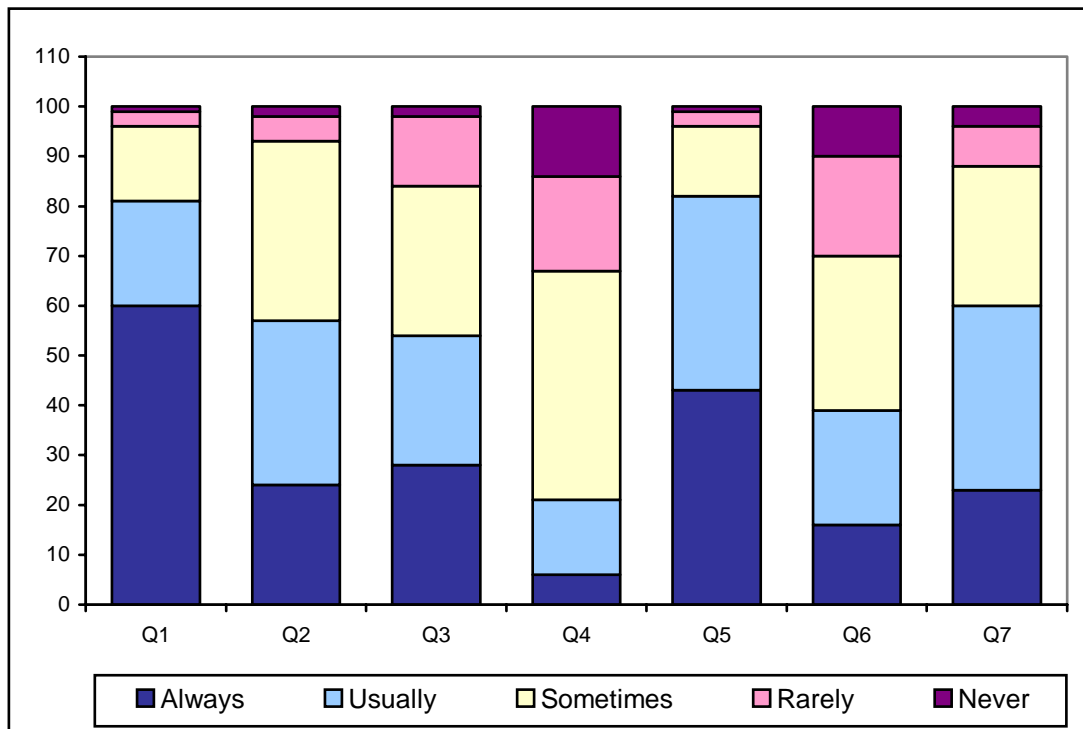
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Table 9.6 Positive discipline and communication strategies
Post course responses (Paired sample)**

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
1. Kiss or hug your children	66	21	10	3	0	n = 438
2. Give children rewards	25	41	32	2	0	n = 429
3. Spend time with individual children	34.5	34.5	27	3	1	n = 431
4. Ignore children when misbehaving	7	26	48	11	8	n = 434
5. Acknowledge (praise) for good behaviour	59	33	6	1	1	n = 433
6. Have family discussions to establish rules	17	32	31	15	5	n = 425
7. Listen to/ask for child's opinions and ideas	32	39	22	5	2	n = 430

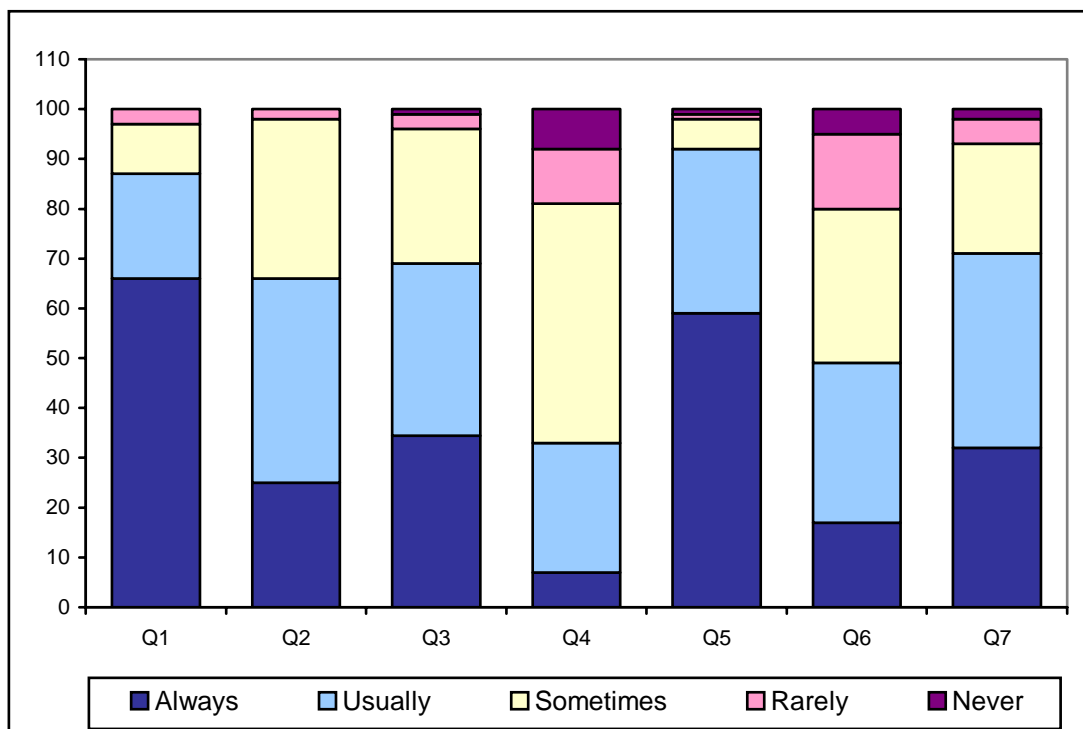
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Chart 9.9 Positive discipline and communication strategies
Pre course responses (Paired sample)**



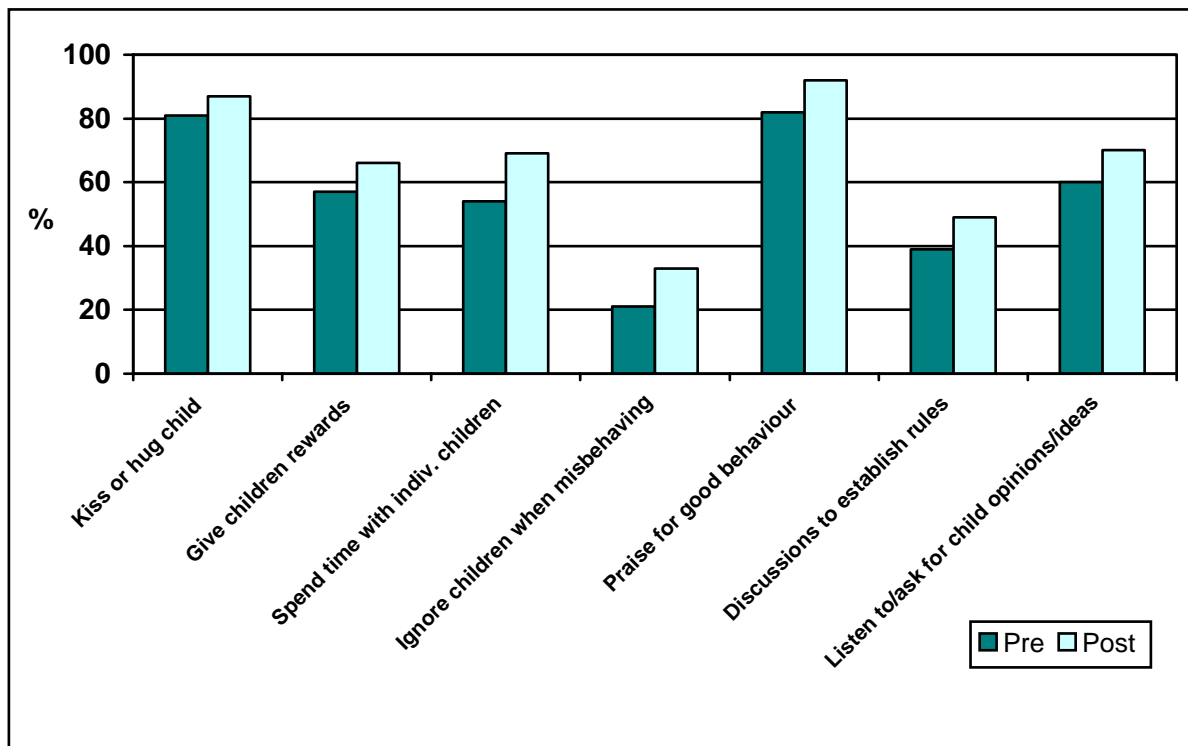
n varied between 422 and 442

**Chart 9.10 Positive discipline and communication strategies
Post course responses (Paired sample)**



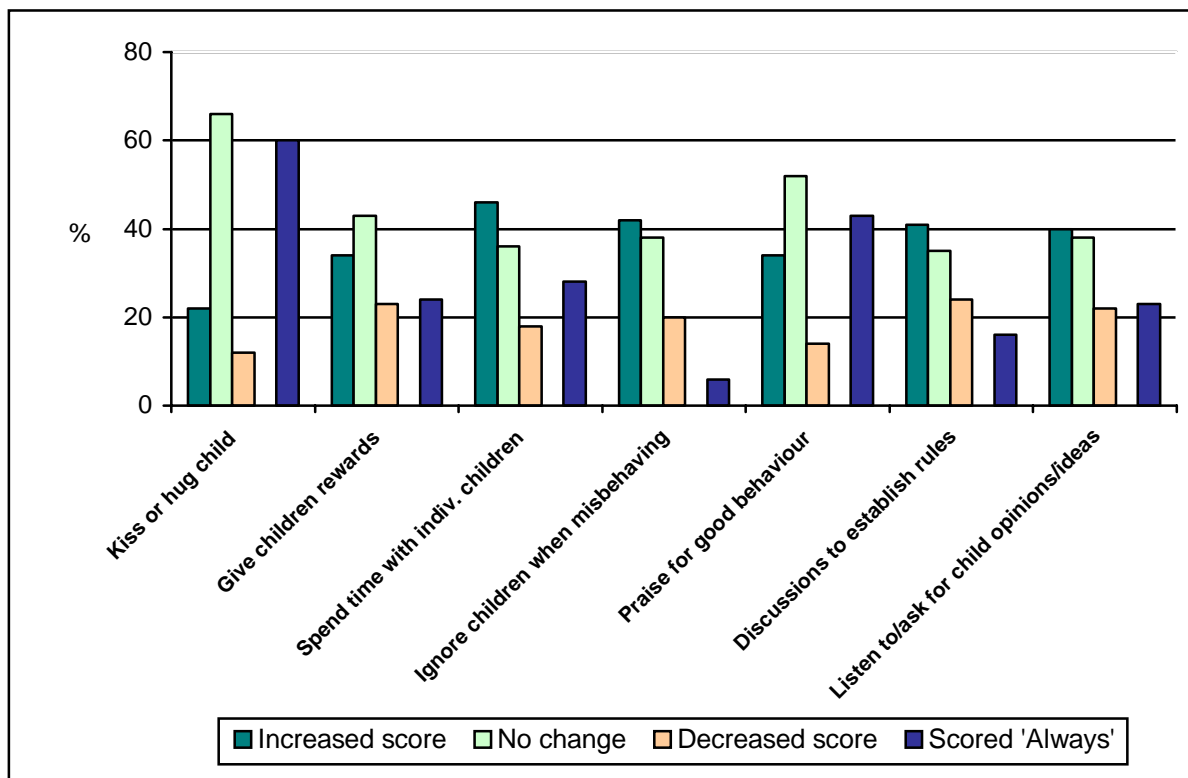
n varied between 425 and 438

Chart 9.11 Positive discipline and communication strategies
Comparison of pre and post responses ('Always' / 'Usually' combined)
(Paired sample)



n varied between 422 and 442

Chart 9.12 Positive discipline and communication strategies questions
Changes in the pre and post scores (Paired sample)



n varied between 407 and 435

9.3.3 Negative discipline and communication strategies

In the pre course questionnaire, over a fifth said that they 'Usually or Always' yell or shout at children (37%), told others about child's bad behaviour (29%) and get angry when children made mistakes (23%), see Table 9.7 and Chart 9.13. Fewer participants said that they 'Usually' or 'Always' threaten or criticise children (13%) or hit or smack children (6%). These responses by the paired sample were very similar to the responses by the full sample.

Table 9.8 and Chart 9.14 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. Chart 9.15 shows that the percentage who responded 'Rarely / Never' in the post course questionnaire increased for all five statements.

Chart 9.16. shows that for all five statements the number of those who responded with a decreased score was more than the number who responded with an increased score. For four of the five statements over 40% did not change their response. In response to the statement on hitting or smacking their children, 51% did not change their score. This statement also had 30% who responded 'Never' for the pre course questionnaire.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test confirmed that all of the differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that the course led to a decrease in the use of negative discipline and communication strategies.

**Table 9.7 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Pre course responses (Paired sample)**

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
12. Yell or shout at children	14.5	23	44	14.5	4	n = 432
13. Threaten or criticise children	4	9	38	30	19	n = 430
14. Hit or smack children	2	4	28	36	30	n = 430
15. Tell others about child's bad behaviour	10	19	37	22	12	n = 430
16. Get angry when children make mistakes	4	19	43	22	12	n = 432

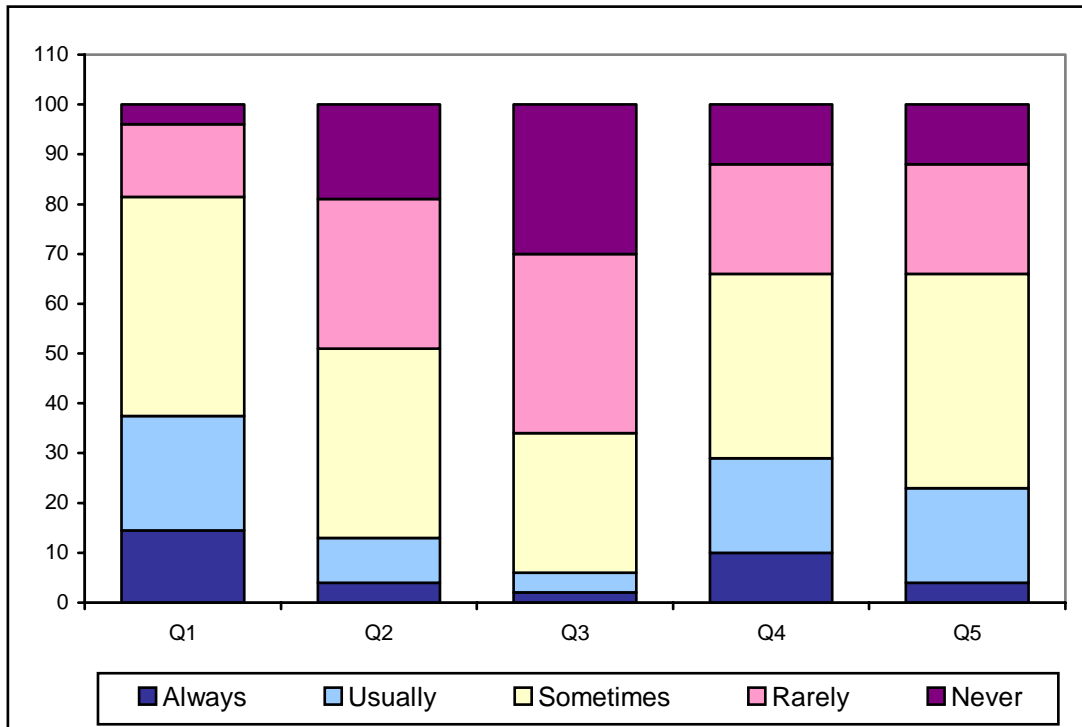
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Table 9.8 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Post course responses (Paired sample)**

How often do you:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Sample size
1. Yell or shout at children	3	11	52	29	5	n = 431
2. Threaten or criticise children	2	3	23	43	29	n = 427
3. Hit or smack children	1	2	16	45	36	n = 429
4. Tell others about child's bad behaviour	5	11	36	29	19	n = 431
5. Get angry when children make mistakes	2	11	37	38	12	n = 429

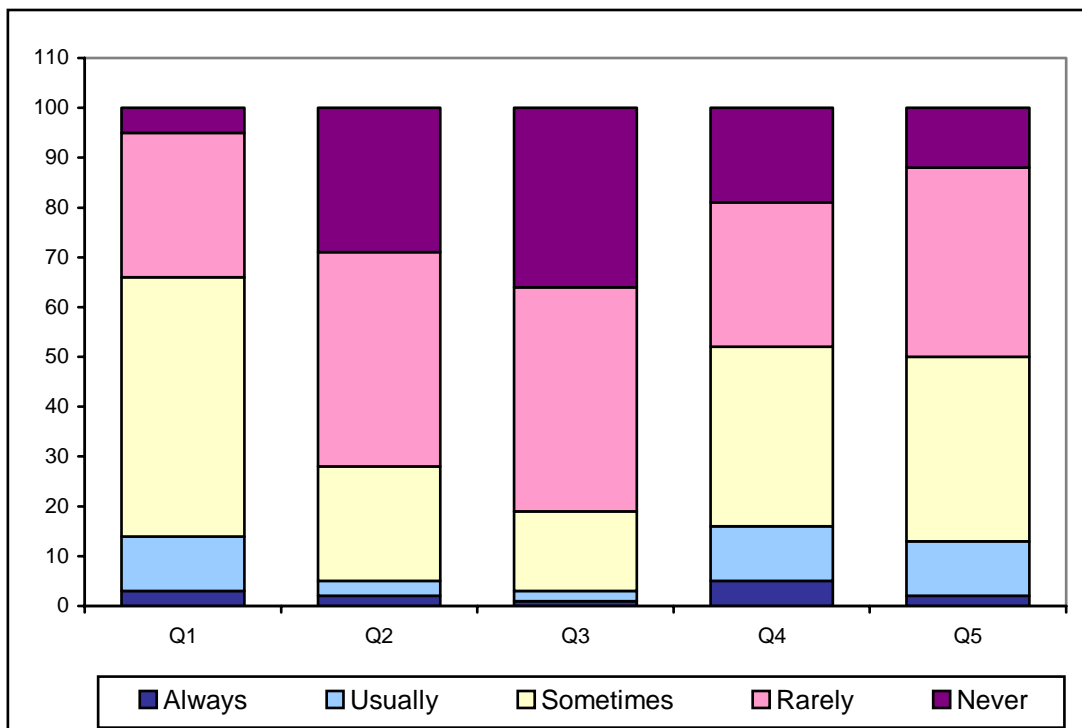
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Chart 9.13 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Pre course responses (Paired sample)**



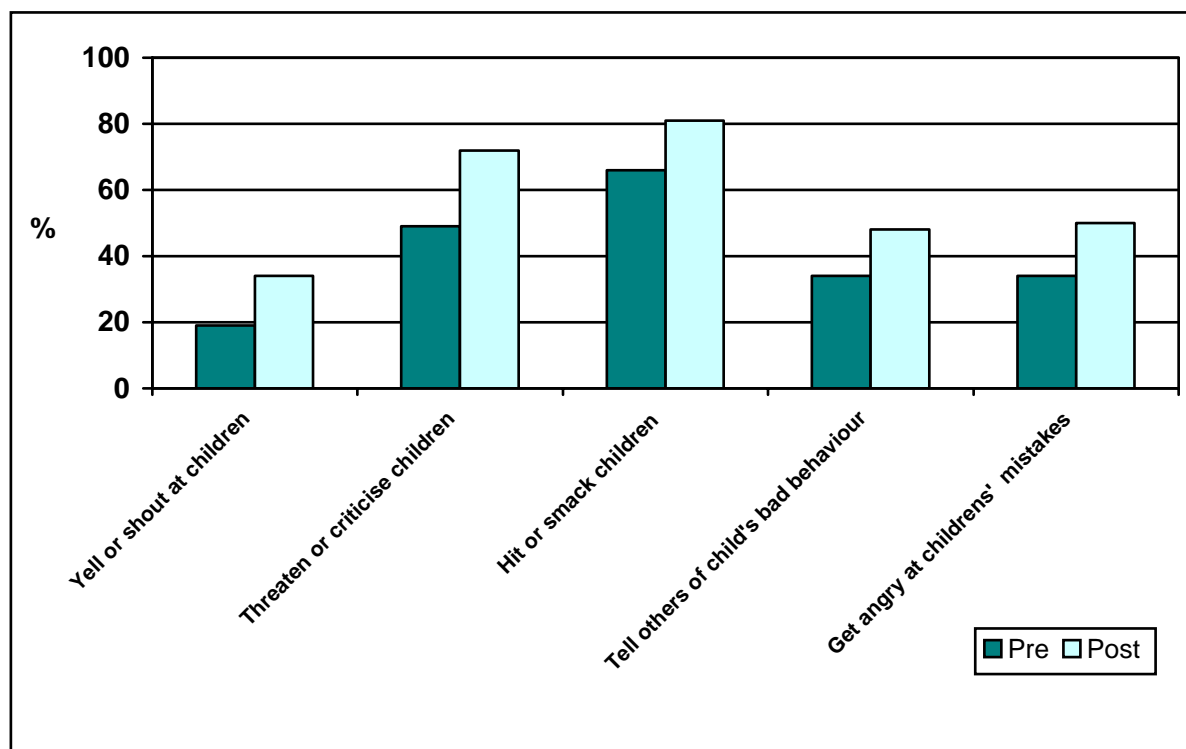
n varied between 430 and 432

**Chart 9.14 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Post course responses (Paired sample)**



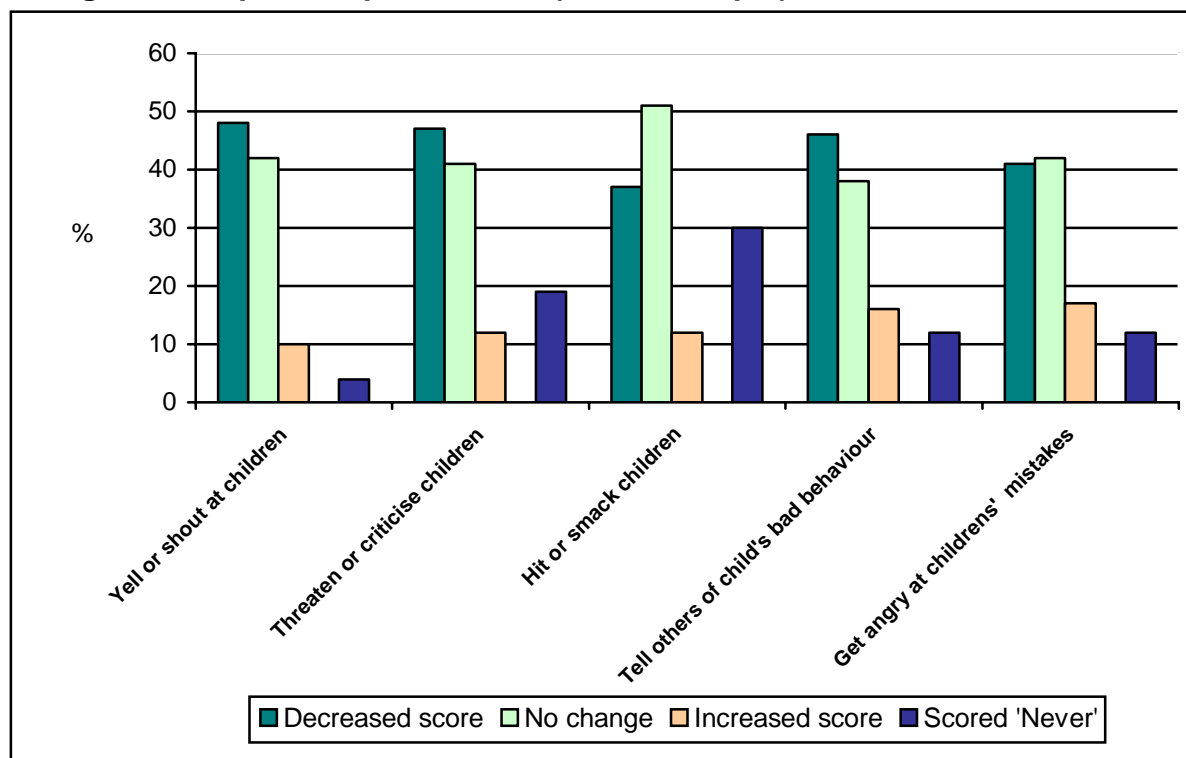
n varied between 427 and 431

Chart 9.15 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Comparison of pre and post responses ('Rarely' / 'Never' combined)
(Paired sample)



n varies between 427 and 432

Chart 9.16 Negative discipline and communication strategies
Changes in the pre and post scores (Paired sample)



n varied between 415 and 421

9.4. The participant's and children's competence

A series of questions were also asked to assess the participants' and children's level of competence before and after participating in the course.

9.4.1 Participants' competence

In the pre course questionnaire, the participants felt most confident about their relationship skills. Over two thirds of participants felt 'Very good' or 'Good' about these, see Table 9.9 and Chart 9.17. Over three quarters of participants (77%) felt 'Very good' or 'Good' about teaching their child right from wrong. However fewer participants felt 'Very good' or 'Good' about their other child management skills. Around half of the participants felt 'Very good' or 'Good' about their anger management and problem solving skills. The highest response for 'Poor' / 'Very poor' was 20%, this was for handling their child's refusal to do housework. These responses by the paired sample were very similar to the responses by the full sample.

Table 9.10 and Chart 9.18 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. Chart 9.19 shows that the percentage who responded "Very good' or 'Good' in the post course questionnaire increased for all ten statements.

Chart 9.20 shows that for all ten statements the number of those who responded with an increased score was more than the number who responded with a decreased score. For nine of the ten statements over 40% did not change their response. For two of these statements, over 50% did not change their response. These two statements also had the highest percentage who responded 'Very good' for the pre course questionnaire.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test confirmed that all of the differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that the course had a positive impact on the participants' competence.

**Table 9.9 Participants' competence – Pre course responses
(Paired sample)**

How do you feel about your ability:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
Anger management						
1. To manage your anger	8	36	41	11	4	n = 439
2. To express your emotions	19	34	35	10	2	n = 436
Child management skills						
3. To teach your child right from wrong	29	48	19	3	1	n = 439
4. To handle child fight or destructive behaviour	9	40	38	10	3	n = 427
5. To handle child refusal to do housework	15	30	35	15	5	n = 405
6. To make suggestions to child's teacher	21	36	28	10	5	n = 412
Problem solving skills						
7. To make plans to achieve personal goals	17	33	34	12	4	n = 429
8. To access community resource	17	36	31	10	6	n = 426
Relationships						
9. How good do you feel about your relationship with your children	38	41	17	3	1	n = 420
10. How good do you feel about your relationship with other family members	24	42	26	6	2	n = 428

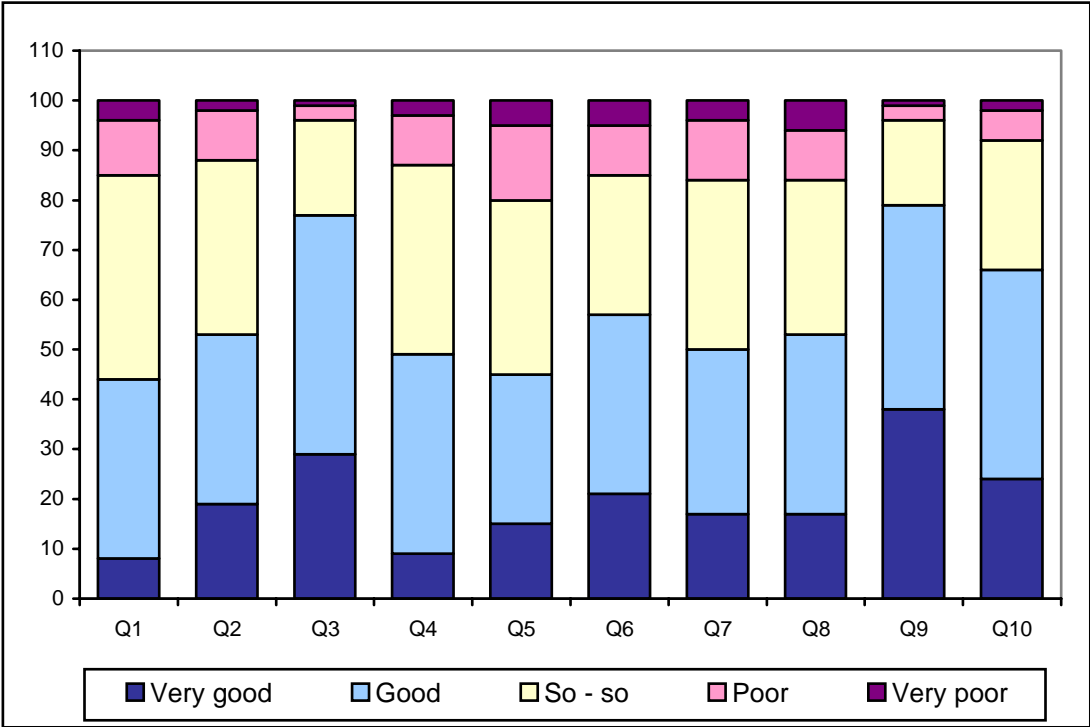
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Table 9.10 Participants' competence – Post course responses
(Paired sample)**

How do you feel about your ability:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
Anger management						
1. To manage your anger	18	45	33	3	1	n = 434
2. To express your emotions	21	44	28	6	1	n = 431
Child management skills						
3. To teach your child right from wrong	41	49	9	1	0	n = 433
4. To handle child fight or destructive behaviour	18	47	29	5	1	n = 425
5. To handle child refusal to do housework	18	40	30	9	3	n = 412
6. To make suggestions to child's teacher	27	44	21	4	4	n = 419
Problem solving skills						
7. To make plans to achieve personal goals	26	46	21	5	2	n = 433
8. To access community resource	27	36	27	8	2	n = 428
Relationships						
9. How good do you feel about your relationship with your children	55	35	8	2	0	n = 434
10. How good do you feel about your relationship with other family members	32	42	19	5	2	n = 431

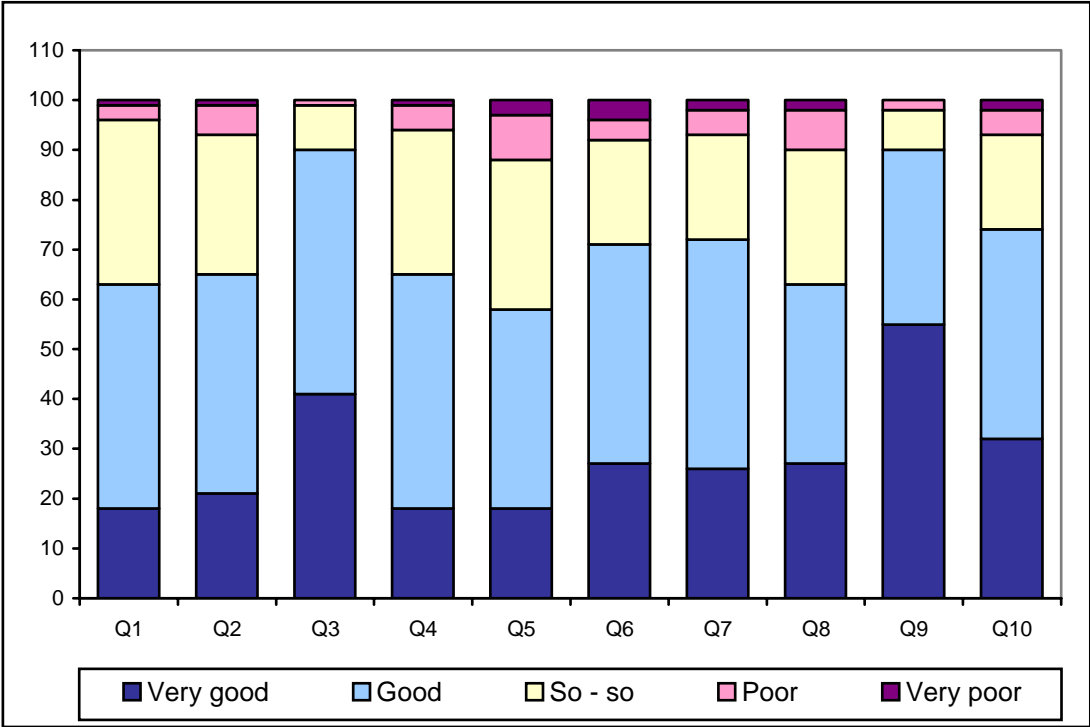
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Chart 9.17 Participants' competence – Pre course responses (Paired sample)



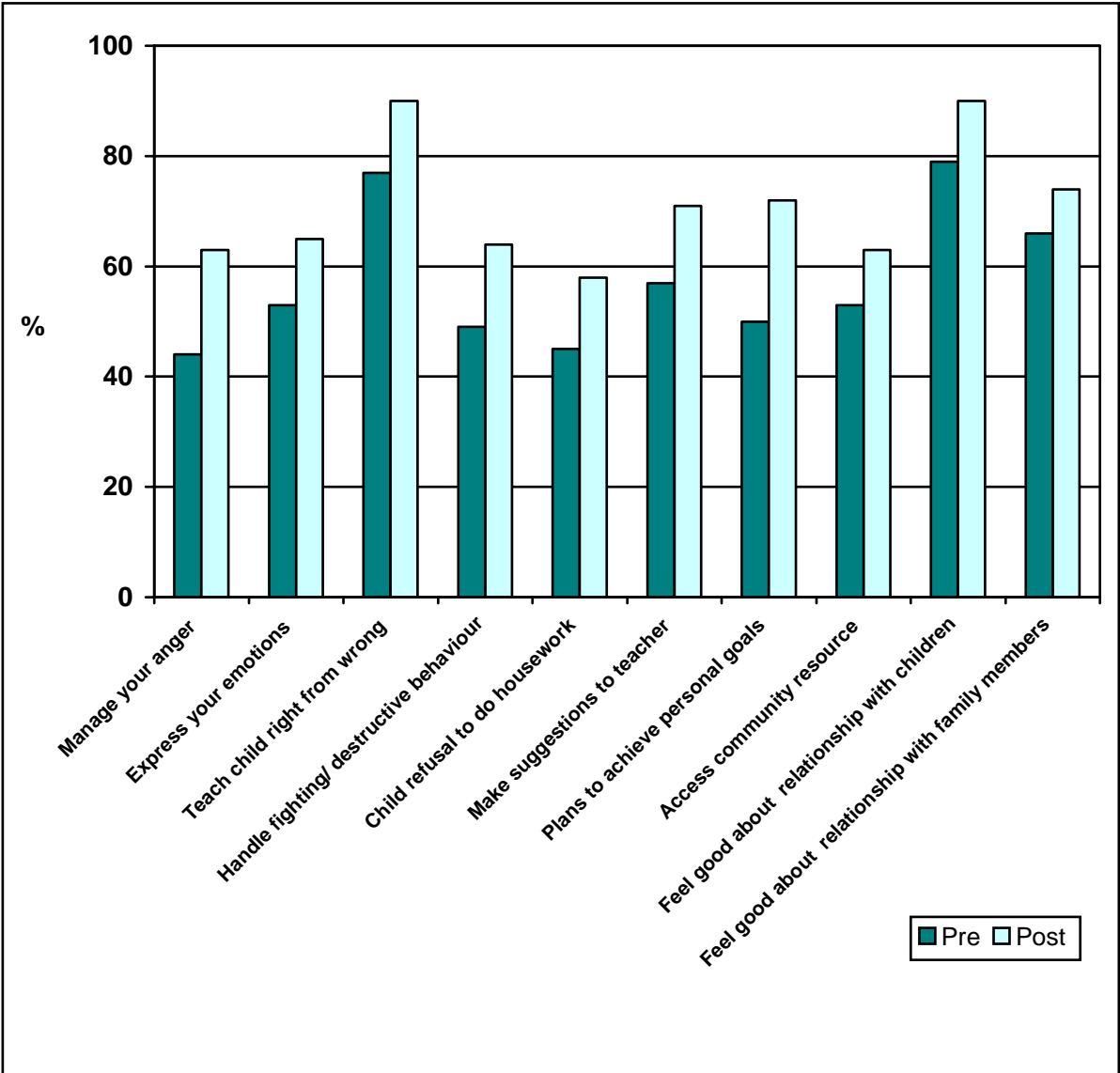
n varied between 404 and 439

Chart 9.18 Participants' competence – Post course responses (Paired sample)



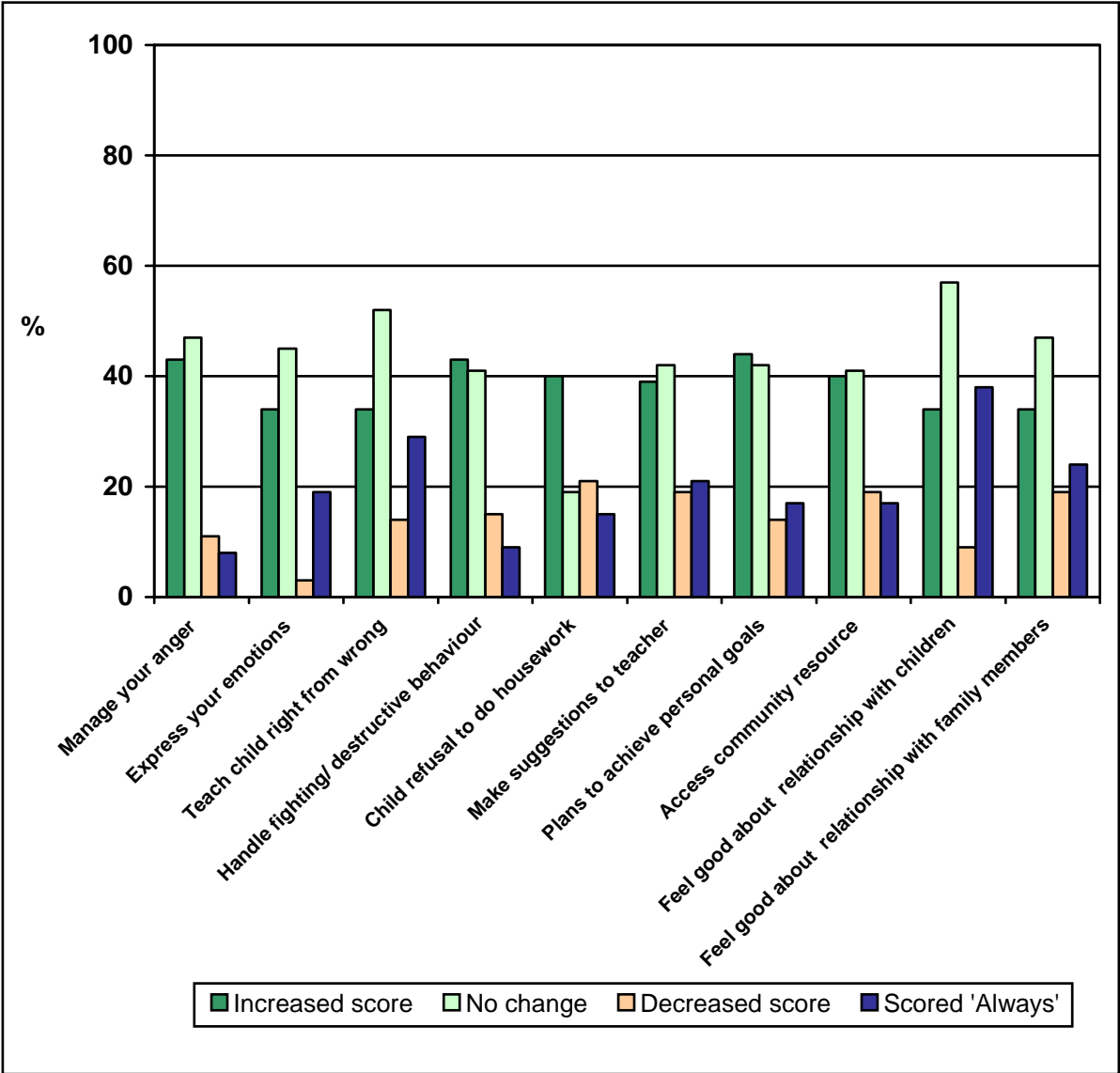
n varied between 412 and 434

Chart 9.19 Participants' competence
Comparison of pre and post responses ('Very good' / 'Good' combined)
(Paired sample)



n varied between 404 and 439

Chart 9.20 Participants' competence – Changes in the pre and post scores (Paired sample)



n varied between 382 and 429

9.4.2 Children's competence

In the pre course questionnaire, the participants felt most confident about their children's competence in relation to their self esteem and making choices and violence, between 60% and 79% of participants felt 'Very good' / 'Good' about these. Participants felt less confident about their children's competence in relation to self discipline and problem solving skills, nevertheless between 45% and 65% of parents felt 'Very good' / 'Good' about all but one of these. The lowest score was for 'control behaviour (self discipline)', 35% felt 'Very good' or 'Good' about this, see Table 9.11 and Chart 9.21. These responses by the paired sample were very similar to the responses by the full sample, apart from the statement on self discipline.

Table 9.12 and Chart 9.22 show the responses to the post course questionnaire. The responses to the pre and post course questionnaires for the paired sample were then compared. Chart 9.23 shows that the percentage who responded "Very good' or 'Good' in the post course questionnaire increased for all eight statements.

Chart 9.24 shows that for all eight statements the number of those who responded with an increased score was more than the number who responded with a decreased score. For six of the eight statements over 40% did not change their response. For two of these statements, over 50% did not change their response. These two statements also had the highest percentage who responded 'Very good' in the pre course questionnaire.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test confirmed that all of the differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that the course had a positive impact on the children's competence.

**Table 9.11 Children's competence – Pre course responses
(Paired sample)**

How do you feel about your child's ability:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
Self esteem						
1.To feel good about him/herself	22	42	24	9	3	n = 678
2. To feel comfortable with his/her ethnicity	43	36	16	3	2	n = 632
Self discipline						
3. To manage / express feelings & emotions	20	36	30	10	4	n = 677
4. To control behaviour (self discipline)	10	29	37	17	7	n = 673
Problem solving skills						
5. To consider others when making decisions	14	33	35	14	4	n = 660
6. To ask for help / guidance if needed	22	42	24	9	3	n = 661
Choices and violence						
7. To avoid using or dealing drugs	49	27	11	7	6	n = 484
8. To avoid violence and stay out of gangs	36	30	20	8	6	n = 537

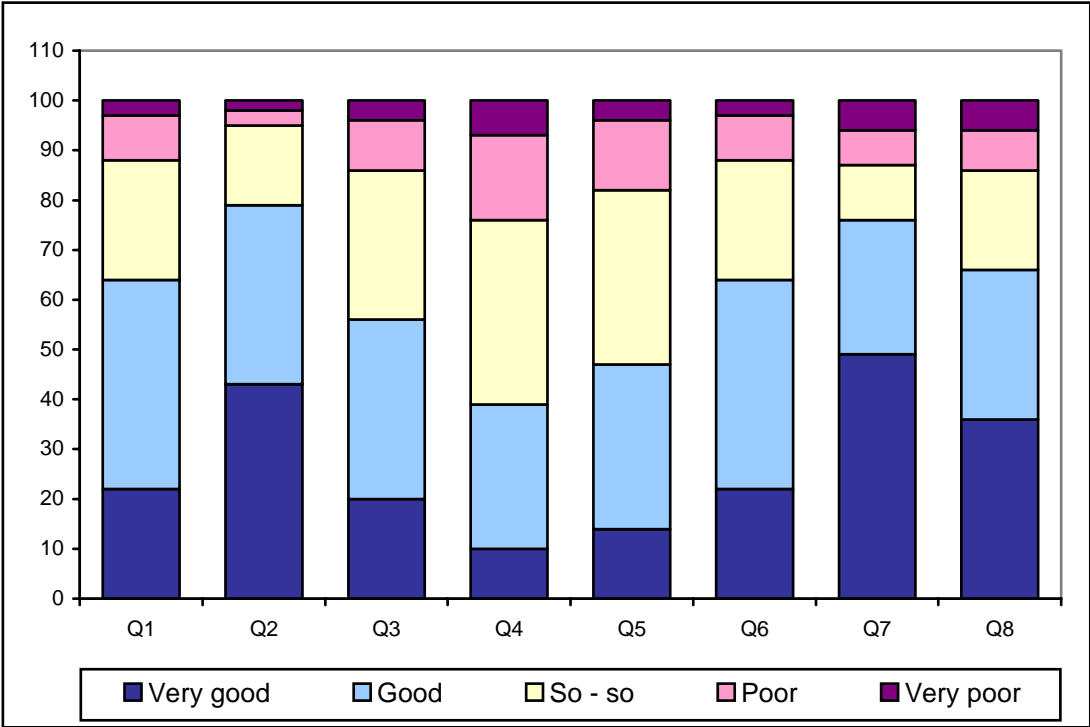
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

**Table 9.12 Children's competence – Post course responses
(Paired sample)**

How do you feel about your child's ability:	Very good	Good	So - so	Poor	Very poor	Sample size
Self esteem						
1.To feel good about him/herself	30	44	21	3	2	n = 652
2. To feel comfortable with his/her ethnicity	52	35	12	1	0	n = 609
Self discipline						
3. To manage / express feelings & emotions	23	46	22	7	2	n = 648
4. To control behaviour (self discipline)	16	37	34	9	4	n = 646
Problem solving skills						
5. To consider others when making decisions	20	37	33	8	2	n = 636
6. To ask for help / guidance if needed	30	44	21	4	1	n = 646
Choices and violence						
7. To avoid using or dealing drugs	59	24	10	3	4	n = 504
8. To avoid violence and stay out of gangs	49	30	15	3	3	n = 550

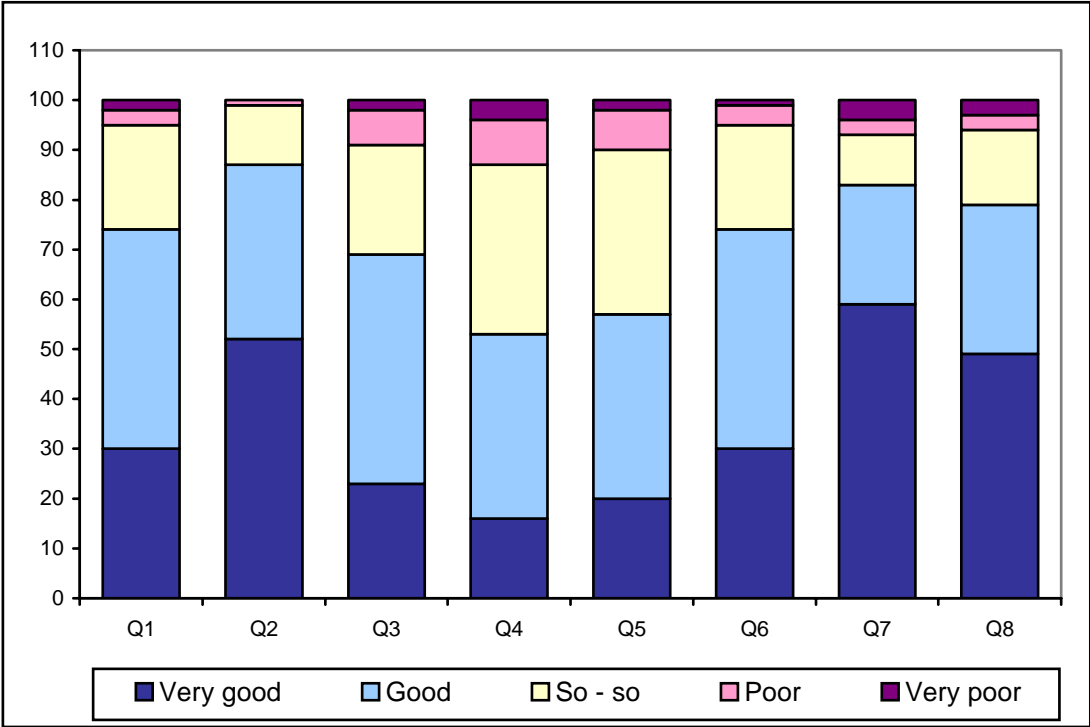
All figures shown as a % out of 100% across each row.

Chart 9.21 Children's competence – Pre course responses (Paired sample)



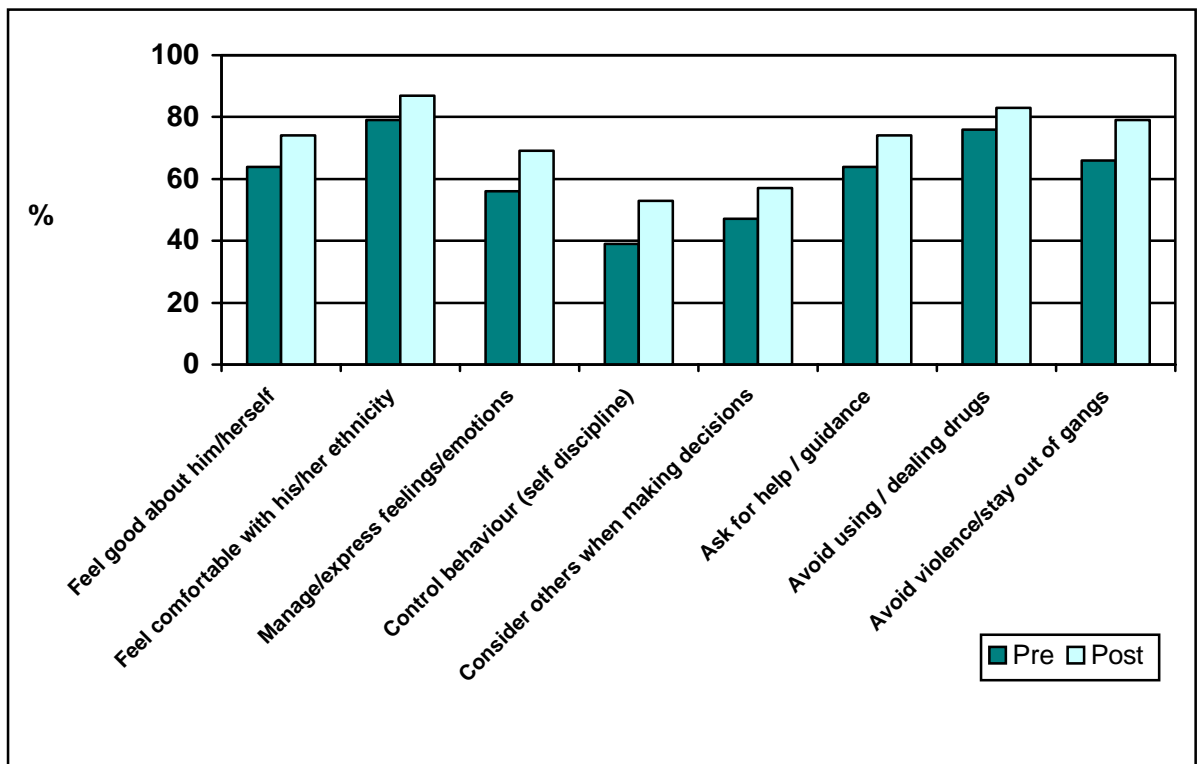
n varied between 484 and 678

Chart 9.22 Children's competence – Post course responses (Paired sample)



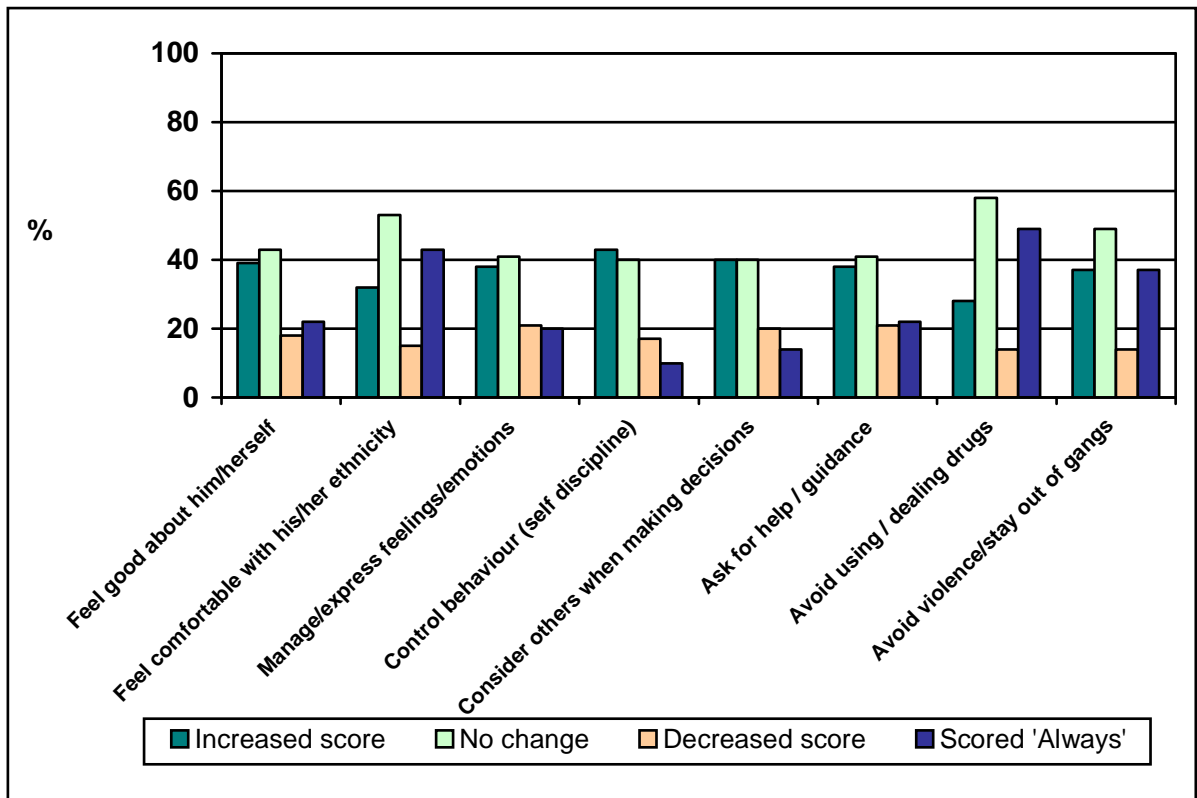
n varied between 504 and 652

Chart 9.23 Children's competence
Comparison of pre and post responses ('Very good' / 'Good' combined)
(Paired sample)



n varied between 484 and 678

Chart 9.24 Children's competence – Changes in the pre and post scores
(Paired sample)



n varied between 412 and 619

9.5 Summary of Section Nine

- Overall, the changes in the responses to the pre and post assessment questionnaires suggested that the course had a positive impact on the participants.
- The changes in the participants' responses to the statements in five areas were all statistically significant and the results suggested that the course led to:
 - An increase in family activities and discussions.
 - An increase in the use of positive discipline and communication strategies.
 - A decrease in the use of negative discipline and communication strategies.
 - An increase in both the participants' and the children's competence.
- There were no statistically significant differences in the changes in the participants' responses to the questions on community focus. This suggested that the course did not have an immediate impact on the participants' level of community involvement.

Section Ten

Possible Improvements to the Programme

10.1 Introduction

The facilitators and participants were asked if they had any suggestions for improving the programme and this section summaries their suggestions.

10.2 Facilitators' suggestions for improving the programme.

The facilitators had a wide range of suggestions for improving / enhancing the curriculum. These covered:

- The curriculum
- Time issues
- Language issues
- The course Manual – language and other issues
- The transparencies – language and other issues
- The pre / post course questionnaires
- Pre planning
- Video etc
- Adapting the course for participants with younger children
- Involving men / partners
- Accreditation guide
- More facilitator training.

The full list of suggestions made by the facilitators has been provided to the Race Equality Foundation.

10.3 Participants' suggestions to improve the course

When asked for their suggestions to improve the course, the participants made 367 comments on this. Some people (36 participants) could not think of any improvement or were satisfied with the course as it was. There were several suggestions that were contradictory.

The most frequently suggested change was to spend more time on the course. Many participants wanted more sessions or longer sessions in order to cover all the information in the course:

'So much to cover and so little time.'
'Longer sessions.'
'Longer duration more than 13 weeks.'

Others, on the other hand, felt that the sessions / course were too long:

'3 hours a bit long.'
'Over long - less reading directly from manual.'
'A shorter course maybe six weeks instead of 12.'

Many participants mentioned the need for more time for group discussions. Included in this was time for the parents to become a group and get to know each other:

'Discussion is the great part of the group.'
'More time for parents to bond.'
'More in depth discussion.'
'More time for discussion and interaction (longer classes).'
'More time to talk about ideas that you or the group need to say.'

Others raised challenges related to group discussions. Some participants did not talk much in the groups or did not feel that they were given the space to talk:

'Encourage parent to participate in group discussion.'
'More interaction - more icebreakers.'
'Need to involve silent people more.'
'Giving everybody the chance to speak as long as others have.'
'More class participation to get to know each other more. Did not feel I met anyone.'

Others felt that, due to poor time keeping, a lot of time that could have been profitably spent was lost:

'To start on time so that there is more time for discussions and practicals etc.'
'Get everyone to arrive at the same time.'
'Time management. We all became too relaxed and came in late.'

Most of the courses were held during school / work hours. Some participants suggested that the course should be at a different time of day or at weekends so that it would be possible for both parents to come together or for more men to attend the course. There was also a call for male facilitators:

'It would be great if there was an evening class to encourage couples / carers to go together.'
'Evening classes for couples. Mums and dads.'
'More male involvement.'
'A bigger group with maybe a mix of people, I mean gender, so we get a feel of the female view.' [male only group]
'Have male facilitators.'

In relation to a class that was held in the evening, it was pointed out that this could be tiring after a day's work:

'Time of classes. Saturday may have been good as evenings can be tiring / difficult for people to attend.'

There were also some requests for some materials so that the parent attending the course could share its contents with their partner:

'Something to help people with partners to share learning from this course.'
'A partner manual.'

A number of language issues were identified, both in relation to the sessions and the materials:

'I feel the language problem.'
'Simplified English. I had some difficulties in catching up with the technical words.'
'Bengali translation should be simplified to easy Bengali.'
'Wording simplified for easier understanding for others. Better interpretation for others.'
'Interpreter to be quieter.'

Some of the smaller groups commented on the need for more participants or a more varied ethnic mix of participants:

'A bigger group.'
'Need more parents to attend.'
'Different ethnicity and religious background.'

Where there was a very big group the comments were rather different:

'Name labels could be worn for every lesson as this would help us remember everyone's name. Especially in large groups.'
'Group too big to start off with.'
'Be careful when splitting large groups to ensure you have a good mix.'

There were a few comments on specific parts of the course or on the way that the course was run:

'Child development, anger management need to be near the beginning.'
'Communication skills added to the course.'
'Issue more living examples.'
'Check in and review of week, implementing follow up activities, feedback - intro to new worksheet.'
'Bring in more speakers from outside.'
'Too much to write.'
'Group agreement should have with the group in the beginning and go through every session e.g. speak [one] at a time.'
'More facilitators.'
'Better lunch sandwiches.'

The role plays and homework had comments both for and against them:

'More role plays.'
'Not to do role play as it is not appropriate and childish. We are adults not children in a drama class.'
'Help with homework.'
'More homework every week.'

Some courses had challenges with specific venues and the equipment available.

There were several more suggestions made under the any other comments section. Several people wanted the class to last longer as they felt that at times it was rushed or they needed longer to discuss a topic:

'I feel there should have been more sessions as there wasn't sufficient time to cover all the information in the booklets and interpreting take up a lot of time.'
'The tutors managed the course very well with the time shortage.'
'I felt that there was a lot of homework and not enough time to do it.'
'More follow up, more discussion time.'
'There is too much material to get through and its deep stuff too in the time given.'

In contrast, one participant felt that the course was too long:

'The course went in other 2 many weeks therefore dragging on.'

Some suggested better food, but others said that they were happy with the refreshments.

Some participants commented on making the course available to more people and to specific groups:

'All parents should participate in this parenting class.'
'This course should be available to all in the community. Education is a right.'
'Have a parenting courses for teenagers aged 16+.'
'I encourage to do the course all the mother with under 3. The course help with it.'
'A very well run course - would like to see more Christian based principles / parallels.'
'I would like there courses to be run in local schools and community centre.'
'We really enjoyed it and learnt something from the course. This course should be taught in all centres where other normal courses go in.'

Some participants commented on the manual:

'Some colour / illustrations in manual as its very dry / uninspiring in its presentation.'
'The wording of certain sections is very hard to understand and very off putting.'
'I was promised a parent manual in Bengali. We did not receive it.'

There were a few comments about the gender of the participants. Some wanted there to be more men involved or some way of involving them in the course:

'I think we need to try and involve both parents if possible.'
'I think maybe if there was a parenting class for fathers as well as mothers.'
'Publicise the course more wider so that father or man could join the course.'

10.4 Summary of Section Ten

- The facilitators and the participants had a wide range of suggestions for improving the programme.

Section Eleven

Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

This section presents conclusions based on the qualitative and quantitative data provided for the evaluation of the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities Programme.

The evaluation covered data from a total of 82 courses with over 900 participants. Over 400 participants completed 'before' and 'after' assessment questionnaires. This evaluation was therefore based on a much larger number of participants than has been possible with most UK based parenting courses to date. The results are therefore less likely to be due to chance.

11.2 Range of locations and agencies running the course

By 2004/5 the programme was being run both in London and other parts of England by a wide range of agencies – voluntary, statutory and partnership organisations and community groups.

11.3 The ethnic and social mix of the participants

A review of what works in parenting support (Moran et al, 2004) highlighted that participation in parenting support by minority ethnic groups and fathers is generally low and there is a subsequent lack of evidence on what works with them. Similarly a report on the market for parental and family support services and a follow up review of capacity in the parenting support market (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006 and 2007) highlighted that a number of groups, most particularly fathers and minority ethnic groups, but also parents of disabled children and low income groups, were under-represented in the use of mainstream parenting support services.

The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme successfully reached people from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds with a wide variety of first languages. This included people who had recently arrived in the UK as well as people in more established communities.

The examination of the ethnic mix of the courses by the type of agency providing the course (voluntary, statutory or partnership organisation or community group) showed that each type of agency was able to access a range of ethnic groups. In some cases, where local ethnic minority organisations and community groups organised courses, this clearly assisted with reaching specific ethnic groups.

The courses also successfully reached people from a range of social groups and / or people who were facing a range of social issues. This included:

- People on low incomes – two thirds of the participants had a household income of £10,000 or less per year.
- Single parents – a third of the participants were single parents.
- Some male participants – 11% of the participants were male and just over a third of the courses (39%) had at least one male participant.
- People with varying levels of education – including 11% who had completed their education by the end of primary school.
- People with experience of domestic violence.
- People on court orders and / or referred through the criminal justice system.

- People referred by social services.
- People dealing with a range of other social issues, including drugs and violence.
- A few teenage parents.

A few grandparents also attended the courses. A review of research on parenting programmes and minority ethnic families pointed out that minority ethnic grandparents were more keen to participate in parenting programmes than White grandparents (Barlow et al, 2004), so this was an important group of participants.

The above list includes people who are sometimes viewed as 'hard to reach'. By working through local agencies and community groups, the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme has demonstrated that these groups can be reached and encouraged to participate in this type of course.

11.4 Course attendance

Some research has indicated that better attendance leads to more change, with 8 – 10 sessions usually needed to achieve substantial improvements (Scott et al, 2006). Nearly all of the courses ran for the full 12 weeks and some for a little longer. This provided time for the participants to reflect on their parenting skills and try out changes within a supportive environment.

The facilitators took a number of actions to support participants' continued attendance on the courses and, out of those who attended at least two sessions, only 15% dropped out. This was a very satisfactory figure for this type of course. Other studies (Barlow et al, 2004) have indicated that the average drop out rate for parents in some parenting programmes is in the region of 30% and can be as high as 50%.

11.5 Benefits for the participants

Most of the participants attended the course to become a better parent. In their post course comments they identified a range of benefits they had gained from the course. These reflected the benefits of parenting programmes identified by Barlow et al (2004). This included: enjoyment, new ideas, reduced stress, greater self control and an increased sense of empowerment. The participants also identified improvements in their relationships with other family members and other people. The pre and post course questionnaires provided quantitative evidence that the participants had benefited from the course and increased their competencies.

11.6 Benefits for the children

The participants' comments also reflected some of the benefits of parenting programmes for children as identified by Barlow et al (2004). This included: improved parent/child communications, spending more time together, increased empathy with children and use of positive rather than negative discipline. There was less evidence of allowing children more freedom. The pre and post course questionnaires provided quantitative evidence that the children had benefited from the course and increased their competencies.

11.7 Use of positive discipline

Positive discipline has been recognised as a particularly important aspect of all parenting courses and the need to convey it in a culturally sensitive context has been emphasised (Barlow et al, 2004). The positive discipline component of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme was the most valued aspect of the course and the pre and post course questionnaires provided quantitative evidence that the ideas associated with positive discipline had had a practical impact.

11.8 Other parenting skills and community involvement

The participants also valued the other aspects of the curriculum and, as the course progressed, they appreciated how these contributed to their parenting skills.

As well as improving parenting skills, the content of the curriculum was designed to explore parenting styles in the cultural context of the parent/carer; to celebrate individuals' cultural background; to discuss and share different cultural parenting styles; to develop an understanding of and to provide the opportunity to build relationships between people of the same and different ethnic backgrounds; to break down isolation and to increase community involvement.

The comments clearly indicated that many of the participants learnt about their own and others' cultures and this contributed to the development of understanding and relationships between people from different ethnic groups. Nearly all of the groups planned to continue meeting in some form after the course had finished and some had already joined a parent support group.

A wide range of social issues were discussed through the curriculum in general and the community involvement component in particular. The different courses responded to the different needs of their participants and focussed on different social issues.

In some agencies experienced facilitators ran the courses alongside newly trained facilitators who had attended previous courses as participants. These 'parent facilitators' added value by bringing their own experiences to the course. This also contributed to capacity building in the local community.

The pre and post course questionnaires provided quantitative evidence that positive participant / child interactions had increased by the end of the course but the community focus questions did not provide quantitative evidence of increased community involvement.

11.9 Adherence to the recommended model

A minority of the courses did not follow the recommended model for the course as described in the programme manual. This occurred in a variety of ways:

- **Target age group of the children:** Although the course was designed for participants who cared for children aged three to eighteen years, some participants appeared to be attending the course to improve their parenting / care of children aged under three years. Some of these participants appeared to struggle with applying the course to younger children. A number of the participants and facilitators suggested that the course should be adapted to cater for participants caring for younger children.

- **Size of the groups:** Some of the courses were considerably smaller or larger than the recommended size of 8 to 20 participants. Both the participants and facilitators commented on the challenges that this created, especially in large groups where the participants spoke a variety of languages and/or used interpreters.
- **Length of the course:** A few of the courses were longer than the recommended length of an introductory session and 12 three hour sessions taught in consecutive weeks. Again this created some challenges for the participants and facilitators.
- **Number of facilitators:** One course had only one facilitator who struggled with running the course on her own. Comments by this and other facilitators underlined the benefit of always having at least two facilitators running a course.

Comments made by both the participants and the facilitators reinforced the importance of following the recommended format.

11.10 Overall conclusions

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data indicate that, overall, the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme had a positive impact on the participants and the children and to some extent the wider family / community.

The final words must go to some of the participants themselves:

'Very good mix of people from different cultures, found similar parenting experiences and concerns amongst us all.'

'The course is invaluable and I would encourage everyone, parent or not to go on this course. It is excellent and informative.'

'Apparently, I thought that coming to this class meant "I was a bad parent" but instead I've learned a lot and am so grateful.'

References

- Barlow, Jane; Shaw, Richard and Stewart-Brown, Sarah in conjunction with the REU (2004) 'Parenting programmes and minority ethnic families. Experience and outcomes' National Children's Bureau for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Moran, Patricia; Ghate, Deborah and van der Merwe, Amelia (2004) 'What Works in Parenting Support? A Review of the International Evidence' DfES Research Report RR574.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2006) 'The Market for Parental & Family Support Services' DfES Children's Services.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) 'Review of Capacity in the Parenting Support Market' Final Report. DfES Children's Services.
- Scott, Stephen; O'Connor, Thomas and Futh, Annabel (2006) 'What makes parenting programmes work in disadvantaged areas?' Findings Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Steele, Marilyn and Marigna, Marilyn R; in collaboration with Jerry Tello and Ronald Johnston (2000) 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities: an inclusive programme. Facilitator Manual' Race Equality Unit.

Appendix 1

Attendance Figures from CSRs

This appendix contains charts showing attendance figures / participation as reported in Case Summary Reports. It covers the 48 courses where the figures were internally consistent.

Chart A3.1. Participation in courses in London: Courses 1 – 6

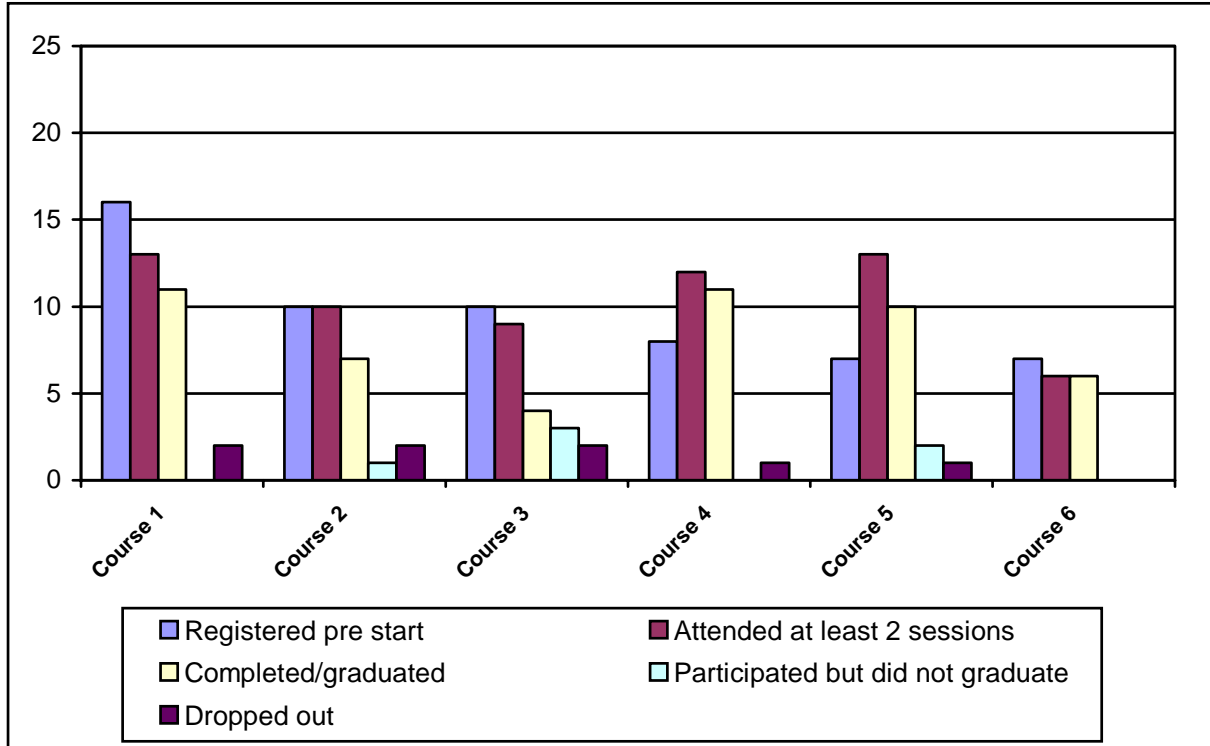


Chart A3.2. Participation in courses in London: Courses 7 - 12

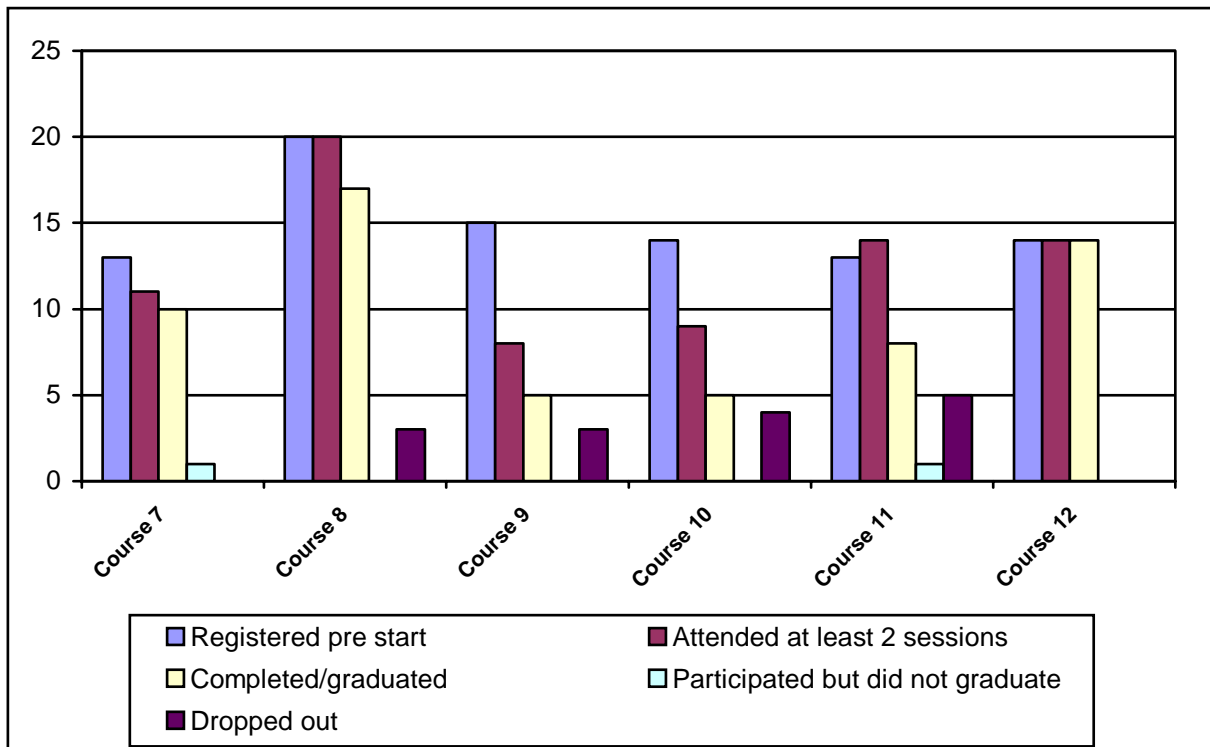


Chart A3.3. Participation in courses in London: Courses 13 – 18

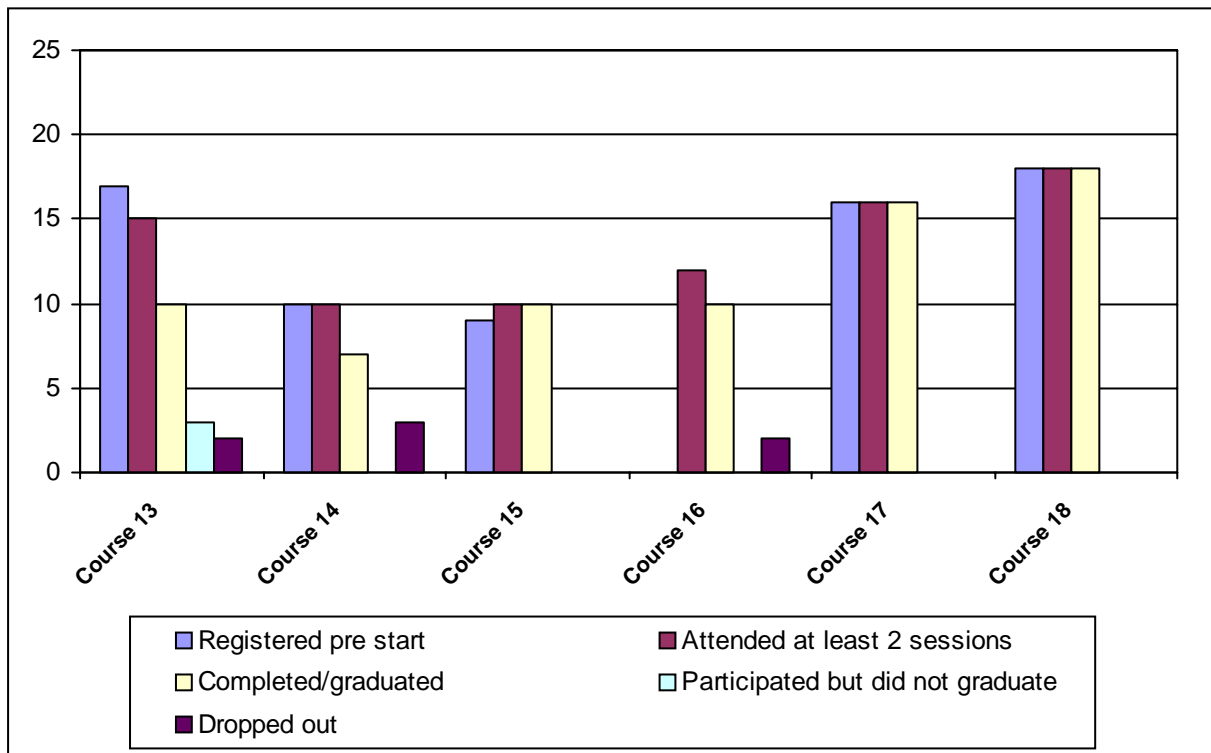


Chart A3.4. Participation in courses in London: Courses 19 – 24

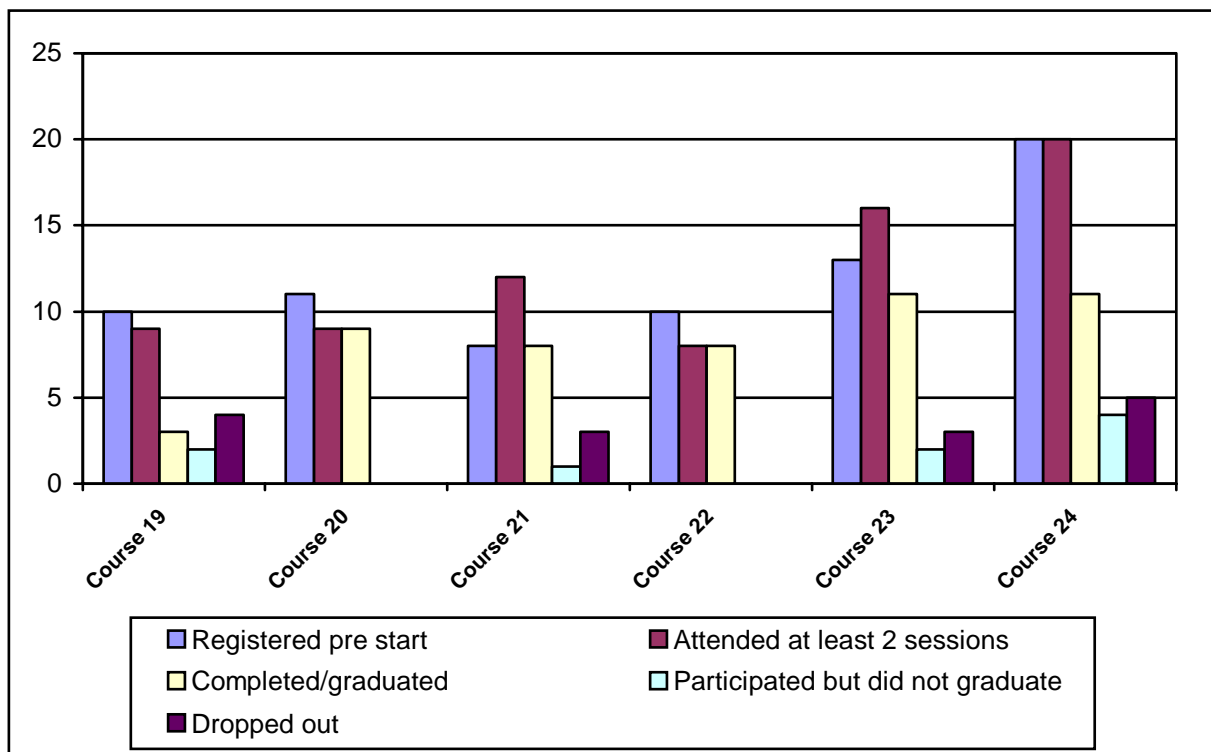


Chart A3.5. Participation in courses in London: Courses 25 – 30

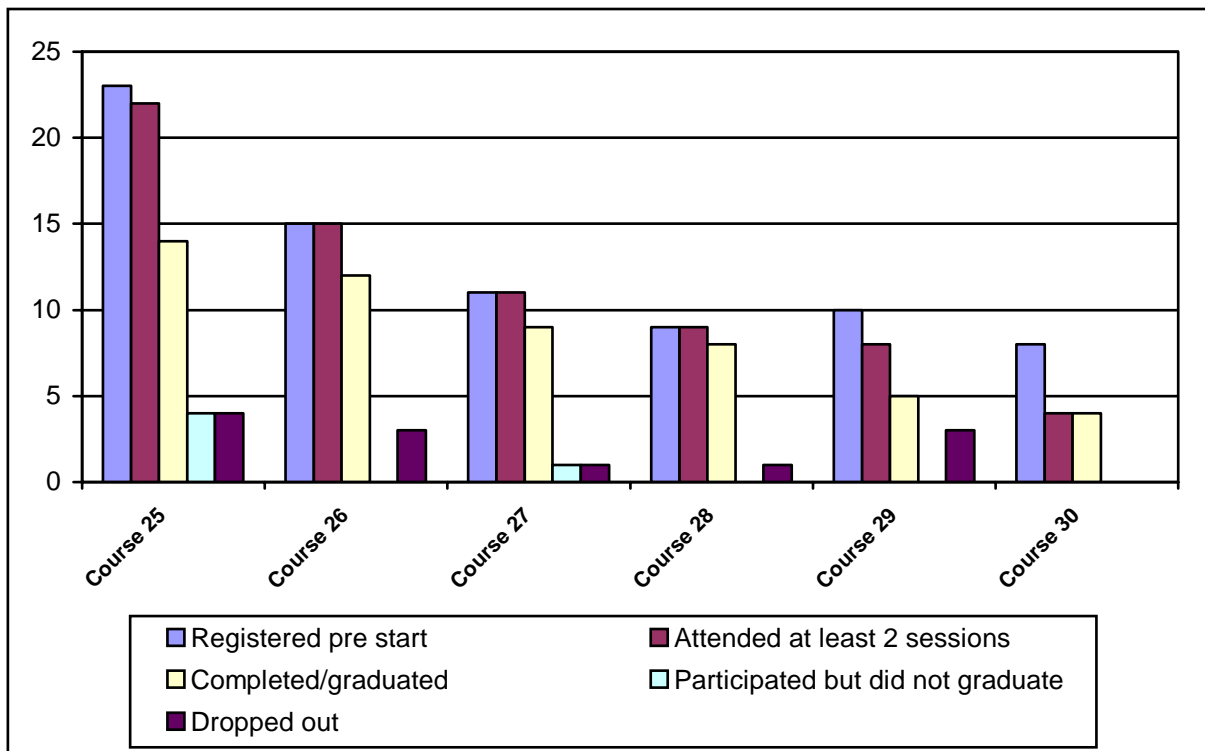


Chart A3.6. Participation in courses in London: Courses 31 – 36

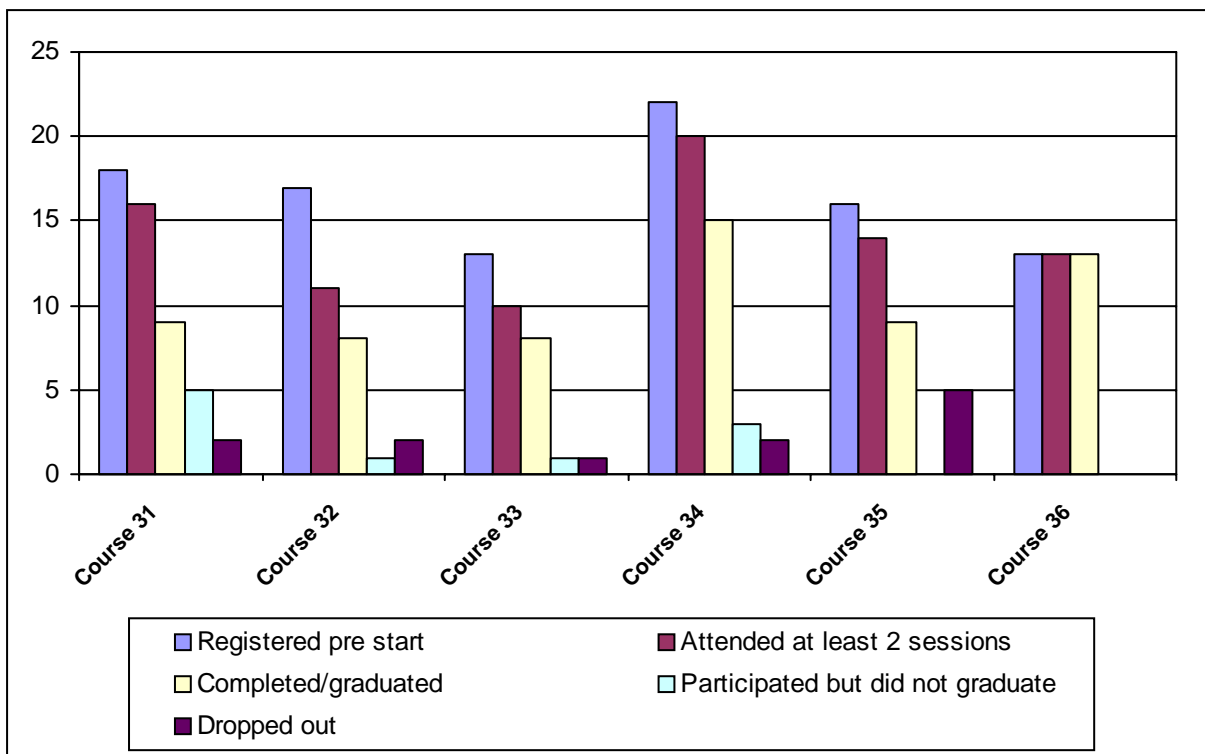


Chart A3.7. Participation in courses outside London: Courses 37 – 42

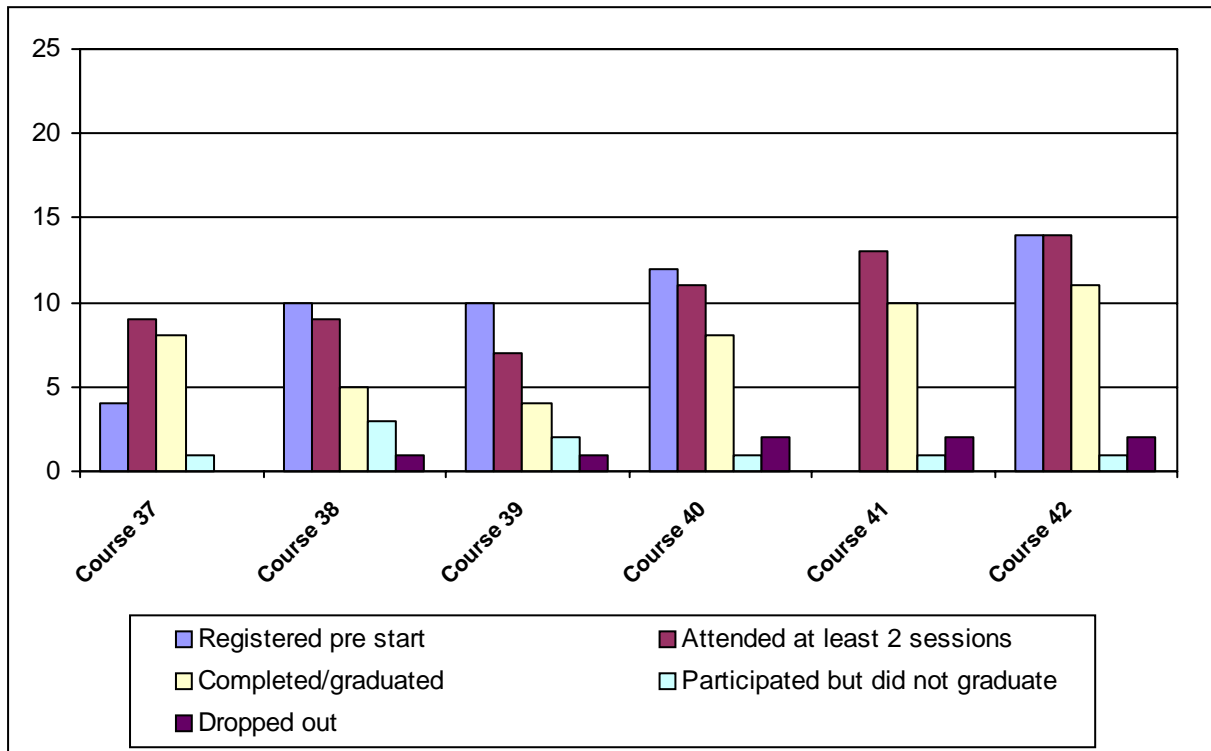
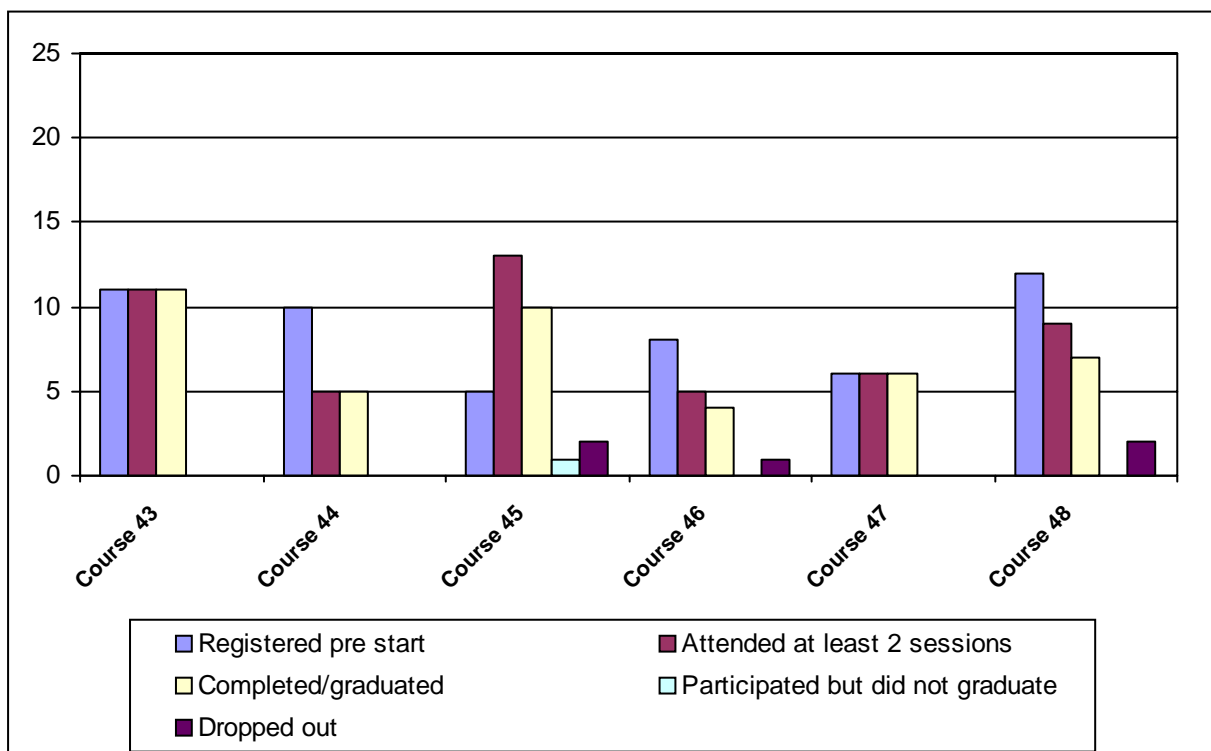


Chart A3.8. Participation in courses outside London: Courses 43 – 48



Appendix 2

Results of the Statistical Tests

This appendix provides the results of the tests for statistical significance on the responses by the paired sample to the pre and post course questionnaires.

A21. Results for the Community Focus questions

The McNemar test was used for the Community Focus questions, as these had 'Yes' / 'No' responses. None of the results were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, i.e. all of the significance values (p) were more than 0.05, see Table A2.1

Table A2.1 Community Focus – Results of the McNemar Test

	Significance p value
Community Focus – Participation in:	
1. Community activities	.218
2. Youth group activities	.179
3. Spiritual religious activities	.073
4. Children's education / school	.358
5. Support network of friends & family	.147

A2.2. Results for the Parent / Child Interaction, Participant Competence and Child Competence questions

The Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test was used for the statements which had a number of response options using a Lickert type scale ('Usually', 'Always' etc). All of the results were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, i.e. all of the significance values (p) were 0.05 or less, see Table A2.2 to Table A2.3.

Table A2.2 Parent / Child Interaction – Results of the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Tests

	Negative ranks	Positive ranks	Ties	Significance p value
Parent / Child Interaction – How often do you:				
Family activities and discussions				
1. Have fun together as a family	143	91	189	.003
2. Talk about dangers of drugs/gangs	123	87	144	.031
3. Go to cultural events together	176	87	152	.000
4. Talk about sexual responsibility	108	78	150	.018
Positive discipline and communication strategies				
1. Kiss or hug your children	95	53	287	.001
2. Give children rewards	143	95	180	.005
3. Spend time with individual children	195	77	152	.000
4. Ignore children when misbehaving	176	86	163	.000
5. Acknowledge (praise) for good behaviour	144	58	223	.000
6. Have family discussions to establish rules	166	97	144	.000
7. Listen to/ask for child's opinions and ideas	167	92	157	.000
Negative discipline and communication strategies				
1. Yell or shout at children	43	201	177	.000
2. Threaten or criticise children	51	196	168	.000
3. Hit or smack children	51	152	214	.000
4. Tell others about child's bad behaviour	69	191	159	.000
5. Get angry when children make mistakes	72	171	178	.000

Table A2.3 Participant and Child Competence – Results of the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Tests

	Negative ranks	Positive ranks	Ties	Significance p value
Participant Competence – How do you feel about your ability:				
Anger management				
1. To manage your anger	46	183	200	.000
2. To express your emotions	89	144	191	.000
Child management skills				
3. To teach your child right from wrong	58	146	224	.000
4. To handle child fight or destructive behaviour	63	179	170	.000
5. To handle child refusal to do housework	79	153	150	.000
6. To make suggestions to child's teacher	75	153	165	.000
Problem solving skills				
7. To make plans to achieve personal goals	58	185	177	.000
8. To access community resources	76	165	170	.000
Relationships				
9. How good do you feel about your relationship with your children	37	145	239	.000
10. How good do you feel about your relationship with other family members	78	144	195	.000
Child Competence – How do you feel about your child's ability:				
Self esteem				
1. To feel good about him/herself	111	242	266	.000
2. To feel comfortable with his/her ethnicity	84	178	291	.000
Self discipline				
3. To manage / express feelings & emotions	132	235	618	.000
4. To control behaviour (self discipline)	102	267	243	.000
Problem solving skills				
5. To consider others when making decisions	122	241	238	.000
6. To ask for help / guidance if needed	127	231	245	.000
Choices and violence				
7. To avoid using or dealing drugs	57	115	240	.000
8. To avoid violence and stay out of gangs	65	168	223	.000