Mothers as Parents, Fathers as Coparents: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of Parent Support Programmes from the Perspectives of Mothers, Fathers, Coparents, and Project Workers

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Abstract

The current research evaluated the Parents as First Teachers parenting programme based on four stakeholder groups' perspectives: mothers, fathers, coparents, and programme project workers. Stakeholders' views were explored with regard to parenting practices, process of change, family roles, family relationships, community services, and programme participation. This bottom-up approach is in contrast to previous evaluation research, which has often been top-down, placing the evaluators as experts. Furthermore, previous research has failed to consider perspectives beyond those of mothers. This evaluation was conducted in three phases using an exploratory mixed-methods design informed by the natural history approach and action research. Phase 1 of the research began in the field, where interviews were conducted with members of all four stakeholder groups. These interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009) which focuses on participants' unique experiences. In phase 2, bespoke questionnaires were developed from phase 1 findings and combined with previously validated measures of programme evaluation and parenting practices. These were distributed widely to each group of stakeholders and were initially analysed to explore underlying regions within the data using multi-dimensional scaling (Kruskal and Wish, 1978). Parametric and non-parametric correlations were conducted to explore the relationship between the findings of each stakeholder group. In phase 3, all stakeholder groups were invited to participate in focus groups. The data were subject to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and used to validate and expand findings from the previous phases. Stakeholder groups' findings from each phase are presented in separate chapters, then compared for similarities and differences. Findings suggest that mothers are often the gateway to fathers' programme participation and the research indicates the importance of considering parenting and parenting programmes in context to address families' unique needs. Implications are discussed with reference to practice, policy, and training of parenting programmes.
Declaration of Originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such with the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.
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I am also appreciative of my father’s willingness to share his thoughts, stories, and being my editor over the years has helped me immensely.

I would like to say a special thank you to my mother for telling me to take ‘just one psychology class’ when I was a first year, making things pretty, and providing the hope when I needed it.

And my deepest gratitude must be said to Francis, who stands on a wall, is my birthday party, and always makes it a beautiful day on our journey. MTLUAFAA...
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Imagine the Following Scenario:

A mother and father take their infant (about one year of age) to the swimming pool. Father takes Child into the water; Mother sits down by the side of the pool, feet dangling in the clear, blue water. Father begins to play with Child in the water and Child is laughing wildly with abandon, in the way only children of that age can. After about two minutes, Mother begins chiming in 'not like that' to Father. Then a few seconds later, Mother calls out 'don't do that' to Father. In the space of five minutes, Mother calls out to Father more than a dozen times to play with Child differently. As minute six begins and Mother calls out one more time, Father walks through the water shoves Child at Mother and says 'Fine. You do it' and Child begins whimpering.

Background

In the summer of 2006, the year before I began my PhD, as my husband and I enjoyed our community swimming pool, we witnessed this event. We were both appalled and spent the following months discussing the scenario, family dynamics, and how we saw the future playing out for this family. At the time I was working as a teacher with children with difficulties and I began to regularly notice similar situations. It was almost as if by seeing this phenomenon so clearly on a relaxing summer day I became unable not to see it. I had already started my PhD applications and was keen to ensure that family relationships were a central point, and this event further inspired me.

As a teacher I regularly had interactions with parents, particularly due to the difficulties many of the children in my class had. I began teaching immediately following the completion of my MSc in child development. I enjoyed being around children and thought I wanted to be a child psychologist 'when I grew up' so to speak. However within weeks of starting I had a conversation with a set of parents about a child exhibiting severe anger management problems that had resulted in him being excluded from another preschool. I said to the parents 'what do you do when you get angry?' To which both parents said 'throw things, slam doors, you know the usual' and they both chuckled. Then they wanted to continue the
conversation about stopping their child's negative behaviour. I can remember staring in shock, did they somehow really not realise that their actions were influencing their child's behaviours? Over the next three years, I learned that many parents were unaware of their effect on their children. But I greatly enjoyed working with the parents in ways my colleagues did not. I felt that something had clicked, I knew that I wanted to focus on parents, as I saw so clearly that the relationships between parents and children was the way to promote healthy family relations.

During the PhD

As time has passed I have discussed my observations and understandings of families with those around me, I have had a number of interesting conversations. I think one of the most remarkable things I have found is that everyone has an opinion on parenting. I find I can talk to anyone any time by saying 'I study parenting.' It appears to be a universal topic of discussion, which creates a fascinating component to the research as a door opener for dialogue and learning.

Nevertheless, the opinions given by others presented a dark side as well. I think one reason negative parenting practices become so ingrained is that just about everyone has an opinion on parenting, and many parents with particularly negative opinions are reluctant to get involved in programmes.¹ Based on my experiences I came to this conclusion that underpins my research: society must change to engage and promote positive parenting.

Positive parenting is a term in the field that remains undefined, although attempts have been made to consider aspects of it.² Based on a number of studies I have developed my own definition that I will be using throughout this research:

Positive parenting is aiming to promote children's healthy development through providing appropriate physical, emotional, and social care, setting developmentally appropriate and consistent boundaries, promoting children's

¹ For example, see: Barlow Stewart-Brown, Callaghan, Tucker, Brocklehurst, Davis, et al. (2003).
² To develop this definition I used several sources including: Barlow and Svanberg (2009); Beckwith (2005); Bornstein (2002); Hoghughi (2004); Moran, Ghate, and van der Merwe (2004).
development in cognitive, physical, social, and mental health domains through interaction, social networks, material resources, and time with their child.

Research Aims
The main aim of the current research was to explore the influence and impact of parent support programmes on families from the perspectives of the various participant stakeholders, i.e., mothers, fathers, coparents, and project workers. Their perspectives were gathered through multiple research methods in their own ecologically valid environments. Thus, the project context operated in the research, policy, and practice domains, which created multi-faceted areas for consideration.

Thesis and Chapter Structures
My PhD thesis investigates stakeholders' perspectives, as they are of the utmost importance because only through understanding their perspectives can services engage with, maintain families' involvement, and thus meet families' needs.3

The chapter structure is slightly unconventional in that it is divided by stakeholder group findings rather than by each research study. This division allowed stakeholders to be understood first in their own right and then collectively. The thesis structure is as follows:

• Chapter 1: creates the platform for the thesis, particularly the research and political context, including identifying the gaps in previous studies. The chapter then briefly explains the background of each stakeholder group, the theoretical framework, and concludes with the research questions.

• Chapter 2: details the parenting programme under evaluation and the methodology for the research, explaining what I did in each phase of the research with all four stakeholder groups. In sum, three phases of the research are built on one another using Mixed Methods Research within action research and natural history approaches. All stakeholder groups participated in the three phases of the research: interviews, then questionnaires, and finally focus groups.

3 For example, see: Sanders, Cann, and Mackie-Dadds (2003).
• Chapter 3: reports the mothers’ findings from all the phases.
• Chapter 4: reports the fathers’ findings from all the phases.
• Chapter 5: reports the coparents’ findings from all the phases.
• Chapter 6: reports the project workers’ findings from all the phases.
• Chapter 7: undertakes a conceptual comparison of the findings from all the groups, drawing hypothetical similarities and differences between stakeholders’ perspectives.
• Chapter 8: provides practice, policy, and training implications of the research findings. Then a critique of the research and suggested avenues for future development are examined.

A very brief literature review demonstrating the importance of studying each group is set out in chapter 1, with relevant research to the findings critically examined in each individual stakeholder chapter for clarity and consistency. Chapter 2 contains the methods used for all groups, and is thus central to understanding the findings of the stakeholder chapters 3-7. Chapter 8 pulls previous and current findings together to create a more broad understanding of the various results, particularly with regard to implications.

Dividing the PhD into these sections, in keeping with the format of mixed methods research, permits each stakeholder group’s findings, from initial interviews to validating focus groups, to be considered together. This ensures that I kept my commitment to understanding their unique perspectives before comparing them. This also allowed for interpretation of findings to remain complex. Therefore my thesis tells the story of the stakeholders’ perspectives, rather than following the chronological development of the research.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting the Contextual Framework and Research Questions

Introduction

Chapter 1 develops the framework upon which the research is based, culminating in the specific research questions. The chapter begins by defining parent support programmes, particularly by their connection to parent-child relationships, followed by developing the research and political context in which the evaluation is placed. It identifies current gaps in the field and reviews some stakeholder group literature. Finally the specific research questions and rationale for the research are discussed.

Defining Parent Support Programmes

Sparked by recent policy initiatives and research on infant mental health, numerous parent support programmes have emerged with the goal of encouraging positive parenting practices. Due to policy agendas, parent support programmes must demonstrate their effectiveness with families (Dfes, 2006a).

The first issue in considering parent support programmes is definition. Parent support programmes, parent training programmes or simply parenting programmes are somewhat difficult to define. No standard definition exists. Instead, different experts and organisations use various definitions, and in some cases parenting programmes are being defined by what they are not (Dfes, 2006a; Dfes, 2007a; Karoly Kilburn, and Cannon, 2005; Moran et al., 2004; Reppucci, Britner, and Woolard 1997; Wolfendale and Einzig, 1999; Zeanah, Stafford, and Zeanah, 2005).

Experts indicate a variety of choices for definitions, with some being more specific and others more broad. For instance, in a review of ‘what works in parenting support’, Moran et

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4 Numerous synonymous terms are used. These include but are not limited to: parenting programmes, parent support programmes, parent training programmes, parent education, etc.
al. (2004) suggest that the definition should be focused on parents ‘reducing risks and promoting protective factors’ (p. 21) for children. Others base their definition more firmly in the parent-child relationship (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Maldonado-Duran, 2002). Zeanah et al. (2005) suggests that parent support programmes, as opposed to traditional interventions, are most often based on developing the parent-child relationship.

In Sure Start guidance (Dfes, 2006a) Children’s Centres are told they must provide ‘support for families and parenting’. This vague statement leaves a great deal of room for interpretation on the Children’s Centres part. However one national evaluation report (Dfes, 2007a) of family and parenting support in Sure Start Local Programmes uses the following definition:

‘Support for parenting: Services which aimed to enable parents to enhance their parenting. These included formal and informal interventions to increase parenting skills, improve parent/child relationships, parenting insight, attitudes and behaviours, confidence in parenting and so on’ (Dfes, 2007a, p. i).

The current research focuses on this definition by researching a parent support programme aimed to promote positive parenting practices (e.g. skills, insights, attitudes, behaviours, confidence) in the context of the parent-child relationship with an objective being improving this relationship.

Numerous key debates exist in the parenting programme literature. These create the framework for understanding the field of parenting programmes as a whole and are briefly summarised in Table 1.1. This figure is a synthesis of a wide-range of literature focusing on the key assumptions and debates currently being utilised in this developing discipline that cannot be fully covered within the scope of this thesis.
Table 1.1

**Summary of Key Debates in Parent Support Programme Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Cites (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventions versus prevention: Are interventions (after an issue occurs) or prevention programmes (before an issue occurs) more effective for families?</td>
<td>Prevention is typically considered best particularly for maintaining change over time, however intervention is better than no services.</td>
<td>Beckwith, 2005 Fonagy, 1998 MacLeod and Nelson, 2000 Moran et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal versus targeted services: Should services be for everyone or exclusively for specific groups of people?</td>
<td>Both are positive but depend on programme design. Thus if a programme is designed for all parents, then universal is good. If it is not designed for all parents, then it should be delivered as targeted.</td>
<td>Barlow and Svanberg, 2009 Long, 2007 Murray et al., 2003 Sanders et al., 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific factors: Are there specific factors that promote parent support programme effectiveness?</td>
<td>Certain factors have been shown to assist in effectiveness including: empowerment based models; containing a theoretical framework; increasing parents' social network.</td>
<td>Bornstein et al, 2006 Moran and Ghate, 2005 Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme format: Are group meeting or home visiting based programmes more likely to assist families?</td>
<td>They both have demonstrated benefits. The needs of the family should be identified in deciding which would be best for families. Group meetings are positive for increasing social networks and/or group processes in learning while home visiting works for families with severe difficulties and/or who might have difficulties engaging in a group.</td>
<td>Gomby, 1999 Izzo et al., 2005 MacMillan et al, 2009 Sanders and Turner, 2005 Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme aims and achievements: Should programmes be based on teaching specific skills, improving parental mental health, and decreasing stress, or changing parental attitudes and behaviours, or a combination?</td>
<td>Research indicates that all of these are important and influence one another. For example, by teaching parents' skills it will decrease parents' stress which will increase positive parenting.</td>
<td>Kane et al., 2007 Karoly et al, 2005 Reppucci et al., 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered services: How can programmes involve, engage and retain potential participants?</td>
<td>Programmes can engage and maintain programme participants by integrating services, considering families' needs in context, and collaboration between the services and families.</td>
<td>Barlow et al., 2003 Pearson and Thurston, 2006 Rush et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. For more information, see Appendix A for comprehensive summary of each question or references.*
Underpinning Research and Context

Parent-Child Relationships

In recent years the field of infant mental health has expanded considerably, with much of the research pointing to the parent-child relationship as central to promoting many aspects of child development (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Beckwith, 2005; Sameroff, 2004; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). For example, parent-child relationships are a key aspect of child neurodevelopment (Schore, 2001b; Swain, Lorberbaum, Kose, and Strathearn, 2007); social development (Fonagy, Gergely, and Target, 2007; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, and Collins, 2005); emotional development (Moore, Coln, and Campbell, 2001; Pauli-Pott, Haverkock, Pott, and Beckmann, 2007); cognitive development (Bauer, 2004; Coleman and Karraker, 2003); behavioural development (Appleyard Egeland, van Dulmen, and Sroufe, 2005; van Aken, Junger, Verhoevenm, van Aken, and Denissen, 2007); and even physical development (Field, 2005; Underdown, 2009).

Historically practitioners working with parents and infants attempted to understand who the 'patient' was. Being labelled as the 'patient' was fundamental in deciding whether to work with the parent or child (Sameroff, 2004). While presenting problems remain similar (e.g. sleeping, eating, etc) a major paradigm shift has occurred. No longer is it important to understand who the 'patient' is, instead practitioners aim to examine the parent-child relationship in working with families. Another reason for the shift toward examining relationships is the need to end the 'pathologising of parenthood'. Stern (2004) describes how mothers often experience difficulty transitioning to motherhood and caretaking their infant. However he states this transition should not be pathologised.

Note. The term 'child' or 'children' is used throughout this research to refer to children younger than five years of age (unless specifically stated). This is due to the population of families studied, and Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance (Dfes, 2006).

Note. While the current research examines parent-child relationships, it is important to note that most of the examples come from mother-child studies, rather than parent-child or father-child studies. This is simply due to the lack of parent-child and father-child studies. The current research discusses this issue and aims to provide information toward an understanding of this phenomenon in research and practice.

Practitioners include social workers, psychologists, counsellors, etc., i.e., anyone in a helping profession having direct contact with parents and infants (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Sameroff, 2004).
A further explanation offered for this paradigm shift is the argument that infants are born into a relational context. Infants rely on others to provide all that is needed for them. Hoffmann (2002) argues that children are also born into a wider political and social world which can include outside stressors and/or social support. Hoffmann and others (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, and Target, 2002; Sameroff, 2004; Sroufe et al., 2005; Winnicott, 1964) state that the relationship between the caregiver and infant develops the infant's sense of self. Furthermore Stern (2008) suggests that infants develop within the framework of relationships, and it is vital that all support for parents and infants operates within this framework. Current advances suggest that infant mental health interventions, especially the parent-infant relationship, can potentially improve a person's long-term physical and psychological health (Fonagy, 2003; Osofsky, 1998; Sameroff, 2004).

**Political Context** and Sure Start Children's Centres

New policies have developed within this changing framework of parent-child relationships. Recent declarations by the UK government, mainly in two green papers, have placed the family centrally on the national agenda: Supporting Families (Home Office, 1998) and Every Child Matters (Dfes, 2003). Historically the Children Act of 1989 set out some initial guidelines for parenting services. The development of current governmental guidelines occurred due to reports of child maltreatment and the death of a child at the hands of her caregivers. In 2000, Victoria Climbe made national headlines as a result of being tortured and eventually killed by her caregivers. The following consultation and inquiry produced the Laming report, which declared that services did not protect her and recommended several ways to protect children (Laming, 2003; Stationary Office, 2003). This culminated in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children campaign, which states the government's aims to ensure every child is healthy, safe, enjoys and achieves, makes a positive contribution and achieves economic well-being (Dfes, 2003; Dfes, 2006a; Goldthorpe, 2004).

In order to accomplish these aims, the government launched a widespread campaign for Sure Start requiring the development of Children's Centres expressly for parents of children.

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8 The current research took place in the context described here. However this context may change when the new government revises current service provision. The new coalition government has agreed that Sure Start Children's Centres will remain open, but may be modified.
younger than five years of age (Dfes, 2006a; Katz, La Placa, and Hunter, 2007; Taggart, 2004). Sure Start Children’s Centres are an essential part of the governments’ Every Child Matters: Change for Children initiative and Children’s Centre are intended for every community throughout the UK (Dfes, 2006a).

All Sure Start Children’s Centres must provide a variety of services for families to promote positive child development. While the services are based on the needs of the community, a number of services must be included at each centre no matter the needs of the community.9 The more disadvantaged an area, the more in-depth the services that must be provided. Children’s Centres are meant to be the hub for inter-agency working, a one-stop place with health and parenting services, and contain a multitude of services, such as health visitors, social services, and family support workers (Dfes, 2006a).

As all Children’s Centres are mandated to provide parenting support in the form of parenting programmes, families in each Children’s Centre community are provided with guidance and assistance for preventing child maltreatment and promoting positive parenting (Dfes, 2003). These programmes should be based in evidence from research (Dfes, 2006a) although in many cases this remains to be demonstrated.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation is rapidly becoming a particularly important aspect in research, one reason being that policy decisions require evidence-based information (Barlow, Parsons, and Stewart-Brown, 2005; Karloy et al., 2005; Weiss, 1998). Evaluation research is often conducted to ensure programmes meet the needs of the participants, improve programme implementation, and determine usefulness (Gomby, 1999; Rubin, 2008). Evaluations aid organisations in enhancing their services, learning the participants’ perspectives, and obtaining an understanding of whether a programme meets its stated goals.

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9 Services that must be included at every Sure Start Children’s Centre (at the time the research took place): Outreach services; early years provision (early education and care); information/access to childcare; information on parenting; parenting support; child health services; information on employment, education and training; and signposting to wider services (Dfes, 2006a).
Examining parenting programmes through evaluation is vital to understanding what typically works and what does not (Barlow, Kirkpatrick, Stewart-Brown, and Davis, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). A great deal of information has been provided during the last decade suggesting that promoting parenting skills and parent-child relationships can yield positive and long-term effects (Olds, Sadler, and Kitzman, 2007; Osofsky, 1998). Evaluation has examined and addressed various aspects of parent support programmes. Carpenter (2007) argues that evaluation research and policy must work together to improve children’s life chances through families. He suggests that programmes and evaluation evolve, and that policy must evolve with it.

Evaluation research is the process of using social science research techniques to make systematic and accurate judgements, often of programmes. Weiss (1998) defines evaluation as ‘the systematic assessment of the operation and/or outcomes of a program or policy compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy’ (p. 4).

Critique of Current Approaches to Evaluation: Outcome and Process

Many types of evaluation exist, with two main types being process and outcome. Outcome evaluation addresses whether the programme is creating particular changes for programme participants (Robson, 2002; Rubin, 2008). Process evaluation discusses the inner workings of the programme, explaining how change occurs for programme participants (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Jacobs, 2003; Weiss, 1998). The current section explains and critiques both types of evaluation, creating the case for combined process-outcome evaluation.

Outcome Evaluation Research versus Process Evaluation Research

Numerous studies state that parenting programmes influence parenting practices on a range specific outcomes. For example, some research suggests that programmes increase mothers’ knowledge of parenting (Culp, Culp, Blankemeyer, and Passmark, 1998; Mann, 10 For more detail see Appendix A: Key Debates or Barlow and Svanberg (2009); Moran et al. (2004).
Pearl, and Behle, 2004). Other studies suggest that interventions reduce children's negative behaviour and child maltreatment (Gardner, Shaw, Dishion, Burton, and Supplee, 2007; Jones, Daley, Hutchings, Bywater, and Eames, 2008; Olds, 2006; Velderman, Bakersmans-Kranenburg, Jufer, van Ijzendoorn, Mangelsdorf, and Zevalkink, 2006). Further research suggests that programmes increase positive parenting attitudes and practices (Leung, Sanders, Leung, Mak, and Lau, 2003; Wolfe and Hirsch, 2003). As stress and anxiety can be a key factor affecting positive parenting, some research indicates that parenting programmes can lower levels of stress and anxiety (Douglas and Brennan; 2004; Manby, 2005; Turner and Sanders, 2006).

Outcome focused evaluation is key to demonstrating the effectiveness of a programme, informing policy, and providing funders with information (Rubin, 2008; Weiss, 1998). However outcome-based research is mainly represented in the literature which can cause difficulties for practitioners and programmes in reproducing the outcomes for other families. This disproportion of studies leaves a considerable gap in the research of understanding the process of programmes and change within families. All of the studies listed above state that parenting practices changed due to programme participation. But these studies explain that the interventions are effective, but not what factors specifically influence the effectiveness.

Various methods for demonstrating outcomes in evaluation exist, however randomised control trials (RCTs)\textsuperscript{11} are considered the ideal, 'gold standard' of evaluation research as they measure if a programme works by attempting to control a number of contextual factors (Rubin, 2008; Weiss, 1998).

However numerous researchers and practitioners actively challenge the use of RCTs. For instance, McGuire, Stein, and Rosenberg (1997) argue that RCTs are not always appropriate for demonstrating effectiveness. They argue that not understanding families in context hinders appropriate evaluation and services. They also explain that RCTs need diagnosis, referrals, and have numerous ethical issues as people who need services are not able to access them, which can have negative and serious implications in a clinical context. Many

\textsuperscript{11} RCTs will not be described in the scope of this paper, but for more information on designing one see: Jacobs (2003); Rubin (2008); Weiss (1998).
consider RCTs not only unethical but dangerous in certain cases such as child maltreatment and/or when participants have mental health issues (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Jacobs, 2003).

Another criticism of outcome research is that in some cases outcomes may not be demonstrated due to the population and what is being measured, i.e., the factor being measured does not need improvement (Beckwith, 2005; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Woldfendale and Einzing, 1999). For instance, if parents being assessed already have a high level of knowledge of child development, measuring their knowledge of child development at different time points may not produce significant results. However, perhaps that group of parents needed help with a different parenting component such as confidence. If parental confidence is not measured, then the programme would be considered ‘ineffective.’

In response to these issues of outcome research, many argue for the need to conduct process evaluations (Kane, Wood, and Barlow, 2007; Melhuish, Belsky, Anning, Ball, Barnes, Romaniuk et al., 2007; Moran et al., 2004). Process evaluation 'helps the programme understand what it has been doing and how, and lead to reflection on how it might improve its operations’ (Weiss, 1998, p.181).

Several studies support the need for process evaluation such as Melhuish et al. (2007) and Lloyd (1999) who argue that evaluation research needs to move toward understanding specific factors that encourage change in parenting rather than simply stating change occurs. Sweet and Appelbaum (2004) suggest that what makes a programme successful remains unclear. Furthermore some authors suggest that until underlying possible causes of family issues are understood (e.g. harsh parenting practices), parenting support cannot be fully appropriate in addressing them (Moran and Ghate, 2005). Understanding the process of a programme allows for programmes to be adapted to meet communities’ needs and expectations. Jacobs (2003) and Hughes and Traynor (2000) point out that by looking at process, programmes can understand and aid individual families’ needs more fully, thus meeting the specific needs of their community. Tunstill, Allnock, Akhurst, and Garbers (2005) explain that engaging with stakeholders’ perspectives encourages meeting the diversity of needs within a community.
Many argue that evaluation research should shift toward fusing process and outcome components (Blamey and MacKenzie, 2007; Jacobs, 2003). Process-outcome studies encourage researchers and policy makers to see families in context while also understanding what works (Hughes and Traynor, 2000; Jacobs, 2003). Moran and Ghate (2005) explain that it is not only about if parent support programmes work, but also why they work.

In detailing the historical background of evaluation research, Jacobs (2003) describes evaluations as initially being exclusively outcome-based. She argues that process studies have become more popular, which is a positive trend as it aids programme operations, allows the complexities in programmes to be investigated more fully, aids in interpretation of findings, and allows ideas to be based in context. Furthermore she claims that process and outcome research conducted separately leads to confusion and increased possibilities for errors in assessing programme impact. In addition to these arguments, Sadan and Churchman (1997) assert that the polarisation between process and outcome research has the potential to harm communities. They argue that placing research types as opposing, communities are more likely to become disempowered.

Statham (2004) suggests that UK service evaluation has yet to produce information that relates to both process and outcome through stakeholders' perspectives, which is important for promoting resilience in families. Kane et al. (2007) argue that little is known about what makes programmes effective from the stakeholders' perspectives. Developing and evaluating programmes to ensure that parents' needs are met is crucial to creating change in parenting practices.

Many researchers and practitioners further the notion that context is central between process and outcome. Developing this point, Carpenter (2007) argues that with the changing nature of the family, society and services, families can only be understood through the specific situations of their lives. He also points out that families do not exist in a vacuum but in a complex system of numerous and competing factors. Only through seeing families in this
light, will appropriate and effective interventions be possible. Blamey and MacKenzie (2007) suggest that by understanding programme context, evaluators can understand how programmes guide outcome changes. Hughes and Traynor (2000) state that the combination of process and outcome evaluation will ensure numerous aspects of programmes are considered within a specific context. They argue that context is a key factor without which a programme cannot be considered. When evaluators consider context they will be better able to collaborate with programme stakeholders.

Using exclusively outcome evaluation, complexity can be lost. However integrating process and outcome research can resolve this issue. Mason, Morris, and Smith (2005) point out that combining process-outcome evaluation maintains the complexity of the programme and the underlying issues of whether the programme works. Stolk, Mesman, van Zeijl, Alink, Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, et al. (2008) argue that looking at both process and outcome evaluation aspects allows researchers the opportunity to understand the varying aspects of programme effectiveness. By exploring more specific components of the process of programmes, one can better examine the development of positive parenting practices and improve current implementation to ensure it meets the service users' needs.

Another way process and outcome can be understood together is through 'process moments' (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Stern, 2008). Pinsof and Wynne (2000) suggest that outcomes can be seen as separate moments that will demonstrate change in participants within sessions. This breaks down some of the bridges between process and outcome research to promote an integrative understanding of what works for participants.

**Current Gaps in Knowledge and the Literature**

Many researchers and practitioners explain that while many programmes exist, most lack information on supporting effectiveness (Forehand and Kotchick, 2002). This leaves practitioners unable to choose the programme that would most appropriately aid families. This section focuses on the key gaps in the research, particularly stakeholders' perspectives.
and evaluation, as they apply to the current research.  

Programme Evaluation in Context

Some researchers have indicated that a considerable amount of information is not yet known about delivering programmes in contexts for which the programme was not specifically developed (Carpenter, 2007; Moran and Ghate, 2005). Yet, parent programme evaluation is typically conducted without consideration of specific context of the same area, with evaluators believing that programmes will be effective across all situations with all parents (Moran and Ghate, 2005; Pugh, 1999).

Many programmes are designed and researched exclusively in one country and then implemented in other countries. It remains unclear whether this ‘cut and paste’ of programmes will produce the same positive outcomes from country to country due to a number of factors, such as culture of participants, and different health and social care structures (Kane et al., 2007; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Patterson, Mockford, Barlow, Pyper, and Stewart-Brown, 2002). Moran and Ghate (2005) explain this is partly due to parent support programmes being implemented more recently in the UK context, but stress that effectiveness should be demonstrated cross-culturally.

An additional aspect of context and parent programmes is related to whether programmes have adapted to current trends in society. For instance, Carpenter (2007) reminds readers that some programmes were developed in the 1980s when considerably fewer women worked outside the home. If programmes have not adapted to the increased prevalence of women in the workplace, a great majority of families will not be able to access services, and thus be unable to receive assistance. Therefore programme evaluation must be considered in the context of current societal trends to ensure service users’ needs are met.

12 Numerous comprehensive summaries on the gaps in understanding parenting programmes have been published. For a more in-depth review of the broader field, see: Barlow and Svanberg (2009); Moran et al. (2004); Moran and Ghate (2005).

13 One widely used programme (Triple P) was developed in Australia and has now shown its effectiveness across much of Europe. The other most typically used programmes were developed in the United States (e.g. Webster-Stratton; Strengthening Families). Only two programmes implemented on a large scale have been developed and implemented in the UK (Mellow Parenting-Glasgow and Solihull approach-Solihull; Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Moran and Ghate, 2005).
Looking at parent support programmes in particular settings, arguments exist regarding programme environment. For instance, programmes developed in a city centre setting may need adaptation before being used in a rural setting, which could change a programme inherently and affect the fidelity of the programme model (Olds et al., 2007). Therefore, programmes need to demonstrate their effectiveness in differing environments.

**Bottom-Up Evaluation**

Many evaluations attempt to explore programmes through their stated goals (Gomby, Culross, and Behrman, 1999; Jacobs, 2003; Melhuish et al., 2007; Rubin, 2008). Proponents of top-down approaches to evaluation research place the researcher as the expert and are unlikely to consider the stakeholders’ perspectives. In taking this top-down approach, evaluators are unable to explore the participants’ viewpoints. By using the programmes’ stated aims, the programme participants may be cast aside. This is likely a considerable mistake as stakeholders’ perspectives on service delivery, engagement, and involvement are central to ascertaining best practices for the programme. For instance, Wigfall (2006) examined a programme that promoted family involvement in the community. Using a bottom-up approach, she was able to base programme development on users’ and providers’ unique perspectives.

Participants are able to offer unique perspectives regarding engagement and the best way to expand service usefulness. Kane et al. (2007) provided a systematic review of qualitative research on parenting programmes. They argue that too few studies exist regarding parents’ perceptions of programmes. They further suggest that parents’ perceptions will aid programmes in understanding the cause of change and increase parental engagement in such programmes. Zeedyk, Werritty, and Riach (2008) examined lasting benefits of parents’ perceptions of a parenting programme and found several key themes. One particularly important theme is that involvement in the programme positively impacted parents’ wider lives, not simply in terms of parenting (e.g. communication in larger social networks).
Specific Stakeholders are Often Not Considered

Using stakeholders’ perspectives in developing programme evaluations is occasionally considered, but typically not implemented. This is despite literature explaining the usefulness of this method for programme evaluation (Dale, 2004; McAllister, Green, Terry, Herman, and Mulvey, 2003; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Shaw, 1999; Wofendale and Einzig, 1999). Even when participant views are considered, they are almost exclusively the views of mothers (e.g., Avis, Bulman, and Leighton, 2007; Mockford and Barlow, 2004; Patterson, Mockford, and Stewart-Brown, 2005; Phares, 1996).

Services are typically designed with the goal of meeting families’ needs. However in many cases they are not designed using families’ perspectives, and are thus unable to meet these needs (e.g. Coe, Spencer, Barlow, Vostanis, and Laine, 2003; Wolfendale and Einzig, 1999). For instance, Allen (2007) studied parents who participated in a home visiting service and found that the parents were concerned when services were unconnected, which meant that their needs, particularly material, went unmet.

To meet the needs of a family, one must carefully assess family functioning. Forehand and Kotchick (2002) suggest that in some cases negative family functioning can be addressed in parent support programmes or the family can be provided with further services. In addition, Thomas and Clark (1998) and Karamat-Ali (2010) suggest that parents may be more willing and comfortable to address their relationship issues in the context of their children’s issues, thus providing a gateway for support workers to assist the family’s overall functioning.

Stakeholders must engage and stay involved in parent programmes to create change in parenting practices. One factor that has demonstrated influence in maintaining parents’ involvement is the service provider-family relationship. This relationship is vital to engagement and to promote change in parenting practices (Beckwith, 2005; Davis, 2009). Therefore understanding how the various stakeholders’ view this relationship is critical to support programme usage, engagement, and change in parenting practices, but is currently largely unrepresented in research.
Not only do specific stakeholders' views often go unexamined, very rarely are groups considered in conjunction. In a few cases mothers' and project workers' perspectives are compared (e.g. Law, Plunkett, Taylor, and Gunning, 2009; Osofsky, Kronenberg, Hammer, Lederman, Katz, Adams, et al., 2007). For instance, Osofsky et al. (2007) aimed to better understand caregivers' and therapists' perceptions of services and found that they both reported benefits to involvement. Law et al. (2009) compared services users and providers and found that both groups agreed that parent support information was difficult to access. In considering numerous stakeholder perceptions, Carpenter (2007) argues that to understand services and service delivery that state they are family focussed, measures should also be family focused. He further suggests that evaluation is only effective if it is done with both the family and the practitioner.

Four Groups of Stakeholders: Mothers, Fathers, Coparents, and Project Workers
Four sets of stakeholders were considered in the current research: mothers, fathers, coparents and project workers. The perspectives of each group were collected, analysed, and compared throughout the research, and findings are presented in chapters 3-7. A brief background and rationale for investigating each group is discussed in turn below.

Why Study Mothers?
Mothers are a particularly important aspect of most people's experiences, particularly within families (Silverstein, 1996; Utting and Pugh, 2004). Mothers provide an organising construct within the family and development is often attributed at least in part to mothers (Caplan and Caplan, 1999; Hrdy, 1999). As Paul (2000) suggests, the 'mothers' role is of great social significance' (p. 264) suggesting that the meaning of motherhood in families and society fulfils a particular social meaning not often filled by other people. Overall mothers are typically studied within families and child development. However numerous gaps continue to exist, such as mothers' views on participation, making it necessary to study mothers in a more complex manner.
Mothers are considered central to children’s development. Mothers are considered to be central to children’s development. Very few dispute the importance of mothers in children’s lives. A range of studies illustrate the various influences mothers have on their children’s development even before the child is born.14 However due to the large number of such articles, they will not be discussed within the scope of this research. Most studies in the parenting field solely investigate mothers due to their perceived centrality (Hoghughi, 2004), and in many cases where research states ‘parenting’ it means ‘mothering’ (Phares, Fields, and Binitie, 2006; Phares, 1996; Silverstein, 1996).

Perspectives on mothering. When mothers exhibit difficulties after the birth of their children, including high levels of stress, their children are more likely to have negative development consequences (Fletcher, 2009; Goodman, Broth, Hall, and Stowe, 2008). Kaitz (2007) researched first-time mothers prenatally and postnatally about their concerns of mothering and found that mothers with high levels of concerns that went unaddressed were more likely to perceive their children as difficult. Other researchers suggested that when mothers experience high levels of stress and other mental health difficulties they have more negative interactions with their children (Craig, 2004). Therefore it is important that mothers receive support early to ensure the negative interaction patterns and maternal perceptions do not negatively influence the children’s outcomes (Chazen-Cohen, Stark, Mann, and Fitzgerald, 2007; Kaitz and Maytal, 2005). Parenting skills can be learned through parenting programmes, and thus that can prevent problems for children. Therefore support should be offered to mothers.

Some research indicates that parental characteristics are under-studied in research, and that these characteristics may be a central aspect of understanding parenting practices (Lundahl, Nimer, and Parsons, 2006; Sroufe et al., 2005). Research indicates that mothers’ behaviours prior to pregnancy related to their post-pregnancy mother-infant interaction (Dayton, Zeanah, Parker, Nicholoson, and Coolbear, 2010; Kaitz, 2007). For example, Bosquet and Egeland (2000) compared pregnant women on measures of antisocial practices and found

14 Numerous studies exist including those in text and others such as: Adam, Gunnar, and Tanaka (2004); Balbennie (2003); Davidov and Guñezc (2006); Domíbrowskii, Timmer, Blacker, and Urquiza (2005); Jonsson and Clinton (2006); Kukkiniski (2003); van Doesum, Rijken-Walraven, Hosman, and Hoefnagels (2008).
that those women who scored highly on antisocial practices were less understanding of their infant, more hostile, and harsh than other mothers. By better understanding mothering characteristics, programmes can be designed that assist mothers more fully (Heincke, Goorsky, Levine, Ponce, Ruth, Silverman, et al., 2006).

For many years, mothers have experienced blame due to the emphasis on their role to children and families (Caplan and Caplan, 1999; McNab and Kavner, 2001). This blame is cited as a cause of some mothers feeling stressed and overly responsible for their children’s development (Hrdy, 1999; McNab and Kavner, 2001). Caplan and Caplan (1999) state that a great deal of research only investigates mothers as an explanation for issues children have, therefore guaranteeing that mothers will be blamed for children’s ‘problems’. They suggest that research that attempts to understand mothers through their perspectives is designed to detach themselves from the negative methods that focus on mothers as causing children’s problems.

Mothers’ perceptions and behaviours connect. The relationship between mothers’ perceptions and mothers’ behaviours is well-documented. Negative perceptions influence mothers’ behaviours toward their children, which in turn can lead to negative child outcomes (Dayton et al., 2010; Dollberg, Feldman, and Keren, 2010; Slade, Belsky, Aber, and Phelps, 1999). For example, research indicates that mothers who had negative or disengaged perceptions of their infant were more likely to have problems that reached a clinical level (Benoit, Zeanah, Parker, Nicholson, and Coolbear, 1997); mothers who perceived that their infants had difficulties expressed less satisfaction in their maternal role, had less self-confidence, and reported more negative interactions with their infants (Bohlin and Hagekull, 1987); and mothers who perceived their children as having behavioural issues perceived their children more negatively overall (Deater-Deckard, Smith, Ivy, and Petril, 2005). Furthermore mothers who have negative perceptions of their children are more likely to use harsh parenting (Bohlin and Hagekull, 1987; Bosquet and Egeland, 2000). Therefore mothers’ perceptions of their children are inherently connected to parenting behaviour and the mother-child relationship. By understanding if and how programmes change these perceptions, more positive relationships between mothers and children can be promoted.
Mothers are often the primary caregiver and exclusive participants in parenting programmes. Another reason to study mothers is that they continue to spend more time with their children doing child care tasks, even in two-parent homes where the mother participates in paid employment (Craig, 2006; Hochschild, and Machung, 1997). Therefore mothers should be studied due to often being the primary caretaker of their children. Furthermore mothers are often the primary if not exclusive participants in parenting programmes (Feinberg, 2002; Manby, 2005; McBride and Lutz, 2004; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Phares et al., 2006; Scott and Dadds, 2009). Thus their perspectives are central to understanding parenting programmes.

One focus of this research is on family roles and the mothers’ role in the family is often central to other family relationships, particularly when considering gender roles (e.g. at transition to parenthood, parents are more likely to revert to gender stereotypical roles, see Fraenkel, 2003; Haddock, Zimmerman, and Lyness, 2003; Walker, 1999). Therefore mothers need to be considered to understand other family relationships in relation to programme participation. Furthermore, if only mothers are involved in programmes, then gender roles are being upheld, with mothers as the primary and ‘best’ caretakers (Guerrero, 2009; Phares et al., 2006; Silverstein, 1996). This creates a need for research to better understand the role that being the ‘mother’ plays on programme participation, and ascertain if and how this influences families more generally.

Little is known about mothers’ perspectives. As previously mentioned, parenting programmes intend to promote change in parenting practices. Various programmes have suggested an extensive range of improvements to child outcomes due to participation, such as improved child behaviour through positive parenting (mothering) practices (Gardner et al., 2007; Heinicke, Fineman, Ruth, Recchla, Guthrie, and Rodning, 1999; Sroufe et al., 2005); increased maternal sensitivity and responsiveness (Asscher, Hermanns, and Dekovic, 2008; Barlow, Davis, McIntosh, Jarrett, Mockford, and Stewart-Brown, 2007; Cowen, 2001); and reduced child maltreatment (Chaffin, Bonner, and Hill, 2001; Puckering, Rogers, Mills, Cox, and Mattsson-Graff, 1994). In addition, research suggests that mothers report lacking
confidence, knowledge and in some cases skills in mothering their children, from their children’s infancy and early childhood (Coleman and Karraker, 2003; Hoghughi, 2004; Powell, 2005). Research indicates that parenting programmes can improve these for mothers, which in turn improves mother-child relationships (Culp et al., 1998; Gardner et al., 2007; Mann et al., 2004; Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Tully, and Bor, 2000). However, very little evaluation has attempted to understand the underlying processes that promote this change, particularly those processes that lead to positive outcomes for family relationships through programme participation.

Furthermore most research on mothers and parenting programmes is outcome evaluation (Carpenter, 2007; Einzig, 1999; Melhuish et al., 2007). This places the researchers as the experts, meaning very little is known about mothers’ experiences. By understanding mothers’ general perspectives on parenting and programme involvement, programmes can be developed and adapted to meet families’ unique needs (Barlow et al., 2003; Sanders, Cann, and Markie-Dadds, 2003). In addition, by considering mothers’ perspectives of engagement, service design and delivery can encourage involvement with other mothers. As Barlow et al. (2003) stipulate, mothers will be more likely to access services, if services consider and tailor themselves to the mothers’ needs.

Why Study Fathers?15

While fatherhood as a topic has gained some mass appeal, aspects of it remain largely unconsidered, including within parenting programme evaluation (Cassano, Adrian, Veits, and Zeman, 2006; Spicer, 2007). The reasons for this are still being questioned with some indicating it is caused by a gendered nature of research on families and services (Lewis and Lamb, 2007), the recent societal advances toward paternal involvement in families has yet to be acknowledged in research settings (Fagerskiold, 2008; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004), or the difficulties of recruiting fathers to participate in research and programmes (Cassano et al., 2006; Phares, 1996; Phares et al., 2006; Sanders, Dittman, Keown, Farrugia, and Rose, 2010). Many argue that understanding fatherhood needs to come ‘through’ fathers, not

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15 One good way to engage fathers in parenting programmes is through the mother, although this will be discussed in chapter 5: Coparents.
simply be ‘about’ fathers (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Draper, 2003; Fagerskiold, 2008; Lewis and Lamb, 2007).

Societal changes have modified the role of the father in families and research. Society has changed to encouraging fathers in caretaking roles. Although fathers do not necessarily undertake a larger role than mothers, and many fathers report spending time with their children in tasks other than caregiving (Golombok, 2000; Lewis and Lamb, 2003), they still spend more time with their children today than they did in the 1970s (Calderwood, Kiernan, Joshi, Smith, and Ward, 2005). Therefore due to the changing nature of the family, it is important to understand fathers. This also means giving fathers a voice by understanding their unique perspectives.

Some authors argue that due to the changing nature of the family, and fathers’ shifting viewpoints toward father-child interaction, ‘modern’ fathers feel unable to put their relational ideas into practice (Lewis and Lamb, 2003; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Henwood and Procter (2003) investigated fathers’ perspectives and found that the concept of the ‘new father’ gives fathers the opportunity to define and create a self-identity, but this is currently done within an unclear framework. Therefore parenting programmes that advance the fathers’ relational role may enable the father and child to interact positively over the life course.

Fathering is often compared to mothering,16 holding up mothering as the ideal parenting type (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, and Roggman, 2007; Phares, 1996; Silverstein, 1996). However in recent years, many in the field argue that fatherhood need to be considered in its own right, specifically tailored to understanding fathers’ needs (Fletcher, Vimpani, Russell, and Keating, 2008; Lewis and Lamb, 2003), and thus father perspectives need to be connected in order to understand their experiences. Several authors argue that in order to understand fatherhood, it needs to be considered as a concept in and of itself (Cabrera et al.,

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16 Note. Fathering and mothering will be partially considered in chapter 5: Coparents, and more fully compared in chapter 7: Comparisons (between stakeholder groups). However the comparison point is made here as it places the research and evaluation in the societal context within which it exists. It further creates the platform for having a separate chapter for fathers from coparents.
2007; Lee, Bellamy, and Guterman, 2009). They condemn the practice of comparing mothers and fathers, arguing that fathering could have its own components not considered when comparing it to mothering.

**Fathers are important to child development.** Fathers have been increasingly recognised to be important, as research suggests that the father-child relationship has a great deal of influence on child development outcomes (Aldous and Mulligan, 2002; Cassano et al., 2006; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Nettle, 2008; Vogel, Bradley, Raikes, Boller, and Shears, 2006). Research findings suggest that fathers have an influence on children's: cognitive development (Bronte-Tinkew, Scott, Horowitz, and Lilja, 2008; Junntila, Vauras, and Laakkonen, 2007; Magill-Evans and Harrison, 2001; McDowell, Parke, and Spitzer, 2002; Nettle, 2008), social development (Coleman and Karraker, 2003; Grossman Grossmann, Fremeer-Bombik, Kindler, Sheuerer-Englishch, and Zimmermann, 2002; McDowell and Parke, 2005; Rah and Parke, 2008), emotional development (Cabrera et al., 2007; Labounty, Wellman, Olson, Lagattuta, and Liu, 2008), academic achievement (Flouri and Buchanan, 2003; Pfifner, McBurnett, and Rathouz, 2001), psychological health (Fabiano, 2007; Flouri and Buchanan, 2003), and behavioural issues (Drugli, Larsson, and Clifford, 2007; Trautmann-Villalba, Gschwendt, Schmidt, and Laucht, 2006). Furthermore, numerous studies have found that fathers are capable of caring for children (Cabrera et al., 2007; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Lewis and Lamb, 2007), yet this is by no means reflected in many parenting studies (Lee et al., 2009).

**Context is important, particularly to fathers.** Context is a particularly important aspect of fathering, and many argue that fathers are greatly influenced by contextual factors (Belsky, 1984; Bost, Cox, Burchinal, and Payne, 2002; Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson, 1998; Dubowitz, 2009). Several authors argue that fathering must be understood in the social context within which it exists, such as individual characteristics, family relationships, and employment institutions (Cabrera et al., 2007; Palkovitz, 2007; Parke, Dennis, Flery, Morris, Leidy, and Schofield, 2005). Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) and Henwood and Procter (2003) suggest that it is only by considering the complex and various roles in context that fathers' participate that fathers' influence on child development can be understood. McBride
and Lutz (2004) suggest that more information is needed on types of interventions that are effective in context with what population of fathers, particularly stating that fathers of infants are often overlooked in interventions.

**Understanding fathers' unique perspectives is vital to promoting father involvement in the family and programmes.** When considering fathers and parenting programmes, exclusion of fathers is the norm (Brenner, Overpeck, Trumble, DerSimonian, and Berendes, 1999; Burbach, Fox, and Nicholson, 2004; Sanders et al., 2010). Thus very little is known about their direct and indirect involvement with parenting programmes, even if their partners are involved. They are also frequently excluded from evaluation of such programmes, perhaps due to not always being able to attend programmes (Brenner et al., 1999; McBride and Lutz, 2004).

**Fathers are excluded from parenting programmes.** Many parenting programmes undermine fathers by valuing mothers’ participation exclusively (Feinberg, 2002; Guerrero, 2009; Manby, 2005; McBride and Lutz, 2004; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Phares et al., 2006; Scott and Dadds, 2009). Many reasons exist for fathers’ exclusion from the indirect (programmes for mothers only) to fathers’ contextual situation. Paternal exclusion could possibly be due to organisational constraints (Manby, 2005; Moran and Ghate, 2005) or underlying programme’s aims to encourage at least one parent’s participation (Moran and Ghate, 2005; Zeanah et al., 2005). Perhaps it is due to fathers’ lack of interest in participation for various reasons such as: time (Dumas, Nisssley-Tsiopinis and Moreland, 2005), gender roles and the perceived feminised nature of services (Ghate, Shaw, and Hazel, 2000; McAllister and Thomas, 2007), lack of programme dedication to them (Feinberg, 2002; Manby, 2005) and lack of interest of the programme content (Fabiano, 2007; Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, and Lovejoy, 2008). Another reason fathers may not participate is that they feel unable or are unwilling to share their concerns with others.

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17 Many argue that fathers’ exclusion from programmes is vital in some cases. These specific cases include child and/or partner maltreatment and if the father participates in antisocial behaviour. Advocates of these exclusions believe that the violence must first be addressed before participating (MacMillan, Wathen, Barlow, Ferguson, Leventhal, and Taussig, 2009; Salzinger, Feldman, Ng-Mak, Mojica, Stockhammer, and Rosario, 2002; Scott and Crooks, 2004).
particularly services (Addis and Mahalike, 2003; Guerrero, 2009; Sanders et al., 2010; Walters, Tasker, and Bichard, 2001). Many parenting programmes engage fathers if they come along. This indicates that the problem may be initial recruitment. Some argue that services need to be developed more fully, with a specific focus on fathering needs (Forste, 2002; Lee et al., 2009). Therefore, obtaining a more complete awareness of factors that promote father involvement is vital in ensuring father participation and thus promoting positive father-child dynamics.

Father inclusion can greatly assist programme and family outcomes. One of the most compelling reasons to better understand fathers and service involvement is that fathers are more likely to physically abuse their children, particularly leading to child fatalities (Schnitzel* and Ewigman, 2005; Starling, Holden, and Jenny, 1995; Stiffman, Schnitzel*, Adam, Kruse, and Ewigman, 2002). Evidence from studies implies that father involvement in parenting interventions reduces a child’s negative behaviours (Fabiano, 2007; Manby, 2005) and increases positive behaviours (Lundahl et al., 2006; Lundahl et al., 2008). In considering therapy and parenting programmes, if fathers are included, effectiveness is increased (Carr, 1998; Cassano, Perry-Parish, and Zeman, 2007) and the outcomes are maintained over time (Lundahl et al., 2008). That said, for fathers to benefit they must fully engage and participate in all aspects of the programme. If they do not complete parts, it is unlikely they will receive the same benefits (Connell, Sanders, and Markie-Dadds, 1997). Other studies suggest that when programmes exclude the father, they are less effective for promoting change in parenting practices (Patterson et al., 2005). Also some programmes indicate that fathers’ behaviours have improved due to programme participation, meaning that changes to fathers’ parenting practices can be promoted through parenting programmes (Sanders et al., 2000; Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1997). Overall a change in the focus of services toward including fathers, not simply mothers, will assist families. Guerrero (2009) suggests that programmes need to be developed with gender in mind and that fathers need outreach and education that is specifically tailored to their needs.
Why Study Coparents?

Coparenting relationships are a developing key topic of interest in family psychology (Cowan and Cowan, 2003; Feinberg, 2002; Hawkins, Lovejoy, Holms, Blanchard, and Fawcett, 2008; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, and Rao, 2004; Walsh, 2003b). Research suggests that coparenting relationships typically exist within the marital and parent-child context, but are in fact a separate construct within family dynamics (Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, and Pruett, 2006; Kurdek, 1996; Margolin, Gordis and John, 2001; Van Egeren and Hawkins, 2004). Despite findings that parents’ collaboration is an important aspect in family functioning, coparenting relationships remain largely unexamined (Feinberg, 2002; Galvin and Brommel, 2000). While the coparenting field is still emerging, little is known about coparents’ relationships, particularly in evaluating parent support programmes. The current research explores parents’ perceptions of the coparenting relationship, and the influence of parent support programmes on the coparenting relationship.

Coparenting relationships can be defined as ‘when at least two individuals are expected by mutual agreement or societal norms to have conjoint responsibility for a particular child’s well-being’ (Van Egeren and Hawkins, 2004, p. 166). This definition ensures that coparenting can be examined from numerous perspectives and various family structures.

An ongoing debate in family research involves whether to explore mothers and fathers together as parents, or individually. Numerous researchers argue that mothers and fathers must be considered together, as they inevitably influence one another’s family interactions. Furthermore, studying mothers and fathers together allows family processes to be examined as a whole (Frascarolo, Favez, Carneiro, and Fivaz-Depeursinge, 2004; Margolin et al., 2001; McHale, 2007; McHale and Fivaz-Depeursinge, 1999; Philipp, Herve, and Keren, 2008).

Coparenting and child development. A great deal of research illustrates the importance of the coparenting relationship on child outcomes. The coparenting relationship as its own concept (separate from mothering and fathering) has been linked to a number of child outcomes, including children’s peer and social relationships (Favez, Frascarolo, Carneiro, Montfort, Corboz-Warnery, and Fivaz-Depeursinge, 2006; Hipwell, Murray,
Ducournau, and Stein, 2005; McHale, Fivaz-Depeursinge, Dickstein, Robertson, and Daley, 2008), children's emotional development (Karreman van Tuijl, van Aken, and Dekovic, 2008; Leary and Katz, 2004; Montague and Walker-Andrews, 2002; Völling, Blandon, and Kolak, 2006), children's internalising and externalising behaviours (Amato and Rivera, 1999; Favez et al., 2006; Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik, and Laurenceau, 2006; Kolak and Vernon-Feagans, 2008; von Klitzing and Burgin, 2005), cognitive development and achievement (Stright and Neitzel, 2003) and mind-mindedness (Arnott and Meins, 2007). Other research suggests that coparents play protective roles for their children, with the involvement of fathers being a key factor in preventing maternal child maltreatment (Guterman, Lee, Lee, Waldfogel, and Rathouz, 2009).

Coparenting also has a link to the marital relationship (Lewis, Kier, Hyder, Prenderville, Pullen, and Stephens, 1996; Van Egeren, 2004) which means that many of the negative outcomes to children from couple conflict exist within this realm as well. For instance, Krishnakumar and Buehler (2000) indicate that when parents are living with marital conflict, they are more likely to use harsher parenting styles, suggesting a spillover between family relationships. Time and time again, marital and relationship conflict has been linked to poorer child outcomes and parent-child relationships.\(^{18}\)

**Connections between the marital relationship and coparenting relationship.**

Various studies connect the coparenting and marital relationships. Cabrera, Shannon, and La Taillade (2009) found that relationship conflict was a predictor of coparenting conflict, which in turn influenced mother-infant interaction and father engagement in the family. Researchers suggest that the coparenting relationship is based on marital behaviour in a feedback loop, such that parents satisfied in their marital relationship find coparenting easier and more enjoyable (Favez et al., 2006; Rogers and White, 1998). In families with high levels of relationship conflict, both parents were unlikely to be involved with their children (Cowan and Cowan, 2003; Margolin et al., 2001). Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorff, Frosch, and McHale (2004) longitudinally assessed the relationship between the coparenting and marital

\(^{18}\) For research evidence of the connection between parental conflict and child development see: Kaczynski et al. (2006); Lindahl and Malik (1999); Stright and Bales (2004).
relationship, finding that coparenting and marital relationships are independent at first, but become more related over time.

Some evidence suggests that fathers' involvement has to do with the couples' relationship, such that when parents feel satisfied by their marital relationship, the father is more likely to be involved (Lewis et al., 1996; Van Egeren, 2004). Furthermore, several studies support that if a couple or coparent relationship is particularly negative, the father is more likely to withdraw from interactions with their children than mothers (Elliston, McHale, Talbot, Parmley, and Kuersten-Hogan, 2008; Krishnakumar and Buehler, 2000; Lindahl and Malik, 1999).

**Maternal gatekeeping and father involvement.** Exploring the drive behind each parent's involvement in the family is important to understanding families, and thus designing interventions based on families' relationships. One notion is that mothers dictate the development of the father-child relationship (Cannon, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, and Sokolowski, 2008; Gordon and Feldman, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2008; Hoffman and Moon, 1999). Van Egeren (2003) researched parents' development of the coparenting relationship at the transition to parenthood. The findings revealed that mothers' and fathers' perceptions of coparenting experiences developed differently, with mothers driving the development. Lindsey, Caldera, and Coldwell, (2005) support this stating that mothers' and fathers' coparenting practices develop differently due to individual contextual factors in which the relationships develop. Due to the mothers' influence on the father-child relationship, mothers have been labelled as 'gatekeepers' (Cannon et al., 2008; Hoffman and Moon, 1999; McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn, and Korth, 2005). It is argued that mothers have both direct (e.g Van Egeren, 2003; 2004) and indirect (e.g. Margolin et al., 2001) influences on father involvement. Margolin et al. provided evidence that the father's involvement is mediated by the couple's relationship, such that when parents feel satisfied in their marital relationship, the father is more likely to be involved with the child. Numerous others studies have found similar results (Gordon and Feldman, 2008; Lewis et al., 1996; Van Egeren, 2004).
Research indicates that gender ideologies influence gatekeeping practices. Bulanda (2004) researched mothers and fathers' gender ideologies and found that equalitarian fathers are more involved than fathers with traditional viewpoints. Hoffman and Moon (1999) researched maternal gatekeeping and found that women's personal characteristics and gender role attitudes predicted the mothers' support for father involvement, with women's personal belief structures being important to understanding maternal gatekeeping. McBride et al. (2005) suggested that mothers' beliefs about the fathers' role dictated fathers' involvement and identity in the father-child relationship. Cannon et al. (2008) similarly found mothers with a strong identity and perceived competence in their role as 'mother' were more likely to direct and interfere with father-child interactions in triadic situations. Therefore looking at gender role attitudes in families may be important to understanding family relationships.

Research also indicates that 'gatekeeping' strains the father-child relationship and increases couples' conflict (Hawkins et al., 2008; Kurdek, 1996; Margolin et al., 2001). Hoffman and Moon (1999) suggest that fathers who feel alienated by mothers during infancy will be less involved in their child's life over time. However Cowdery and Knudson-Martin (2005) argued that for mothers to play the gatekeeper role, fathers must 'step back' from their coparenting role (p. 343). Thus they suggested that coparenting is a dynamic process in which motherhood and fatherhood are constructed together.

**The Coparenting Relationship and Parent Support Programmes.** The number of parent support programmes has increased greatly in recent years, yet very few address the coparenting relationship (Feinberg, 2002; Hawkins et al., 2008; Mockford and Barlow, 2004; Schulz, Cowan, and Cowan, 2006). A few interventions indicate that addressing family relationships, particularly coparents, is vital to positive family dynamics (Cowan et al., 2006; Feinberg, Kan, and Goslin, 2009; McHale, 2007; Zeanah et al., 2005). In some cases parents state a preference for partner inclusion (Patterson et al., 2005) in parenting programmes that goes largely overlooked when implementing. Despite these points many parent support programmes address the coparenting relationship indirectly, focussing the intervention on the child's primary caregiver, typically the mother (Feinberg, 2002).
Understanding the influence of only one parent's participation in programmes. The continual focus on mothers (e.g. the primary caregiver) in programmes demonstrates a need to examine whether mothers exert power in the coparenting relationship through access to and knowledge of the children (Burck and Daniel, 1995; Dallos and Dallos, 1997). If mothers influence the father-child relationship, it becomes vital to address the numerous parent support programmes that allow mothers’ exclusive participation (Feinberg, 2002; Lewis and Lamb, 2003; Patterson et al., 2005).

Research indicates that changes in parenting practices are only maintained over time if both parents participate in programmes (Barrows, 2003, 2009; Lee and Hunsley, 2006; Manby, 2005; Schulz et al., 2006). In addition, conflict can increase in the couple if only one parent is included in a programme. For example, Lee and Hunsley (2006) suggest that by only one parent participating in programmes, more conflict may be generated between the parents. Other research suggests that empowering the mother without considering the father increases coparent conflict (Mockford and Barlow, 2004).

One study has specifically attempted to understand parenting programmes when only the mother attends. Mockford and Barlow (2004) interviewed mothers about their experiences after participating in the programme. Mothers reported that several unintended consequences occurred from participating in the programme without their partner. The findings suggested that mothers had difficulty engaging their partners and changing their partners’ parenting, and mothers suggested they had difficulty parenting with their partner. Mockford and Barlow recommend that more qualitative studies are needed to understand this phenomenon, and explore the perspectives when one parent attends a programme.

Coparents’ exclusion and inclusion from parenting programme. Numerous authors recommend that parenting programmes be adapted to encourage both parents’ inclusion. Lindsey et al. (2005) recommend that parenting interventions be designed to encourage the coparenting relationship. Furthermore, programmes should not only consider improving individual parenting behaviour, instead programmes should aim to assist parents
in working together for the best interest of their child. Feinberg (2002) suggests that programmes need a more specific coparenting component to encourage the coparenting relationship more fully. Several authors recommend that adding a relational aspect between parents can assist parents in parenting their children, and that interventions should focus more specifically on aiding the mother-father relationship to increase positive outcomes for children (Cowan and Cowan, 2002; Feinberg et al., 2009; Mansfield, 2005). Morrill, Hines, Mahmood, and Cordova (2010) suggest that focusing interventions on coparenting can have an effect on romantic relationships; meaning that by assisting couples with one aspect of their relationship, e.g. coparenting, their romantic relationship will also be supported and if their romantic relationships are assisted, the couples’ coparenting together will be more likely.

With few exceptions, most coparenting intervention research uses quantitative analysis, attempting to demonstrate that a change exists following programme participation (Cowan et al., 2006; Emanuel, 2006; Patterson et al., 2005). However the studies that ‘show’ a change in parenting practices do not account for the process leading to modifications (Barlow Parsons, and Stewart-Brown, 2005; Barrows, 2003; Wilson and Halford, 2008). In addition, most studies do not specifically address the coparenting alliance from the parents’ perspectives, especially in relation to parenting programmes (Harel, Kaplan, Avimer, Patt, and Ben-Aaron, 2006; Mansfield, 2005; Patterson et al., 2005). By understanding coparents’ perspectives together, practitioners and parent support programmes will be better able to engage with and promote family relationships.

Why Study Project Workers?
Very few studies attempt to understand practitioners, even though they deliver programmes. Very little is known about practitioners’ perspectives, particularly their views of themselves in work with families (Green, 2006; Zeanah, Larrieu, Boris, and Nagle, 2006). By understanding project worker perspectives, a wider and more in depth understanding of programme practices can be achieved. In addition, project workers allow for a better understanding of the core processes and factors that encourage collaboration with families. Practitioners are the direct line between programmes and families (Gomby et al., 1999). They
are also often the way that families become engaged initially (Wall, Taylor, Liebow, Sabatino, Mayer, Farber, et al., 2005), are maintained in programmes over time (Barlow et al., 2003; Korfmacher, Green, Spellmann, and Thornburg, 2007) and act as the catalyst (Law et al., 2009; Stolk et al., 2008) for change in families. Therefore it is imperative that their perspectives are understood for families' involvement.

**Importance of studying project workers.** One reason that makes programme practitioners essential to parenting programmes is that their role inherently represents the programme to the families. As Gomby et al. (1999) state: 'Home visitors are the embodiment of the program for families; they draw families to the program, and they are the vehicle through which the curriculum is delivered' (p. 18). Gomby et al. make it clear that the practitioner is the programme to the family, meaning that the practitioner can create or impede programme engagement and potential change in parenting practices.

**Project workers' perspectives and programme impact.** Although most studies ignore practitioner perspectives, those that have considered them, indicate important points in considering further research and developing practice. For example, Zeanah et al. (2006) found that practitioners reported an emotional impact on their perspectives through delivering the programme which affected their work with families. Brocklehurst, Barlow, Kirkpatrick, Davis, and Stewart-Brown, (2004) also considered how practitioners viewed their support for families. They found that practitioners perceived having a number of influences on families, particularly in the domains of family-service relationships, providing referrals to other agencies, building parents’ positive perceptions of parenting and appreciation for parents’ children, improving parents’ confidence and skills, and supporting families through child protection investigations. Furthermore, research indicates that practitioners have the ability to encourage mind-mindedness in parents, particularly when practitioners are encouraged in reflection themselves (Tomlin, Sturm, and Koch, 2009; Virmani and Ontai, 2010).

Another topic that has received some input from practitioners is in service provision. Wall et al. (2005) suggest that to best support families, flexibility in practice is important. They found
that practitioners can play a unique role in engaging families and aiding them in overcoming barriers in services through individualised support from practitioners. Macdonald, Mohay, Sorenson, Alcorn, McDermott, and Lee (2005) asked infant mental health service providers about service provision, finding that practitioners expressed the need for a prevention emphasis within services, providing easily accessible services to families, and overall more integrated services.

**Engaging in Context.** Practitioners interacting within family environments have illustrated importance to families, particularly considering the multiple contexts within which families exist. McAllister and Thomas (2007) suggest that by understanding a family not only within its own familial context, but also in the societal, community, and political contexts, practitioners are better able to support the family. It is only through considering these aspects that the practitioner can fully engage with the family. In some cases, practitioners are specifically trained to view their families through the environmental context within which their families live (Zeanah et al., 2006) and that this is the path for the most helpful interventions (Emde, Everhart, and Wise, 2004; Law et al., 2009; McAllister and Thomas, 2007).

**Collaboration between practitioners and families is vital to promoting participation and change.** Collaboration is a particularly central point to creating a good working relationship between practitioners and families. Lutz, Anderson, Riesch, Pridham, and Becker (2009) suggests that an important role is in creating the relationship with families in order to support the family relationships. They suggest that practitioners should provide screening, resources and support to encourage families’ participation. Park and Turnbull (2003) state that services which promote family centeredness will support families across a range of needs. This will make families and services integrated team members with regards to interventions; which in turn is more likely to promote family change. Research suggests that to make a collaborative relationship with families, practitioners must move away from an ‘expert’ model, having instead equality between families and practitioners (Barlow et al., 2003; Zeanah et al., 2006).
Therapeutic Alliance. The working or therapeutic alliance is a particularly important part of the project worker-family relationship. The therapeutic relationship or 'working alliance' has been suggested as the central components that promotes change in parenting (mothering) practices (Zeanah, 2005). Numerous studies have indicated the importance of this relationship such as Kazdin, Marciano, and Whitley (2005) and Kazdin and Whitley (2006) who found that this relationship is essential to positive outcomes for parents. Yet little is known about the way in which project workers create this relationship, which suggests a need for process research (Green, 2006). It remains to be seen whether this relationship develops from personality traits, skill base, and/or programme training. Zeanah et al. (2006) suggest that due to the importance of practitioners being able to create the therapeutic alliance, it is vital that personal characteristics and experiences be investigated. Thus these studies recommend more research be conducted on this relationship to develop an understanding of its influence, and to provide further information concerning the best strategies for promoting this relationship.

Theoretical Framework
The research attempted to explore stakeholders' perspectives of families within dyadic relationships in the family, to the family as a whole, and the influence of wider society. Therefore a combination of attachment theory, family systems theory, and feminist theory both informed the development of the research questions and were used to illuminate the findings. Each theory is briefly described in turn below, stating specific aspects that are used in the research. The theories also appear when discussing the current research's findings in the specific stakeholder chapters and are considered in the final discussion section.

Attachment Theory
Much of infant mental health research focuses on the parent-infant relationship, particularly attachment (Berlin, Ziv, Amaya-Jackson, and Greenberg, 2007; Sameroff, 2004). Attachment involves the relationship between children and caregivers, usually parents. In cases where a

19 For a more comprehensive summary of attachment theory, see: Attachment and Loss (Bowlby, 1982); Handbook of Attachment (Cassidy and Shaver, 2008); and Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood (Grossman, Grossman, and Waters, 2005).
child's various needs are met with responsive, sensitive parenting, the child typically feels connected to and protected by the caregiver. Numerous studies suggest that if children do not obtain a secure relationship/attachment with their parent(s), they are likely to encounter a variety of issues. These include low self-esteem (Karavasilis, Doyle, and Markiewicz, 2003); difficulties in school, including impaired cognitive functioning (Schmidt, Cuttress, Lang, Lewandowski, and Rawana, 2007); problems creating and maintaining relationships (S. C. Johnson, Dweck, and Chen, 2007); and tendencies toward developmental psychopathology (Fonagy, 2003). Alone, each of these problems would provide good cause for studying infant mental health in reference to parent-child relationships, however, combined, these outcomes make it imperative for researchers and clinicians to better understand and promote healthy parent-infant relationships. Two aspects of attachment theory are particularly important for the current research: the secure base and internal working models.

A secure base. Attachment theory argues that all people need a secure base from which to explore and understand the world (Karen, 1994). The secure base is a specific person or set of people who can be relied on to get needs met, and are the platform from which one explores the world (Bowlby, 1982; Smith, Cowie, and Blades, 2003). Bowlby (1982) originally explained this in terms of children, suggesting that the mother was the secure base for a child, but later suggested it was an adult caregiver, not necessarily the mother.

A few decades after the initial development of attachment theory, the concept of a secure base was linked to adults. Originally considered by Bowlby with widows of war, Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1990) completed a series of studies in which they found that partners had similar relationship patterns to mothers and children. This discovery resulted in a wealth of information demonstrating the similarities between adult and child relationships and the importance of adult attachment. Many argue that the attachment bond between partners is key to the couple relationship (Feeny, 2008; Hazan and Shaver, 1987; 1990; S. Johnson, 2008; Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan and Cowan, 2002; Mikulincer and Florian, 1997; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). Therefore studies illustrate that the secure base is a lifelong developmental need which is met through relationships with others.
**Internal working models.** Bowlby (1982) believed attachment to exist from the ‘cradle to the grave.’ The way this has been conceptualised is through internal working models. Bowlby argued that the initial bond between adults and a child created an internal working model that influenced the child’s understanding of how relationships work over the lifespan (Bowlby, 1982).

This model is considered a cognitive structure of the emotional bond which the child will use when considering an attachment figure (Bretherton, 1990; Bretherton and Munholland, 2008; Mayseless, 2006). For instance, if infants learn through experiences that caregivers are responsive, they will develop expectations that caregivers are usually responsive. Another example would be if an infant is unable to engage caregivers, the infant is likely to develop the belief that s/he does not deserve care. When these models for viewing the world become established, they are consistent across the lifespan, meaning they are increasingly difficult to adapt (Sroufe et al., 2005). Therefore, if the person’s internal working model was secure early on, they are more likely to create other safe and positive relationships. Pietromonaco and Barrett (2000) discuss internal working models and adulthood. They suggest that the mental representations of the expectations of the self, others and the self-in-relation to others is formed from the parent-child relationship. Internal working models influence what people pay attention to, and how events are interpreted and remembered (Bengtsson and Psouni, 2008; Bretherton and Munholland, 2008; Limbo and Pridham, 2007).

Attachment has been linked to intergenerational transmission, meaning that people who are securely attached are more likely to have children who are securely attached. One possible suggestion for this is that parents who have positive responsive internal working models are more able to respond to their children’s needs, which in turn provides their children with secure attachments (Lyons-Ruth and Jacobvitz, 2008).

Attachment theory is used to examine family relationships such as, the couple relationship, the impact of the couple relationship on children’s development. Overall the theory is used
here to illuminate findings regarding stakeholders' worldviews, particularly in regard to relational aspects of parenting and parenting support.

**Family Systems Theory**

Family systems theory understands a person within the contextual framework of the family (Barrett, 1998; Galvin and Brommel, 2000; Vetere and Dallos, 2003; Walsh, 2003). Drawing the name from science's 'system theory', family systems theory suggests that people do not exist in isolation, but instead spend the majority of their lives connected to and socialized within a family (Corey, 2005; Galvin and Brommel, 2000; Haley, 1971; Sroufe et al., 2005). Two important aspects of family systems theory are the contributing factors and family roles.

**Elements of family systems theory.** There are five major components of family systems theory:

- Systems are an organised whole and interdependent: Family systems supporters believe that all parts of the family influence other parts, termed wholeness, and all parts of the family are inherently related for the system to function;
- Systems are complex and composed of subsystems: Each part of the larger system is made up of smaller subsystems (e.g., parent-child and parent-parent) in which patterns and rules exist;
- Systems have behaviour patterns that are circular (as opposed to linear): The system patterns are not cause-and-effect based, but instead system behavioural patterns influence one another in circular form and thus it is the patterns that must be considered, not one single past event;
- Systems are homeostatic/self-regulatory: Patterns that exist in systems have stability, thus making the patterns self-perpetuating cycles; and
- Systems are developmental: Systems evolve and change, with additions and subtractions to the system's unit.

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Family Roles. Family systems theory suggests that patterns within the family evolve over time. However, these patterns contribute to assigned roles of family members which create shared meanings of families' roles (Broderick, 1993; Marvin, 2003). Roles\textsuperscript{21} are an important aspect to consider when exploring families (Barrett, 1998). Society and the family provide numerous opportunities to define people's roles, such as nurturer, disciplinarian, playmate, etc. and are often applied to mothers and fathers. Many argue that roles are developed and enacted within the family through social interaction (Galvin and Brommel, 2000; Maldonado-Duran and Lartigue, 2002; Talbot and McHale, 2003). It is within this framework that roles are negotiated and decided (Broderick, 1993; Sroufe et al., 2005). According to this 'interactive perspective' (Galvin and Brommel, 2000), behaviours leading to family roles are reliant and interrelated as there cannot be a father without a child or 'a competitive wife to a man who avoids conflict' (p. 159).

The current research used family systems theory throughout as a framework. The parent-child subsystem is one part of the larger system. There could also be a parent-parent relationship or sibling subsystems, etc. Therefore, understanding that each part affects one another is key to understanding the research. As mentioned above, infants are born into and develop within a changing relational system (Sameroff, 2004; Stern, 2008) which also acted as a framework for the research. A final reason for the application of family systems theory is that it provides the rationale for exploring stakeholder perspectives (e.g. mothers, fathers, coparents).

Feminist Theory\textsuperscript{22}

Feminist theory developed during the women's movement of the 1960s, particularly due to women's growing dissatisfaction of traditional gender roles (Bem, 1993; Feree, 1990; Kearney, 1979). Since then feminist theory has grown immeasurably, and is now flourishing with many different types of feminism existing on a continuum (Corey, 2005; Feree, 1990).

\textsuperscript{21} Many definitions of role exist. In this text family roles will be defined as: 'recurring patterns of behaviour developed through interaction that family members use to fulfil family functions' (Galvin and Brommel, 2000, p. 159).

\textsuperscript{22} For a more comprehensive discussion of feminist theory, see: Gender, Power and Relationships (Burck and Speed, 1995a); Feminist Family Therapy (Goodeich, 2003); Bridging Separate Gender Worlds (Philpot et al., 2009).
Feminist theory argues that all people should be treated in an equalitarian manner, with each person being an expert on their experiences. One central concept of feminist theory is ensuring people are understood in context, particularly societal and political frameworks (Goodrich, 2003; Philpot, Brooks, Lusterman, and Nutt, 2009). One further belief of these theorists is in empowering people to make cognizant choices, rather than relying on others and society to make their decisions (Butler, 1993; Corey, 2005; Hrdy, 1999).

Many gender researchers argue that people do gender. It is something performed, particularly through discourse, not something people are. Gender is done in the normative context, meaning that gender performances are often done/judged through societal norms (Butler, 1990; 1993; Nentwich, 2008). Two important concepts for the current research that are encompassed by feminist theory are power and the social and political context.

**Power.** Power is a key concept in feminist theory, although exceedingly difficult to define (Dallos and Dallos, 1997). Due to societal expectations, for centuries men had power to make certain decisions for women (Bem, 1993; Philpot et al., 2009). As power was a main point feminists fought for in the women’s rights movement, it remains a central aspect of feminism today (Corey, 2005). This means advocating for power in wider society and in relationships. Numerous types of power exist. Williams and Watson (1988) suggest several power bases for each gender. These include women as having power over domestic, affective, relational, reproductive and sexual bases, whereas men have power over economic, ascribed, physical, contractual, informational, and language.

Many argue that power processes continue to exist beneath the surface of what couples call ‘equality’ (Hochschild and Machung, 1997; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2009).

Researchers continue to find gender differences between people and what they do in the household, the amount of money they make, and their interaction styles, which is arguably due to power processes in relationships (Goodrich, 2003; Philpot et al., 2009). While power continues to be an organising and important framework for relationships, it has been found that couples who see themselves as able to influence one another have higher well-being and
are more likely to use direct communication strategies (Deutsch, 2001; Gottman and Gottman, 2007).

**Social and Political Context.** One central concept of feminist theory is ensuring people are understood in context, particularly societal and political frameworks (Goodrich, 2003; Philpot et al., 2009). One overarching theme in feminist theory is that the 'personal is political' (Hanisch, 1969). This theme is based on the principle that all people's individual problems are based in societal and political roots. This idea underpins the feminist notion that social change is the best catalyst for personal/individual change (Corey, 2005; Segal, 1995).

One key similarity in feminist theories is a principle of challenging societal assumptions, especially any assumption that places one person (e.g., men) above another (e.g., women) (Silverstein, 1996; Wittig, 1982). Many feminist theorists aim to displace ideas of sex differences being 'natural' or biologically determined (Butler, 1993; Paul, 2000; Wittig, 1982). They believe the definition of 'natural' creates an inflexible societal norm which people are expected to accept (Caplan and Caplan, 1999). One example frequently suggested is that women are 'natural' caretakers (Caplan and Caplan, 1999; Hrdy, 1999; Silverstein, 2003). Feminists argue that this assumption leads an inevitable path toward all women becoming a mother, and enables men to avoid their caretaking responsibilities and abilities (Goodrich, 2003; Hrdy, 1999; Silverstein, 1996).

One under-researched aspect of feminist theory is gender in present day society. According to Goodrich (2003) gender as a political and societal issue has begun to fade (Goodrich, 2003). While during the 1960s and 70s the women's movement caused a great deal of commotion, it is beginning to be marginalised. Many people believe and discuss their partnership as 'equal' (Goodrich, 2003; Hochschild and Machung, 1997; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1999; 2009). Although people still talk of the 'glass ceiling', it just takes a simple exemplar to undermine the continued existence of the issue (Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, and Webster, 2009; Hakim, 2006). Women may on the surface, appear to be 'equal' to men. However to many this 'equality' remains only an appearance. Numerous researchers have
reported on gender equality, with Knudson-Martin and Mahoney claiming it as a ‘myth’ (1999; 2009). Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (1999) investigated the ‘traps’ into which modern couples fall. They found four traps: 1. Natural differences; 2. Acting out invisible gender scripts 3. Ignoring power differences and; 4. Gender inequality is no longer an issue. Each of these is often unconscious, but they continue to drive romantic relationships. They warn that by falling into these traps, the societal context of gender will stop developing, and thus people, including therapists, need to consider and address the underlying gender issues in their romantic relationships.

Feminist theory is primarily used in the current research to understand families in a relational and societal context. The key message is that gender remains an important and organising construct in terms of family relationships and roles, and thus provides the rationale for considering parent programmes’ in supporting parents.

Research Questions

Numerous areas exist for development in understanding parenting and parenting programmes, particularly due to most of the research creating more questions than it answers. Integrating the political and research context with the current gaps in the field and the underpinning research theories, five key research questions have emerged and been addressed throughout this research. While the application of these questions to each stakeholder group will be conducted in more depth in specific stakeholder chapters, a brief summary of the key questions is provided below. These questions will be considered from all stakeholders’ perspectives.

Research Question One

As mentioned, participant perspectives of services are often not included in programme evaluation. Additionally participant perspectives of parenting are not typically asked nor considered. For instance, Kane et al. (2007) suggest that understanding parents’ involvement in parenting groups is underpinned by their perceptions of parenting, which in turn determines programme engagement. These parenting perspectives influence the design,
delivery, and participation in programmes (Lamb, 2004; Lloyd, 1999). A lack of understanding of parenting perceptions can be particularly difficult as parents are not always willing to be involved in services or to consider themselves as a contributing issue to their children's problems (Target and Fonagy, 2005). Little is known about underlying processes that promote and sustain change in parenting practices (Roth and Fonagy, 2005). Without knowing parents' perspectives on parenting, it is exceedingly difficult to understand how to design a programme or evaluation that meets families' needs (Powell, 2005). In considering this idea and the method of bottom-up design, this research first established parents' viewpoints and then built on these to ensure the evaluation addressed the stakeholders' perspectives. Therefore the current research asked from stakeholders' perspectives:

How do parents' perspectives on parenting influence their involvement in, and understanding of the benefit of, parent support programmes?

Research Question Two

Process of change in parenting practices is often overlooked in the evaluation of parenting programmes, despite numerous studies declaring its importance (Jacobs, 2003; Melhuish et al., 2007; Stern, 2008). Process of change considers underlying components that encourage people to create change in their lives. In other words, process of change is about understanding the 'active ingredients' promoting change by participants (Dallos and Vetere, 2005). Understanding the process of change in parenting practices is essential to promoting positive parenting practices each time a programme is delivered. Researchers suggest that it is important to know why change has occurred, not just that it has, in order to reproduce the same effects and ensure effective family interventions are implemented (Cowen, 2001; Stern and Reid, 1999). Additionally, Paris, Spielman, and Bolton (2009) discuss process of change in mother-infant relationships and found that relational connection and 'now moments' were key in promoting change. Only through understanding how change occurs in families, can programmes be developed, designed, and delivered to meet families' needs. Evaluating programmes with a focus on how change occurs enables service providers to better support parents. Therefore the current research asked from stakeholders' perspectives:
Research Question Three

Questions about family roles are typically not addressed in parent support programmes and/or evaluation research, even if programmes claim to be underpinned by family systems theory. Family roles are often explained, both implicitly and explicitly, with gender as a basis (Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2009; Walsh, 2003a). Some research indicates that mothers tend to take on the role of primary caretaker with the children, leaving little room for fathers’ participation (Lindsey et al., 2005; Mockford and Barlow, 2004; Silverstein, 1996). If only mothers are being supported and encouraged to attend parent support programmes, then programmes are indirectly upholding gender roles with mothers as the primary-and perhaps ‘best’- caretakers. Investigating family roles enables a better understanding of families’ in their current state, and whether parent support programmes can play a part in encouraging both parents to work together (Manby, 2005; Patterson et al., 2005). Therefore the current research asked from stakeholders’ perspectives:

What influence do parenting programmes have on family roles (e.g. role of mother, father etc)?

Research Question Four

In addition to exploring family roles, family relationships were examined as part of the current research. This question aims to better understand the direct and indirect influences that parent support programmes’ have on family relationships as this influence is key in developing programmes that meet families’ needs (Forehand and Kotchick, 2002; Kane et al., 2007). Creating awareness of the family relationships can encourage services and service development to be more family focussed. Numerous programme developers and evaluators suggest that their programme promotes a change to the family relationships (Gardner et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2008; Leung et al., 2003; Martin and Sanders, 2003; Olds, 2006; Patterson, Barlow, et al., 2002; Velderman, et al., 2006). However these evaluations leave questions
unanswered regarding the underlying factors of change in families. Therefore this research aims to address the perceived influence of programmes on the families' relationships from the integrated process-outcome perspective. This question is about how parents perceive their relationships with their children and partners and in what ways parent support programmes influence these relationships. Furthermore, if family relationships are vital to programme participation and effectiveness, it becomes crucial that programmes consider these relationships in theory and delivery (Beckwith, 2005; Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). Therefore the current research asked from stakeholders' perspectives:

What influence do parenting programmes have on family relationships (e.g. quality of relating in marital/coparents/parent-child relationships)?

Research Question Five

By understanding the relationship between families and services, service providers can better address the needs of the service users. Researchers argue that integrated services that meet families' in context are better able to offer assistance (Law et al., 2009; McAllister et al., 2003; Melhuish et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2003). They claim that services need to be designed and considered in ecological circumstances to ensure families are involved and engaged. Also understanding the communities' context in developing and promoting services is fundamental to meeting services users' needs (Coe et al., 2003; Osofsky et al., 2007). By understanding service users' perspectives, services can become more inclusive which will enable them to assist families. For instance, difficulty in accessing services can create a misunderstanding and/or mistrust that may only be alleviated by outreach (Avis et al., 2007; Turner and Sanders, 2006). In order to design, develop, and evaluate services in communities, stakeholders' perspectives are needed. Therefore the current research asked from stakeholders' perspectives:

What are the connections between parents and community services?

An important note here is the difference between services and specific project/family support workers. This section discusses more general programmes and services, leaving specific family-support worker relationships for chapter 6 where project workers' relationships are discussed in more depth.
Conclusions

Parent support programmes are a rapidly developing aspect of practice, policy, and research. The current research attempted to address a few of the gaps that currently exist. The discussion above defined parent support programmes, briefly developed some of the background of the field, established key gaps in the literature, including in specific stakeholder groups, and states the main research aims and questions. The next chapter explains the parent support programme that was evaluated and the methodology for the research in order to achieve the aims mentioned here.
Chapter 2: Method
Programme Description, Research Background and Phases

Introduction
Chapter 2 describes the research framework. It begins by describing the parenting programme that was evaluated for this research, Parents as First Teachers. This chapter then explains the research design of mixed methods research with the two foundational approaches of action research and natural history and their connections to the current research. Finally, the chapter details the three phase research design which was completed in order to integrate process and outcome evaluation and explore stakeholder perspectives.

Programme Description: Parents as First Teachers
The current research focuses on a parenting programme referred to as Parents as First Teachers (PAFT). PAFT aims to support parents through a combination of factors delivered during home visits and group sessions. It believes that parents are a child's 'first and most influential teacher.' They argue that by providing parents with information, support, and encouragement, children are more likely to achieve their full potential. PAFT undertakes four delivery activities in communities where it is implemented:

- **Personal visits:** Trained project workers go to families' homes giving them individual attention and promoting positive parent-child relationships in the families' environment. The visits are usually conducted once a month, although more can be arranged if necessary. Typically lasting an hour, the home visit includes discussion of the previous session, parent and child achievements, some activities for the parent and child to do together with the project worker that can be made out of materials found in the home, and a handout summarising the section. The project worker fills

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24 A selection of programme materials was reviewed over the course of the research. These materials are available upon request.
25 For further and more in-depth summaries published in literature, please see: Karoly et al. (2005); Repucci et al. (1997). For PAFT comparison to similar programmes, please see: Gomby et al. (1999); Gomby (1999); Olds et al. (2007). Although these are all written from an American perspective, they provide more detailed specifications of the programme.
out several forms after visiting with each family, including the milestone's checklist and the Personal Visit Record.

- **Group meetings**: Group sessions encourage parents to obtain information on child development and gain support from other parents and professionals. The groups provide parents with the opportunity to socialise with other parents and/or raise issues with their project workers. Group sessions typically happen once a month (although in some areas, this can be once a week) and last one to two hours. These sessions also have a variety of children's activities so that parents are not required to find child care to participate.

- **Screening**: Project workers provide information about children's health and developmental progress identifying strengths and if any areas of concerns exist. The forms completed by the project workers at the end of each home visiting session, allow them to monitor and promote children's development. It further assists project workers in noticing if an aspect of a child's development is progressing atypically and provide information to the family about specialist services, if necessary.

- **Resource network**: Create connections with other organisations within the community to be able to signpost parents to additional services. Project workers keep working relationships with other services and ensure they encourage parents' participation in the community. PAFT also has experts in the community, such as health visitors, who occasionally deliver the group meeting topic which helps to familiarise parents to resources in the community.

The programme states many additional purposes, including preventing child maltreatment, increasing parents' knowledge of typical development, realistic expectations and age appropriate activities, encouraging parent-child positive interaction, supporting parental self-esteem/confidence, ensuring children's school readiness, detecting developmental delays, and preventing child behavioural problems.
PAFT began in the United States in the 1981 in the State of Missouri and is now used in many states across the United States. It also operates in several countries around the world, such as New Zealand and China. In the 1990s, PAFT was brought to the United Kingdom to aid parents in understanding and promoting development of young children. PAFT is flexible and extensive in its possible offerings, in contrast to many other programmes. Although universally designed, PAFT is often delivered to families from diverse and high-needs backgrounds. The programme typically offers home visits for parents of children aged nought to three years, making it a particularly long programme. In certain cases, if a child is exhibiting delays or specific developmental issues, the family can remain in the programme until the child reaches five years of age.

Home visitors of PAFT use the patented Born to Learn curriculum, which is based on theories of prenatal through to early childhood neuroscience, attachment, critical periods, positive parent-child interaction and other aspects of child development surrounding language, motor, intellectual and socio-emotional development. Sessions are divided by age group, so the information for each home visiting session is delivered based on the age of the child. (This means if the child is 8 months old, the 8 month old visit materials are resourced for the parents and project workers.) This curriculum contains strong theoretical underpinnings, detailed evidence-based content, and considerable information on a variety of topics (Drotar, Robinson, Jeavons, and Kirchermer, 2008; Pfannenstiel, and Seltzer, 1989). PAFT is based on strengths-based models, and they have a detailed model that specifically discusses the immediate, short and long term outcomes.

In addition to the detailed programme materials, potential practitioners are required to attend intensive training. This training takes place over six days, five days being completed consecutively before delivering the programme to families, and then one 'top-up day', six

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26 Parents as First Teachers in the UK is called Parents as Teachers (PAT) in the USA. Throughout this research, PAFT will be used for clarity and consistency.
27 For more information on the US programme, please see their website: http://www.parentsasteachers.org/site/pp.asp?c=eHRLcMZJeE8&b=272091
28 For more information on the UK programme, please see their website: http://www.parentsasfirstteachers.org.uk/
29 The detailed model is available upon request.
months post training. The training not only examines the provided materials in depth, it also
delves more deeply into information on engaging families and exploring the usefulness of
finding parents' strengths in promoting change. Project workers must be delivering PAFT to
families within one year of training, and to stay accredited they must work with at least five
families a year.

Sure Start Children's Centres in some UK areas are currently incorporating, or intending to
incorporate, PAFT as part of their statutory home visiting services. PAFT is one of the
programmes recommended by the Sure Start guidance of 2002 (Dfes, 2002). The current
research took place in two areas of the UK, primarily in semi-rural and rural geographic
locations. They will be referred to as Area 1 and Area 2 and described in turn below.

PAFT: Area 1
PAFT in Area 1 was started in 2001 by a head teacher that was regularly seeing children with
developmental issues, and wanted to ensure that these children were obtaining the best start
to life. PAFT is now being offered across their county. They have connections with a
number of parent-toddler groups and often encourage parents' attendance at these. They
have also created a supportive network with other community organisations with links to
health visitors, paediatric nurses, social services, doctors, educational psychologists, and
various schools that the children will eventually attend. It is important to note that not all
families are offered PAFT throughout the county. Instead, families are offered a variety of
services and one may be PAFT. This is due to time and resource shortages.

PAFT: Area 2
Area 2 is the first PAFT in the UK. It began in the 1990s after a head teacher learned of the
programme in the USA. She went to the USA to train, and brought it back to the UK. This
head teacher is not only responsible for bringing PAFT to the UK; she maintains an active
role in the programme's running across the country. Eventually she and a few others
obtained their trainers' licenses to disseminate the programme more widely. Area 2 has faced
recent funding difficulties and was almost shut down at several points during the research.
This has caused a great deal of undue stress for the project and created some difficulties in obtaining their participation.

**PAFT Evaluation Research**

PAFT evaluation research has been conducted almost exclusively in the USA. These evaluations are mostly large scale, and measure a large number of outcomes. The majority of these evaluations demonstrate positive outcomes for families based on PAFT participation.

The effectiveness of PAFT has been demonstrated through outcome research. Research indicates that parents of children who participate in PAFT have higher cognitive development (Wagner and Clayton, 1999; Wagner, Spiker, and Linn, 2002), social development (Wagner and Clayton, 1999; Wagner et al., 2002), school-readiness (Pfannenstiel, Seitz, and Zigler, 2002; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, and Seitz, 2008), school successes (Pfannenstiel et al., 2002; Zigler et al., 2008), and self-help skills (Wagner and Clayton, 1999). Furthermore, research indicates that participating in PAFT may prevent child abuse and keep child immunisations up to date when used with case management for teen mothers (Wagner and Clayton, 1999). Research also suggests that PAFT can shorten the gap between children living in poverty and those who are not, by decreasing the negative effects of poverty on parenting (Pfannenstiel et al., 2002; Wagner et al., 2002; Zigler et al., 2008). In addition, some research suggests that parents are more engaged in children’s learning than parents of children who had not participated in PAFT (Albritton, Klotz, and Roberson, 2004).

PAFT evaluations have consistently shown positive outcomes for families participating in the programme, particularly for low income families. However little is known about the underlying processes for change with families (Gomby, 1999; Pfannenstiel et al., 2002), the importance of the home visitor relationship to the family (Gomby et al., 1999, Zigler et al.,

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30 Summaries of each evaluation are available upon request.
31 One evaluation was undertaken in the UK at the University of Buckinghamshire. Results of this report did not expand any previous findings and thus is not discussed in the text. It is important to note that due to funding restraints, this evaluation was ended halfway through.
2008), and comparisons between programme stakeholders (Wagner, Spiker, Linn, Gerlach-Downie, and Hernandez, 2003). Furthermore, all of these studies on PAFT, with one exception, have employed experimental and quasi-experimental methods (Wagner et al., 2002), thus ignoring participants’ perspectives. The current research addressed these gaps by exploring PAFT’s influence on families and processes through stakeholders’ perspectives, and allowed for comparisons between groups.

Research Design and Underpinning Approaches
To explore both process and outcome through evaluation, the current research combined an exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, Clark, and Garrett, 2008), with action research (Brown and Young, 2005; Uzzell and Barnett, 2006), using a natural history approach (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005; Vetere and Gale, 1987).

Mixed Methods Research and Design
Mixed methods research, also known as the third paradigm, combines quantitative and qualitative paradigms, predominantly in practice driven research (Denscombe, 2008). While no one definition of mixed methods research exists (Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry, 2006; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007), it is generally considered that the design technique used focuses on combining qualitative and quantitative components to better understand concepts, ideas and in this case, evaluations.

One way of viewing mixed methods research is to visualise it as existing on a continuum (see Figure 2.1) between quantitative and qualitative paradigms (B. Johnson, 2008; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Leech, Dellinger, Brannagan, and Tanaka, 2010). Rather than choosing either qualitative or quantitative approaches exclusively, mixed methods researchers believe that both ends of the research spectrum provide useful research perspectives (Bryman, 2008; B. Johnson, 2008). These researchers promote combining the designs for a comprehensive explanation of findings (Bryman, 2008; Leech et al., 2010).

32 A more detailed description of Mixed Methods Research see: Bergman (2008a); Creswell (2009); Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) or is available upon request.
Figure 2.1. Mixed Methods Research Paradigm

Several advantages to using mixed methods research exist. Mixed methods research provides the advantages of qualitative research by encouraging participants' viewpoints, while using quantitative research to provide policy makers and programme designers with information on effectiveness (Bergman, 2008c). Bryman (2007) suggests that using the methods in conjunction allows for contradictions and clarifications in interpreting the results. Another advantage to mixed methods research is that it does not force researchers to look exclusively at one specific question but instead allows them to consider several questions in varying lights (Bergman, 2008b; Robson, 2002). Many researchers argue that mixed methods design provides the best way to understand participants (Bergman, 2008c; Coe, Gibson, Spencer, and Stuttaford, 2008; McGuire, Stein, and Rosenberg, 1997). Recently, mixed methods research designs have been applied to programme evaluation (Creswell, 2009; Nastasi, Hitchcock, Sarkar, Burkholder, Varjas, and Jayasena, 2007; Weiss, 1998). This is most likely because both place their emphasis in real world research. Johnson et al. (2007) argue that this is because evaluations have to carry out the task of measuring the effectiveness of social programmes, which is best achieved by considering multiple types of data. Therefore the current research believes that mixed methods research designs fulfilled the needs and complexity of the evaluation by encouraging an understanding of effectiveness in context.

While several types of mixed methods research designs exist, the current research will adopt the mixed methods research strategy known as 'sequential exploratory mixed methods design'. This method begins by first collecting and analysing qualitative data, and then using the findings from this to construct the quantitative study, including the development of research questions making it sequential (Brannen, 2008; Creswell et al., 2008; Creswell,
The technique is often applied when engaging stakeholders' views and encourages the involvement of both programme providers and users in designing the evaluation (Owen, 2007). The clear advantages of mixed methods research design meant that it was the preferred method for meeting the purpose of the current research.

**Triangulation.** By using several methods for data collection, the evaluator can provide more accurate and deeply considered information (Jacobs, 2003; Weiss, 1998). This is one of the most important issues in evaluation research, termed triangulation (Clarke, 1999). Triangulation can be defined as using more than one reference point such as collecting multiple sets of data in a variety of settings at different points in time thus ensuring greater accuracy of the evaluation (Rubin, 2008; Weiss, 1998). Overall, triangulation provides a way to validate data, better understand various viewpoints, ensures appropriate monitoring and allows researchers to be more confident in findings. One of the easiest ways to complete triangulation is through mixed methods research. Bamberger et al. (2006) suggest that mixed methods designs can help to naturally complete triangulated methods as the researchers are collecting data from different participants.

The current research triangulated by first conducting background research, which underpins the research. At several times throughout the research, extant theory and literature provided consideration and direction for the subsequent phase. That said, the main way that triangulation occurred was through the research phases. As a researcher gains information through different modes, confidence is gained that these findings are useful and valid. In the current research, as each phase used not only theory, but also participants' viewpoints, it was better able to illuminate a full picture of the meanings within the research (see Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2. Triangulation in the current research to validate and interpret findings.

Underpinning Approaches

Two approaches inform and underpin the current research’s application of mixed methods research design: the natural history approach and action research. These approaches were central to the design and development of the research. This section will briefly explain each approach in turn, describing its rationale and the application to the mixed methods research design and wider research.

**Natural history approach.** The natural history approach provides a framework for the research’s design. This approach combines field work and mass data collection to explore the natural world (Dobbert, 1983; Vetere and Gale, 1987). Developed originally by Darwin and extended by Bateson, the approach aims to understand connections between natural environments and events through relationships.

The natural history approach is underpinned by a unique three phase design:

1. **Field work.** This involves the researcher immersing themselves with participants to better understand their worldview. This could be achieved through observations or interviews with the population under study.

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³³ For a more detailed description of the natural history approach, please see: Leeds-Hurwitz (2005); Vetere and Gale (1987); or is available upon request.
2. **Mass data collection.** This involves examining the findings of the initial phase in a more widespread context. This could be accomplished through mass questionnaires sent to members of the population under study.

3. **Taking the findings back to the field.** This involves taking steps one and two back to the participants to validate the accuracy of their findings and make any necessary revisions or expansions. This could be achieved by further interviews or focus groups.

The natural history approach is applied in various ways to the current research. One way that the natural history approach informed the research was that the current research was conducted primarily in the field with the participants. In association with natural history approach, the researcher did not join the group, instead remained an outsider (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). Another way the research applied the natural history approach was through aiming to understand the context of the participants. The final way that the natural history approach informed the research was in its three phase design (described in detail below). Minimal theory and judgement were applied to the research at the outset, instead allowing for flexibility in developing each phase so that the research could more accurately reflect the context and relating factors uncovered as the research advanced through each phase.

**Action research.** Action research is a unique approach of combining theory and practice in research so that an active process takes place in which research, participation and evaluation relate in a cyclical nature (Brown and Young, 2005). It began as a way to provide practical solutions to social problems, and has since evolved into an approach that demonstrates evidence for policy decisions (Uzzell and Barnett, 2006). An inherent part of action research is the notion that all issues are contextually bound and should take into account the perspectives of the members of the population who use the service being evaluated (Ho, 2002; McGuire and Gottlieb, 1979). It also represents collaboration between the practical concerns of a community and of social sciences research (Robson, 2002).

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34 For a more detailed description of Action Research, please see: Jason, Keys, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor, and Davis (2004); Kindon et al. (2007a); Uzzell and Barnett (2006); or is available upon request.
Action research informed the current research by developing through stakeholders' perspectives. Specific to the current research, the researcher attempted to understand the programme and thus develop the evaluation by going to home visits with project workers (with parents' permission) and attending numerous group meetings. This allowed the researcher to understand the programme in context as required for action research and encouraged the researcher to understand the various difficulties experienced by programme participants, such as the lack of public transportation in their area.

Action research was also relevant for the current research because it has both been developed for and is often used to evaluate programmes and interventions (Uzzell and Barnett, 2006) including parent support programmes. Some studies evaluating parent support programmes and services use action research, such as Brown and Young (2005), who evaluated 'Stay and Play' at Children's Centres; Coe et al. (2008) who evaluated the rationale of eligible people who do not use Sure Start centres; and Goudreau and Duhamel (2003) who evaluated the involvement of fathers in families. It is clear that action research has been successfully utilised with similar populations to the current research.

As described in chapter 1, evaluation is often considered from a top-down perspective with a one-way influence of research on practice. Action research promotes evaluation through the stakeholders' viewpoints, and therefore empowers stakeholders and researchers in a two-way influence of research and practice (Ho, 2002; Muhoy and Lauber, 2004; Seymour and Davies, 2002). Furthermore process and outcomes are equally important for action research, thus the current evaluation was informed by action research to maintain a continual focus on the process-outcome integration.

### Phases of the Current Research

The current research was divided into three phases, which built upon one another. The research began by piloting semi-structured interviews with multiple stakeholders. The

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35 As stated earlier, this explains each phase of the research but provides no findings. The section describes simply what was done, not what was found.
interviews were analysed and compiled into theme lists. The theme lists were used to develop bespoke questionnaires, which were piloted and then distributed in two areas of the UK. Focus groups were used in the final phase to validate and further develop the findings of the first two phases. The diagram (Figure 2.3) illustrates the research's three phase design.

**Figure 2.3.** The three phase design of the current research.

These data collecting methods and their development are discussed in more depth below. The section begins by describing the interviews, then the questionnaires, and finally the focus groups. Each of these three sections will begin by briefly discussing the data collection strategy, followed by the participants, then the measures used, and finally the analysis techniques will be described.

**Phase 1: Semi-Structured Interviews**

In the first phase (Box 2.1) of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

**Box 2.1. Summary of the research design and analysis from phase 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative) (Fieldwork)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers: N = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers: N = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparents: N = 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Workers: N = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59
Interviewing as a method and rationale. Interviews were selected as the method to ensure the research was based on participants' perspectives. Interviews are a common tool used in evaluation research as they can help researchers identify issues for more detailed investigation (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Rubin, 2008). They are often used to assess perceptions, and when analysing data qualitatively (Barker, 1990; Silverman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were used, where the interview has some specific questions and further prompts (Bernard, 1995; Breakwell, 2006). Advantages of interviews include the flexibility and numerous usages in various contexts, obtaining detailed information, and the option of exploring ideas in depth (Owen, 2007; Rubin, 2008). However, disadvantages include the following: interviews do not give direct access to 'facts' or events and the interview as a process is inherently an interaction which is subject to social dynamics and can be influenced for several reasons, such as dislike or mistrust of the researcher, embarrassment, or not understanding the questions (Breakwell, 2006; Silverman, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews were selected for the current research as they are flexible, thus allowing participants to respond to at least some questions as they choose (Breakwell, 2006; Weiss, 1998). This encourages researchers to understand the participants' worldviews in context and ensure the questions pertain specifically to the interviewee (Owen, 2007; Weiss, 1998). In addition, interviews are commonly used in evaluating parenting programmes (e.g. Allen, 2007; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Slade, 2004).

Participants. Interviews were first conducted with mothers and PAFT project workers, then, fathers and coparents were interviewed. The process for recruiting and interviewing parents was through the programme project workers. After receiving ethical approval, project workers contacted parents to ask if they might be willing to be interviewed about their experiences in PAFT. If the parents agreed, the project worker gave the researcher the parents' contact details. The researcher then contacted the parent(s) and set up a time to be interviewed. The researcher went to the parent(s) house, explained the research, had the parent(s) sign the consent form and proceeded to the interview.

36 Participant characteristics will be discussed in the specific stakeholder group chapters to provide context and clarity to the analysis.
Six mothers were interviewed in phase 1 and each interview lasted from one to two hours.

Five fathers were interviewed and all interviews lasted one to two hours. One interesting note is the complicated nature of including fathers in the research. In several cases the project worker contacted the mother, the mother spoke with the father, and then the mother contacted the project worker.

Seven sets of coparents were interviewed. The coparent interviews lasted one and a half, to two and a half hours.

After receiving ethical consent, the researcher set an appropriate time to interview each project worker individually in the school in which the programme was based. The researcher explained the research, had the project worker sign the consent form and proceeded to the interview. Three project workers were interviewed in phase 1 and each interview lasted forty five minutes to one hour.

All participants were interviewed using semi-structured interview schedules. These interviews contained open-ended questions to ensure the participants' could answer as they chose and interesting leads initiated by the interviewee could be followed. The guiding questions were developed with evidence from the literature. The sets of participants have somewhat different interview schedules (discussed below), in order to understand specific group perspectives.

The Semi-Structured Mother Interview Schedule is divided into five sections. The first assessed demographic questions to establish basic information about the family. The second section involved seeking an understanding about what typically leads mothers to join PAFT. The next section explored the helping

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37 For specific literature reasons for including mothers, please see chapter 1 and/or chapter 3, ‘Mothers.’
38 For specific literature indicating reasons for including fathers, please see chapter 1 and/or chapter 4, ‘Fathers’.
39 For specific literature indicating reasons for including coparents, please see chapter 1 and/or chapter 5, ‘Coparents.’
40 For specific literature indicating reasons for including project workers, please see chapter 1 and/or chapter 6, ‘Project workers.’
41 Developed from literature: Allen (2007); MacAllister and Thomas (2007); Osofsky et al. (2007); Smith and Bryan (2005).
relationship and the fourth section examined the coparenting relationship. The final section aimed to understand the parents' experiences with PAFT and their overall attitudes.

**Fathers.** The Semi-Structured Father Interview Schedule\textsuperscript{42} (Appendix B2) attempted to understand father perspectives and is divided into five sections. The first assessed demographic questions, to establish basic information about the family. The second section involved examining fathers' perspectives on parenting. The next section explored the fathers' interaction and involvement with PAFT. The fourth section examined the parenting relationship. The final section aimed to understand the fathers' experiences with PAFT and their overall parenting attitudes.

**Coparents.** The Semi-Structured Coparent Interview Schedule\textsuperscript{43} (Appendix B3) attempted to understand coparent perspectives and is divided into five sections. The first assessed demographic questions to establish basic information about the family. The second section involved investigating parents' perspectives on coparenting. The next section explored the coparents' interaction and involvement with PAFT. The fourth section examined the coparenting relationship in the context of the parent support programme. The final section aimed to understand overall coparents' experiences and attitudes in relation to PAFT.

**Project workers.** The Semi-Structured Project Worker Interview Schedule\textsuperscript{44} (Appendix B4) is comprised of four sections. The first section involved probing the project workers' ideas about PAFT and the process behind becoming a project worker. The next section aimed to obtain the project workers' perspective on the overall PAFT programme. The third section assessed the project workers' impressions about their relationships with families. The final section explored the project workers' perceptions of PAFT in the community setting.

**Procedure.** Participants were interviewed in their homes or at the school in which PAFT operated. The interviews were audio recorded. The researcher sought and received

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\textsuperscript{42} Developed from Literature: Addis and Mahalike (2003); Harel et al. (2006); Hawkins et al. (2008); Lewis and Lamb (2003).

\textsuperscript{43} Developed from Literature: Feinberg (2002); McHale and Rotman (2007); Mockford and Barlow (2004); Patterson et al. (2005).

\textsuperscript{44} Developed from Literature: Beeber, et al. (2007); Brown and Young (2005); Ho (2002); Law et al. (2004).
consent to record each interview to ensure she could engage fully in the dialogue. The researcher explained to participants that the recording would only be heard by her, and that the dialogue would be written down so that she could compare all of the participants' ideas. Finally participants were informed that recordings would be destroyed at the end of the research. All interviews were then transcribed verbatim to allow for analysis.

**Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.** Qualitative Analysis was used to analyse the interviews, first individually and then collectively. To ensure an in-depth exploration of the interviewee's perspective, the research used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

**Theory and background of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.** IPA advocates that people are experts about their experiences (Midgley, Target, and Smith, 2006). It therefore offers the unique opportunity to learn about particular topics through the eyes of participants, and to interpret their worldviews (Jarman, Walsh, and De Lacey, 2005; Reid, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005). In addition, IPA encourages researchers to scrutinize data without pressuring it to fit a hypothesis, making it ideal for exploratory studies. The goal of most IPA studies is to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences (Midgley et al., 2006; Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Several key reasons exist for selecting IPA as the analysis technique. First IPA is particularly appropriate for the underlying research idea as it is an inductive approach (Reid et al., 2006). Second, IPA is unique in that it encourages researchers to enter the participants' worlds, while using their background knowledge to interpret the participants' experiences (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Lyons and Coyle, 2007). Third, IPA assumes that researchers are attempting to understand and describe participants' viewpoints rather than explain a 'truth' (Lyons and Coyle, 2007).

**IPA: Step by step.** The researcher used the steps typical of IPA (outlined in various literature, for examples see Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Smith and Eatough, 2006; Smith,

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45 Analysis is being discussed here as it is the same for all interviews.
After completing the interviews and transcribing them verbatim, the researcher reviewed one transcript several times. The researcher then made initial, unfocused notes, and highlighted interesting points in the left hand column. The researcher reread the transcripts and notes, this time documenting emerging themes in the right hand margin and associating between parts of the text. Finally, the researcher created a table of these themes and clustered them, particularly with superordinate themes, subordinate, and quotations. The researcher extracted textual quotations and ensured that the themes were based in the text. Finally the researcher placed this list of themes into a coherent order to clarify connections between themes.

The researcher then read the other interviews, adhering to the same process as above, investigating for new themes and confirming the current list of themes. The initial theme list was modified to include new themes and further supporting quotations. The researcher then reread earlier texts to establish whether newly emerged themes existed in previous interviews. During the analysis, the researcher carefully moved between the transcript description and interpretation. Finally the researcher prioritized the data to create a master list of themes, which included commonalities from all of the interviews, clustered into superordinate, subordinate and quotations (Reid, et al., 2005).

As with all qualitative research, credibility checks were employed in accordance with good practice (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Harris, Pistrang and Barker, 2006). Therefore, a portion of the analyses were reviewed by other researchers to ensure the analysis was coherent and relevant to the interviews (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Silverman, 2006). Differences in opinion were discussed by the researchers and resolutions were reached (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Harris et al., 2006).

46 The findings from the interviews can be found in the appropriate group section. For instance, mother findings can be found in chapter 3 entitled 'Mothers', father findings can be found in chapter 4 entitled 'Fathers' etc.
Phase 2: Questionnaires

In the current research phase 2 (Box 2.2) involved using the analysis from phase 1 to explore participants’ perspectives more widely (e.g. mothers, fathers, coparents, and project workers in other areas of the UK).

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<th>Box 2.2. Summary of the research design and analysis from phase 2</th>
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<td>Phase 2: Questionnaires (Quantitative)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Mass Data Collection)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mothers: N = 85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fathers: N = 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Workers: N = 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis: Multi-Dimensional Scaling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlations</td>
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</table>

**Questionnaires as a method and rationale.** Questionnaires attempt to obtain a better understanding of a particular concept through participants’ perspectives (Clarke, 1999; Owen, 2007). Questionnaires can be previously developed tests which are considered reliable and valid by the research community (Korfmancher et al. 2007), or researchers can develop new ones that test a particular construct (Rubin, 2008). They can be open or closed ended questions, and can be analysed using qualitative and/or quantitative methods (Bernard, 1995; Owen, 2007). Advantages of questionnaires include that they can be completed anonymously, inexpensively, and quickly in many cases (Ososky et al., 2007). Disadvantages of questionnaires include the following: possible low response rates and required level of literacy among participants (Fife-Schaw, 2006a; Weiss, 1998).

Questionnaires were the selected method as they were able to be distributed widely to obtain widespread stakeholder perspectives. Furthermore questionnaires can assess on process and outcome levels to create a comprehensive evaluation and better understand the programme as a whole. In addition, they are commonly applied to parent support programme evaluation (e.g. Korfmancher et al., 2007; Mann et al., 2004; Myers, 1982; Ososky et al., 2007).
Participants. Eighty-five mothers, 37 fathers and 25 project workers completed at least some part of the questionnaire. Two methods were used to recruit parents to complete the questionnaire from the two areas:

Area 1. In one area of Area 1, questionnaires were posted on three separate occasions to parents. For several reasons, the current project workers felt uncomfortable contacting families they had never met to participate. Therefore, the questionnaires and supporting materials were posted with a letter from the present children’s centre manager explaining the importance of the evaluation. The rest of Area 1 used the Area 2 approach.

Area 2. Project workers contacted families to see if they might be willing to complete questionnaires. If a family agreed, project workers took the questionnaires to the families with empty envelopes. The families were asked to complete the questionnaires and then place them in the empty envelopes, sealing the envelope and then signing the seal to ensure anonymity. The project worker then collected the completed questionnaires from the family and returned them to the researcher.

Project workers. The project workers were recruited via the two programmes. They filled out their questionnaires and then posted them to the researcher.

Measures (Appendix C). Whether to use questionnaires considered reliable and valid by the psychological community or to develop new questionnaires was carefully contemplated. Eventually it was decided to ensure the research maintained its commitment to action research and actively engaging stakeholders’ viewpoints. To uphold this commitment, the researcher developed questionnaires based on participants’ viewpoints as analysed in phase 1 and combined them with two standardised measures considered reliable and valid.

Bespoke questionnaires. Questionnaires were designed based on each participant groups’ themes, as is typical of exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2009). Thus, the mother questionnaire was developed from themes from the mothers’ interviews, the father questionnaire was based on themes from the fathers’ interviews, and likewise for

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47 Participant characteristics will be discussed in the specific stakeholder group chapters to provide context and clarity to the analysis.
project workers and coparents. The questionnaires included statements in which participants rated how much they agreed with a statement on a six point scale of nought (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Each statement in the questionnaires was a quote taken directly from the interview transcripts in support of the IPA themes. These statements were made anonymous by ensuring no names or identifying details were included. In addition, terms that might not apply to everyone (e.g. spouse) were amended to ensure they encompassed all participants (e.g. partner).

**Standardised questionnaires.** Two previously standardised questionnaires were included in the parents’ packets to better understand constructs related to parents’ process of change and coparenting practices:

- **Coparenting Questionnaire.** Developed by Margolin et al. (2001) to better understand parents’ perceptions of their coparent on three dimensions: cooperation, triangulation, and conflict. It is a fourteen item questionnaire and asks parents to rate their perceptions of their partner, with five items rating cooperation, four rating triangulation and five rating conflict. This questionnaire was chosen for the current research because it fits closely with the underlying family systems framework for the research. It also assessed partners’ perceptions of one another, which was necessary to better understand the relation between these perceptions, parenting, and programme participation. Cronbach alpha’s range from .69 to .87 indicating high reliability within the scales.

- **University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice.** This questionnaire was developed at the University of Idaho by Shaklee and Demarest (2005) to better understand how parents perceived changing over time due to PAFT participation. The questionnaire assesses a four level construct of parenting practice with knowledge as the first level, ability as the second, confidence as the third, and actions as the final level. They suggest that these build upon one another to create positive parenting. It assesses these four levels using twelve items (three for each level) on a scale of seven responses (0 low to 6 high). In order to achieve pre and post test scores with one administration, they ask parents to rate their parenting practices after they started PAFT and then ask them to rate their parenting practices before they started PAFT. This was selected because it rated PAFT participation specifically and provided
stakeholders' perceptions of their PAFT involvement on four separate dimensions. Test-retest reliability indicated that each item reliability ranged from .76 to .87 (Pearson's R).

Procedure. Wider dissemination: Questionnaires distributed to programme stakeholders in two areas. The questionnaires were disseminated to mothers, fathers and project workers in packets.48

Piloting bespoke questionnaires and integrating feedback. These questionnaires were piloted twice with mothers, fathers and project workers. The initial questionnaires received feedback about being too long and the scoring being unclear. In response the number of statements in each questionnaire was reduced considerably and the format was amended to shorten each questionnaire's length. The original scoring of statements 'not like me at all' (0) to 'very much like me' (5) was changed to strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (5). The new adjusted questionnaire was then piloted and feedback was more positive. Therefore the questionnaires were ready to be disseminated more widely.

Mother questionnaires (Appendix C1). The mother packets included seven questionnaires exclusively for mothers:

- Demographics. This questionnaire asked basic questions about age, ethnicity, employment, and overall scores of parenting and marital satisfaction.
- Parenting as a Mother. This questionnaire asked mothers about their specific experiences of being a mother (e.g. 'During pregnancy, everybody told me I would be fine at mothering').
- Mothering and PAFT. This questionnaire asked mothers about their experiences with PAFT (e.g. 'The mother inside me changed a lot because of PAFT').
- Coparenting as a Mother. This questionnaire asked mothers about their experiences of coparenting (e.g. 'It makes you feel good as a mum when you see your partner helping you out').

48 'Packet' is the term preferred by the parent support programme to describe the questionnaire battery. They felt the term 'packet' would be clear and open for programme participants.
Coparenting and PAFT. This questionnaire asked mothers about their experiences of coparenting and PAFT involvement (e.g. ‘PAFT is not just a mummy thing, daddy can do it as well’).

Coparenting Questionnaire (standardised). This measure aimed to assess parents on three scales of cooperation, triangulation, and conflict in their coparenting relationship.

University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice (standardised). This questionnaire aimed to assess how parents’ perceived knowledge, confidence, abilities, and actions to have changed over time due to PAFT involvement.

Father questionnaires (Appendix C2). The father packets included seven questionnaires exclusively for fathers:

- Demographics. This questionnaire asked basic questions about age, ethnicity, employment, and overall scores of parenting and marital satisfaction.
- Parenting as a Father. This questionnaire asked fathers about their specific experiences of being a father (e.g. ‘A lot of fathering is whether you feel something is right or wrong’).
- Fathering and PAFT. This questionnaire asked fathers about their experiences with PAFT (e.g. ‘As a father you have the opportunity to attend or not attend PAFT visits’).
- Coparenting as a Father. This questionnaire asked fathers about their experiences of coparenting (e.g. ‘I think father involvement in the family has to come through the mother of the family’).
- Coparenting and PAFT. This questionnaire asked fathers about their experiences of coparenting and PAFT involvement (e.g. ‘PAFT is teaching my partner and me to be aware of what things the baby should be doing’).
- Coparenting Questionnaire (standardised). This measure aim to assess parents on three scales of cooperation, triangulation, and conflict in their coparenting relationship.
- University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice (standardised). This questionnaire aimed to assess how parents’ perceived knowledge, confidence, abilities, and actions to have changed over time due to PAFT involvement.
Project worker questionnaires (Appendix C3). Project workers were given one questionnaire with four sections:

- **Demographics.** The first section asked basic questions about gender, age, parenthood, ethnicity, occupation, length of time with PAFT, and included a few open ended questions.

- **PAFT and the community.** This section aimed to probe the connection between the two (e.g. 'In an ideal world it would be great to offer PAFT to every single family in the community').

- **PAFT, project workers and family relationships.** This section aimed to assess PAFT and family relationships to meet families' needs, including ways in which project workers promoted the therapeutic alliance (e.g. 'One of the most important parts of PAFT is empowering parents to parent more confidently').

- **PAFT inclusion of the entire family, including working partners.** This section aimed to consider ways in which PAFT encouraged both parents' involvement in the family (e.g. 'PAFT should leave handouts/activities for parents who are not at the visit').

**Analysis: Multi-dimensional scaling and correlations.** The analysis of the questionnaires took place in stages. After the data were collected, entered into a database and checked for accuracy, the analysis was conducted in four stages:

1. **Non-Metric Multi-dimensional Scaling (MDS)-ALSCAL.** Multiple dimensional-scaling represents data spatially (Everitt and Dunn, 1991). It takes the similarities and differences between variables and places them on a matrix (Kruskal and Wish, 1978). The closer together two points are, the stronger the relationship between them, whereas points that appear farther apart, are less correlated (Kruskal and Wish, 1978). Thus if variable A is correlated highly to variable B, they will appear closer together on a graph. MDS is comparable to factor analysis in that it examines correlations between variables (Schiffman, Reynolds, and Young, 1981).

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49 The findings will be discussed in the following group chapters. However the overall analysis type will be described here as it is the same across participant groups.

50 MDS can be done with 2 or 3-D models. For clarity, only 2-D models are included in this research.
The current research used MDS as it carries few assumptions and is appropriate for most forms of data. In addition, it is ideally used for exploratory work as it does not necessarily impose a model on data. The final reason it was used was because it represented similarity in the data distances and the purpose of the research was to explore underlying judgments in the data, which are both common purposes of MDS (Borg and Groenen, 2005). This allowed the researcher to understand which questions in the questionnaires were related statistically.

The statistical package SPSS-ALSCAL was used to conduct MDS analysis. The important output for interpreting MDS are the matrix (described above), the RSQ and the stress. RSQ is the R squared correlation between distances. This must be as close to one as possible and above .7. Stress measures how much work is put into coordinating distances between variables and these values should be less than .15 (Fife-Schaw, 2006b; Schiffman et al., 1981).

2. **Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha.** The regions identified from the MDS analysis were developed into their own scales using Cronbach's alpha, which provides scores on how likely people were to answer questions the same way. Reliability was also established in these samples on the standardised measures. Scales with an alpha level of .7 or higher were considered reliable, as is often considered best practice for this measure (e.g. Field, 2005; Fife-Schaw, 2006b).

3. **Normal distribution was calculated.** Skewness and kurtosis scores were then calculated on all scales to establish whether the scales were normally distributed to ensure the correct inferential statistics were conducted.

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51 To ensure that missing data did not exclude participants, person mean substitution was used. This technique allowed for participants' information to be included in the analysis who had completed at least half the questions for individual scales.

52 In a few cases (three), Cronbach's alpha levels were slightly below the .7 value considered best practice. In these cases, it was considered adequate due either to the values of the inter-item correlations to be above .3 or due to their placement in the MDS models as highly related.
4. Correlations determined the relationships between scales. Correlations\textsuperscript{53} were then conducted to better understand the relationship between the newly formed scales and the previously standardised measures.

Phase 3: Focus Groups
The final phase (Box 2.3) of the current research was conducting a series of focus groups. The findings from the first two phases of the research were taken back to the field to validate, expand, and explore with programme stakeholders, in separate focus groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2.3. Summary of the research design and analysis from phase 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3: Focus Groups (Qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Findings to the field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 focus group for each stakeholder group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers: N = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers: N = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proj. Workers: N = 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis: Thematic</td>
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</table>

Focus groups as a method and rationale. Focus groups involve convening a group of ‘relevant’ people to discuss specific topics. They offer the opportunity to validate and examine the findings of the first phases of a project (Brooker, Curtan, James and Readhea, 2005; Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Wressle, Eriksson, Fahlander, Hakansson, Jonsson, Martinsson et al., 2008). Keilty, LaRocco, and Casell (2009) point out that focus groups are ideal when research aims to identify major themes based on participants’ viewpoints. Research suggests that using focus group information in conjunction with other forms of analysis can create a clearer picture of the findings (Nabors, Ramos, and Weist, 2001). Many advantages exist to conducting focus groups. One main advantage is that they are a good way to gather a lot of information on values, beliefs and attitudes from numerous people in a relatively short period of time (Salkind, 2006). Another advantage of focus groups is that the

\textsuperscript{53} Scales with normal distribution of skewness and kurtosis \(z\)-scores (within \(+1.96\) to \(-1.96\)), had Pearson’s \(r\) correlations conducted. Scales that were not normally distributed (\(z\)-scores above \(+1.96\) or below \(-1.96\)), had Spearman’s rho correlations conducted.
setting is less artificial than interviews and thus has higher ecological validity (Willig, 2006).

Focus groups have some disadvantages including the following: encouraging all participants to voice their opinions and keeping the focus group on topic (McQueen and Knussen, 2002; Millward, 2006).

Focus groups were selected as they provide an appropriate fit with mixed methods research (Owen, 2007; Rubin, 2008), with their ability to examine meaning making (Dallos and Vetere, 2005) and their application of group processes (Millward, 2006). Furthermore, many parent support programmes, including PAPT, use group meetings to aid parents. Conducting focus groups helped illuminate group process aspects of parenting support while exploring parents' understanding of the key findings from previous phases of this research. In addition, focus groups are regularly used when evaluating parenting programmes (e.g. Campbell-Grossman, Hudson, Keating-Lefler, and Fleck, 2005; Law et al., 2009).

**Participants.** Three focus groups were conducted with stakeholders: with ten mothers attending, five fathers, and ten project workers. Each focus group contained some participants who had participated in phases 1 and 2 or just phase 2, while others had not participated in any previous phases. This range of participants proved ideal as it meant that stakeholders conveyed various perspectives on parenting and PAPT, which provided rich conversation.

**Measures** (Appendix D). Focus groups primarily rely on the group participants' interaction with less consideration for a pre-defined list of questions to be asked by a single researcher (Barbour, 2007). However the current research used focus groups to probe the findings, thus a list of key findings specific to each group was used in the focus group. Information was obtained about topics that emerged from the previous interview and

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54 Participant characteristics will be discussed in the specific stakeholder group chapters to provide context and clarity to the analysis.

55 Present day literature indicates that five to seven questions is ideal for focus groups (e.g. Millward, 2006). Thus each schedule has six main questions (two for each section) and the questions underneath (bullet-pointed) can be used as prompts if the previous questions are not understood or not generating discussion among participants.
questionnaire phases including the programme's perceived usefulness, parental roles, and overall experiences with parenting and PAFT.

**Procedures.** Focus groups lasted between one and two hours, in line with previous focus group research (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Millward, 2006). Focus groups running much longer than one hour can be taxing to the participants, and any shorter than one hour is probably not long enough to explore various ideas in a group framework (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Millward, 2006).

Before each group began, the researcher sought and received consent to audiotape record the dialogue of the focus group. The researcher explained that the reason to record the focus groups is so that she can engage fully in the discussion, and act as the facilitator. In addition, the researcher explained that the recording would only be heard by her. Participants were also informed that the dialogue would be written down so that the researcher could better understand the participants' perspectives and compare all of the groups' ideas. She also stated that the information would be destroyed at the end of the research.

At the beginning and end of each group, the researcher asked that everyone in the group mind the confidentiality of the other participants. To create a safe environment for the participants and the group more generally, all participants were required to agree that the information provided during the group was not to be discussed elsewhere or with anyone else.

At the beginning of each focus group, it was explained that the focus group was being conducted to get stakeholders' feedback on the data analysis thus far, with the intention of verifying, expanding and ensuring nothing significant was missed in the evaluation.

**Analysis: Thematic Analysis.**56 Because the aim of the focus group was to validate and expand on the previous findings, thematic analysis was used to analyse the focus groups' data. In addition, the themes being investigated were largely known, making thematic

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56 Analysis is being discussed here as it is the same for all focus groups.
analysis the best option. An important aspect of thematic analysis is to allow for themes other than those expected to be found. Therefore the analysis consisted of studying not only which themes were supported by the group, but also whether any new themes emerged. Each focus group had additional findings that had not previously been considered at any point in the research. These new points were perhaps conveyed because the group environment encouraged discussion among the stakeholders.

Thematic analysis proved the ideal choice for various reasons. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a flexible and thus applicable method to many types of qualitative data. Many authors argue that thematic analysis assumes that the researchers have a sense of what they are looking for and is ideal for ‘bottom-up’ research (Crawford, Brown, and Majomi, 2008). In addition, when attempting to access similarities and differences in participant experiences, thematic analysis encourages this process (Breakwell, 2006).

To conduct the analysis, the audio recordings for each group were transcribed verbatim. As some of the groups had a great deal of noise in the background, several different audio recordings were listened to in order to ensure accuracy. After reading through the transcript several times, it was searched for specific quotes that supported previous research findings. These were taken into a separate list. The transcript was then assessed for parts that did not fit into these themes. These created another list of new themes that emerged from the focus groups. The rest of the transcript was then analysed with both lists to ascertain whether each section fit onto one list or the other.

In keeping with good practices for qualitative analysis, an independent audit was carried out (Dallos and Vetere, 2005) in which a researcher unknown to the research assessed one third of each transcript using the themes identified by the first researcher. This independent audit was completed with very high accuracy. Differences in opinion were discussed and resolutions were reached (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Harris et al., 2006).
Field Work, Ethical Considerations, and Gaining Access

As previously mentioned, a main objective of the current research was to base the evaluation in the context of the programme. Therefore it required fieldwork. Some authors suggest that this is the best way to understand a programme so that it can be evaluated. For example, Weiss (1998) suggests that evaluators come to a programme, conduct the methodology and analysis, and then leave. She believes this to be a major mistake, as without understanding the programme, one will not be able to design, develop and implement a meaningful evaluation with sound recommendations. Carpenter (2007) furthers this stating that without an in-depth appreciation of a programme, conducting a meaningful design will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. To overcome these issues, the researcher spent three months with the programme, going on home visits (with parental consent), attending group meetings as an observer, and meeting with the project workers. Only then was an appropriate method for the evaluation, based in stakeholder perspectives, developed.

Another way that field work is central to programme evaluation is that evaluations must be considered in their contextual environment. Several researchers suggest that the context in which a programme not only operates, but also is delivered to a population, is going to influence perceptions of the findings (Bamberger et al., 2006; Barnett, Bell, and Carey, 1999). The current research existed in two areas of the UK. The original PAFT programme in which the researcher made contact in Area 1 was coming under pressure to be evaluated. They knew they had neither the time nor the expertise to conduct an evaluation. Thus they began actively pursuing an evaluator. As a programme they were keen and active to assist in any way possible to undertake the task. However some of the other PAFT programmes were less enthused when they were asked by their manager to join the evaluation. Field work is also important to evaluation research particularly in seeking out participants to understand effectiveness. Coe et al. (2008) suggests that in order to obtain participant perspectives, one must be willing to go into the field to gain these.

57 All phases of the research received ethical approval from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee, and letters of approval are available upon request.
Throughout the research, ethical considerations were taken into account due to the importance of doing so when undertaking any research, but more so when research is conducted as field work. Due to the programme already existing within the parents' context, duty of care had typically already been addressed by the project workers. However there is always the possibility that child protection issues will be named during research interactions and plans were developed in case this occurred. Fortunately no need arose regarding child welfare concerns throughout the research.

Access remained a negotiation throughout the research. Because the research was being conducted with a currently running programme, there was a particular need for sensitivity. The project workers wanted to ensure no families felt pressured to join any research they did not want to, and thus, at each stage of the programme, they contacted the families. Thus when interviews were being conducted, they asked parents' permission to give the researcher the parents' contact details. While all of the project workers involvements with the research were key, and they were mostly incredibly helpful, not being allowed access to parents made for some difficulties (discussed in the limitations section, discussion). In addition, it meant that it remained crucial that the researcher and programme providers stayed on good terms. Because the programme could withdraw their participation at any time, it meant that when things went not according to plan (only occasionally) the researcher could only call/ask the programme so many times for documents, meeting dates, etc. This caused some delays and required flexibility throughout the research.

Self-Reflexivity58

As with all qualitative research, self-reflexivity is a key component. Some argue that this becomes particularly important in real-world contexts such as programme evaluation (Robson, 2002) and when mixed methods research designs are used (Philip, 1998). Robson explains that the real threat to validity in these contexts is being unwilling to consider alternative explanations to findings.

58 Self-reflexivity is illustrated at the end of each chapter. It can be identified by the heading and is written in italics.
Various other methods were used to promote self-reflexivity throughout the research. The main strategy employed was in keeping a research journal that I routinely wrote my thoughts and reflections. I spent a great deal of time recording my observations and reflections, particularly after the monthly group sessions I attended and conversations that I had with mothers as a part of the groups. I also revisited my thoughts at various times when I was attempting to interpret meanings to my findings. One experience that is particularly of note is after the piloting of the questionnaires, one mother of a two year old and eight months pregnant with a second child, began a conversation with me about the questionnaires. She expressed her puzzlement that the questionnaires indicated that 'I should be thinking about my husband'. This re-framed my thinking in that perhaps many of the mothers did not particularly pay attention to their partners, which provided an additional component to my views. Numerous conversations occurred like this with mothers and project workers over the two years I spent with them in the field, and they certainly influenced my thinking of the overall PhD and the way in which I analysed the information provided. I regularly went back through these notes to re-consider previous points and establish connections between discussions I had and the findings in front of me.

Conclusions
Chapter 2 has explained the parenting programme that was evaluated and the methodology for the current research. It began by describing the PAFT programme, then mixed methods research, particularly exploratory mixed methods design in relation to evaluation research and the two underpinning approaches. The next part developed the phases for the research. By using the design detailed above, process and outcome remained central to the current research. The objective was to describe the research design and framework, as the following results chapters will provide stakeholder group findings in this three phase structure.
Chapter 3: Results
Mothers on mothering and PAFT: ‘PAFT gives me confidence because I see that I can be a good mum’ (Ally, 559-560)

Introduction
This chapter looks specifically at mothers’ experiences of mothering, perceptions of their family relationships, and their participation in parenting programmes. As mentioned in chapter 1, mothers are an important group to study due to their central importance on children, families, and parenting programmes. This chapter reports the findings from the mothers’ research to discuss and provide interpretations. The findings from each phase will be reported leading to a general discussion on specific mothers’ perspectives that will conclude the chapter.

Phase 1: Interviews
Participants
Interviews were conducted with six mothers from varying backgrounds. Several mothers were experiencing difficulties with their children of varying magnitudes with respect to sleeping, eating, developmental issues, children with behavioural difficulties, a premature infant, difficulties with social services and becoming a mother at a young age. At the time the interviews took place, all mothers were over the age of 21, heterosexual, and living with their partner. For further information see Table 3.1.

59 For more information on the rationale for studying mothers, see chapter 1.
Table 3.1

Descriptions of Mothers Interviewed about their Experiences during Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers reported reasons for participating in PAFT</th>
<th>Years with PAFT</th>
<th>Children sex and ages (in years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn: New to area and child exhibiting behavioural difficulties</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 daughter (5) 1 son (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia: Anxiety issues, chaotic household and child exhibits behavioural difficulties</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 biological son (3) 1 stepson (8) 2 foster sons (6, 9) 1 daughter (6 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth: General questions about child development and child exhibiting speech difficulties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 daughter (5) 1 son (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan: Became a mother at age 18 and child was born 14 weeks prematurely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 daughters (2.5, 4 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally: Various difficulties with social services, formerly using drugs, on child abuse register, children truant from school, and became a mother at 14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 sons (11, 8) 1 daughter (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine: General question about child development and difficult transition to motherhood</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1 son (1.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Information reported was stated by mothers during the interviews.

Analysis (for sample transcripts, see Appendix E2)

Using IPA (described in chapter 2), the analysis yielded six superordinate themes (for full breakdown of each theme from quotes to subordinate to superordinate themes, see Appendix E1), listed in Table 3.2. These themes provided a platform for understanding these mothers’ experiences in mothering and PAFT involvement, and will be discussed in turn.
Table 3.2

Superordinate Theme Table from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Mothers’ Interviews

| Theme 1: Mothers valued connections between PAFT, community resources and the overall community network |
| Theme 2: Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement over time and mothers’ perceived success |
| Theme 3: Process of change in mothering: Mothers perceived that various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours, overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses |
| Theme 4: Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as information and the empowerment-based model |
| Theme 5: Family as a whole: Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems that were valued by PAFT |
| Theme 6: Self-other interaction: Mothers perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them |

One superordinate theme that emerged was that mothers’ perceptions of community resources encouraged mothers’ active participation within the community. The mothers attributed this to PAFT involvement. Mothers gained knowledge on the offerings of the community and were more open to engaging in community events. PAFT both provided information on the community offerings and encouraged mothers to participate in the community.

1a) Social networks were increased through PAFT participation. Mothers felt that PAFT’s support encouraged their community involvement including through social networking. Mothers expressed that the community contained a number of resources, and were able to access them with PAFT’s support:
... it was only one of the group meetings that I met [another mum] who runs the toddler
group in [area] and um my project worker introduced me to [other mum]...and the next
day 'cause [PAFT group] was on a Thursday and [other mum] was 'well come along
tomorrow' and I was 'okay' and I was like 'oh I suppose I'd better go now' and so we
went along and now we go every Friday. Because otherwise I probably wouldn't have had
the confidence to go along because not knowing anybody in the area and no one to go
with you kind of feel a bit out of place in these things but meeting [other mum] when I
got there she came over and talk to me and introduced me and people already knew that
I lived here... (Susan, 201-211)

PAFT played a key role in Susan's ability to become involved in the wider community, and
through PAFT her social network grew considerably. PAFT's connection to community
services being perceived as positive is supported by Allen (2007), who investigated mothers' perceptions of home visiting services and found that mothers felt connections to other services would have much improved their interactions within the community. Many researchers have found that the social network is central to promoting positive mothering (Bornstein, Putnick, Suwalsky, and Gini, 2006; Gomby, 1999). Walker and Riley (2001) suggested that parenting programmes exist within mothers' social networks, and thus programmes encourage social networks. Similar to Susan, Patricia explains that through PAFT she connected to other mothers who experience similar issues:

...another mum has the same problems as me, her child's very much like mine...he comes to the toddler-group and he's the same. He's always at the doors, always here, always there, so it was quite nice that at PAFT we managed to get to talk to one each other. (Patricia, 686-690)

Patricia illustrated that group settings give mothers an outlet for feeling that they are not the only ones that have experienced issues (Pearson and Thurston, 2006). In considering mothers' engagement in home visiting services, McGuigan, Katzev, and Pratt (2004) found that certain factors influenced mothers' involvements. If mothers did not receive other community services they needed, or were isolated from social networks, they were less likely to engage. Therefore programmes such as PAFT provide an invaluable resource to engaging mothers by encouraging their involvement in the community.

1b) Mothers perceived their involvement with community resources positively and felt encouraged to access these resources through their PAFT participation. As
in McGuigan et al.'s study, PAFT encourages mothers' involvement in the community. Some mothers felt that PAFT encouraged them to seek community resources in promoting their children's development, such as Beth, whose son exhibited a language delay:

...what is the right way to go about seeing the health visitor and all that... I forgot the health visitors were there to be honest and I don't even know who my health visitor is 'cause they 'cause they're scarce...[health visitors] you don't really get much support from them so it's actually nice to have PAFT and she pointed me in the right direction as to where to go... (Beth, 664-675)

Beth explained that the lack of health visitors' involvement in her child's life meant that by the time her child's language difficulties became clear, she had forgotten about the health visitors' existence. Therefore her project worker assisted her in contacting the health visitors to ensure her son received the required services for his potential delay. This illustrates that PAFT provides a helpful community service by referring possible developmental delays to the appropriate support service, before children reach school age when issues may be more ingrained and thus more difficult to resolve.

1c) Family's connection to the community was promoted through PAFT participation. Ally described numerous difficulties with services during her interview, but explained that her project worker was a key person in her life. Through this relationship, she felt that she had someone on her side with social services, and this support aided her parenting practices:

...it just helps when you have somebody who is in a seat of authority [project worker] that isn't stuck up their own ass who just says how it is and that's what she [project worker] done and obviously yeah at these [child at risk meetings] they were sayin' to her 'you know if you've got any concerns' which she would have to answer 'cause that's her job and she went 'no, no there's no concerns' which is nice and 'if you're services are required I will' and so it's little things like that is what helped I think... (Ally, 933-939)

One aspect of Ally's description is that she placed the project worker as being on her side, in collaboration with her, against the social services, and this encouraged her parenting. Ally also reported that PAFT participation encouraged her involvement in the community:

62 The project worker-family relationship will be discussed more fully in the next theme.
... more so in the school side of things 'cause [project worker] gives you that confidence to get involved...to get involved with it you don't have to worry what anyone else thinks 'cause you're doin' it for you and your kids (Ally, 614-618)

Parent involvement is crucial to children's success in schooling (Pfannenstiel et al., 2002; Zigler et al., 2008) and PAFT encouraged Ally's involvement. It is of note that the reason she suggested for not being involved previously was 'worry about what everyone else thinks' which demonstrated that she was concerned that others judged her, either her looks (she has some drug related physical alterations) or herself as a person. But she explained that she and her children were more important to her than the judgements of others, and she perceived PAFT as having increased her confidence in order to get involved.

Theme 2: Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement over time and mothers' perceived success

2a) Mothers perceived project workers using various techniques to engage and support them, such as being friendly, supportive, and providing mothers with information

2b) The mother and child relationship with the project worker was vital to programme success

One particular notion developed elsewhere and supported here was the family-project worker relationship. One issue investigated in some depth was mothers' views of their practitioner. The supportive and non-judgemental practitioner influenced mothers continued participation in services. It has been suggested that this relationship is a key factor in engaging mothers (Korfmacher, Adam, Ogawa, and Egeland, 1997) and in the process of change (Kazdin, Whitley, and Marciano, 2006; Pharis and Levin, 1991; Stolk et al., 2008). In fact, Korfmacher et al. (2007) found that mothers' reports of their relationships with their project worker were the central factor to mothers' maintaining involvement in a programme. The current research found support for the importance of the relationship, especially with mothers often indicating that their project workers were synonymous with PAFT, which is suggested in previous research (Gomby, 1999).

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63 The role of 'other people' as influencing mothering will be discussed below in theme 6.
64 Increasing confidence will be discussed further below in themes 3 and 4.
2a) Mothers perceived project workers using various techniques to engage and support them, such as being friendly, supportive, and providing mothers with information. Mothers attributed many of their perceived positive outcomes to their project worker specifically, rather than PAFT as a programme. Mothers described their project worker as a friend or friendly:

...[home visit] was like my friend turning up every month for a coffee and a chat who helps me understand my child and then she goes away again (Carolyn, 130-132)

...it’s a very friendly relationship I don’t suppose I wouldn’t say it was we’re friends or it’s a friendship in the way that we would meet up with her in a non-PAFT terms cause that would be a bit strange but it’s definitely been a very friendly, supportive relationship and I’ve always felt that I could be really open and honest with her about everything that is on my mind and not just direct not just directly baby development type stuff... (Elaine, 408-413)

Both mothers described their project workers positively and indicated an appreciation of their relationships. By perceiving their project worker as ‘friendly’, they may have been more able to have a collaborative relationship between the mother and project worker, which is vital to programme participation (Barlow et al., 2003; Manby, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). Elaine also suggested that the relationship allowed her to discuss a variety of issues, not simply those about her child, meaning that the relationship was wide ranging and not specific to one topic. By providing support to mothers for various issues, research indicates that parents are more fully assisted, which in turn promotes positive parenting (Beckwith, 2005).

2b) The mother and child relationship with the project worker was vital to programme success. Another important aspect of this theme was that mothers’ perceived their child’s enjoyment as encouragement for staying involved over time:

... [child] enjoys it as well...but he’s always shy to begin with but then he’d be looking in [project worker’s] bag to see what was coming next and you know and everything that she did... (Beth, 182-186)

...[child] really enjoys it and because I think the child enjoys it I think you tend to stay involved a lot longer and don’t tend to like letting it go... (Patricia, 267-268)
Beth and Patricia both discussed that their children enjoyed PAFT which encouraged them to stay involved. The mutual aspects of the project worker-child relationship provided a passage between the project worker and the mother, a potential engagement strategy that would aid a large number of parents in future parenting programmes.

Mothers indicated that they appreciated the continuity in the project worker-family relationship by always interacting with the same project worker:

...you always see the same person she knew [daughter] since she was a baby...so she knows her birth circumstances they know her history which is really important that you don't see someone different every time...I think the health visitors changed since um [daughter] was a baby (Susan, 1079-1083)

One mother in particular suggested her project worker created change in her mothering. Ally attributed a great deal of her perceived improved mothering to her project worker. A few examples include:

...[project worker's] very, very helpful...it's made me a better mother seeing her, 100% I know that for a fact (Ally, 173-175)

...all right I'm gonna get her [child] doin' that so that when [project worker] comes around and so I always want to impress her so 'look what [child] can do?' And she'd say 'but that's 'cause you taught her'... I'd go 'yeah I suppose I did' (Ally, 551-556)

...I have been a drug addict yeah I have a had all these problems but I can a be a normal whatever normal is I can be a normal mum...like [project worker] said 'you've got nothing to be ashamed of Al.' You and she always kept sayin' 'you're a good mum, you're a good mum. You keep your kids clean, fed, they're polite you're a good...' and it just gives you that confidence... (Ally, 568-576)

Ally expressed her strong belief that the project worker made her a better mother through her support. The project worker’s opinion was clearly valued and vital to Ally’s ability to change her parenting practices. Of note is that due to Ally’s upbringing being in and out of foster care, having her first child at 14 and continual problems with social services, her project worker may have been the first person who was reliable and encouraged her in parenting. It seems likely that she feels an attachment to her project worker, an attachment that has been illustrated as important in previous research (Vetere and Dallos, 2008). This
secure attachment relationship encouraged her to interact more positively with her own children.

As demonstrated by other studies (Kazdin et al., 2006; Pharis and Levin, 1991; Stolk et al., 2008), but providing first-hand illustrations here from mothers’ perspectives, the project worker-family relationship was essential to programme engagement and involvement over time.

**Theme 3: Process of change in mothering: Mothers perceived that various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours and overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses**

- 3a) Sense of self in mothering included transitioning to being a mother
- 3b) Increasing mothers’ knowledge, empathy and child-centred perspectives played an important part in mothers’ understanding of their child
- 3c) Reflection was important to adapting mothering practices
- 3d) Maternal discourses influenced mothers’ perceptions of themselves as mothers
- 3e) Role of education in parent support programmes for reassuring and promoting positive child development and mothers’ consideration for children

The process of change in mothering is greatly influenced by a number of factors. Five subordinate themes comprised this theme, which illustrates its particular complexity. As mentioned previously, knowing the ‘active ingredients’ in promoting change is central to understanding and promoting change in others (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Sroufe et al., 2005).

**3a) Sense of self in mothering included transitioning to being a mother.** When becoming a mother, many mothers felt that their sense of self adapted for their new role. Susan explained that when she first became pregnant and considered the baby being born, she thought she would know what to do:

> I just thought I’d get it all from books and go down to toddler groups and find other women and stuff and then I was like ‘Oh my God what do I do with this little baby’? (Susan, 885-888)
Thus, Susan was not concerned about becoming a mother until she actually had her baby, when she realised how unprepared she actually was. Similarly Elaine suggested that:

...it was quite a shock initially I remember during the first few weeks thinking oh my God it’s just me and this little thing now and how am I going to entertain him both of us all day and am I going to go mad... (Elaine, 69-71)

Elaine’s shock was based on the transition to motherhood. This quote conveyed several issues, such as feeling alone in caretaking (‘it’s just me’) and becoming a mother, which led to feelings of being unsure what to do. She also called her child a ‘little thing’, suggesting that he was not a person, but rather an indescribable aspect of her life. Furthermore she saw her child as almost a guest by saying ‘entertain him, both of us all day’, which sounds like a chore, and by using ‘entertain’ indicating that she was providing a production.

3b) Increasing mothers’ knowledge, empathy and child-centred perspectives played an important part in mothers’ understanding of their child. Elaine explained that the negative concern expressed above is temporary:

...[knowledge] grown hugely because well before you have a baby most people don’t know much about kids you know you want them but um you want to be a mum but you don’t really know what’s coming or what it’s going to be like and it’s a learning process (Elaine, 610-614)

Elaine expressed that her desire to be a mother was important, despite not knowing much about being a mother. This indicates that the lack of knowledge is a part of a typical mothers’ experience. Research has shown that many mothers feel they have little knowledge of children in general, including appropriate expectations and overall child development (Conrad, Gross, Fogg, and Ruchala, 1992; Culp, Culp, Noland, and Anderson, 2006; Dix, 2007; Stiefel and Renner 2004). Some studies report as high as 70% of mothers do not feel they have adequate knowledge to care for their young child (Neuhauser, Constantine, Sokai-Gutierrez, Obarski, Clayton, et al., 2007). However Elaine indicated that having the motivation to ‘want to be a mum’ created a desire to participate in the ‘learning process’. By suggesting mothering as a process, she further implied that mothering is adapting, evolving, and changing over time, which perhaps gave her room for development in her role. The similarity between the experiences of Elaine and Susan suggests that
concerns about the transition to motherhood is potentially an issue for mothers after their child is born, but under certain circumstances mothers can overcome these concerns successfully.

Mothers’ cognitions about their children were in some cases fairly negative. As research suggested that mothers’ negative attributions influenced the mothers’ behaviours with their children (Deater-Deckard et al., 2005; Dollberg et al., 2010), it was important to understand why. For instance, Carolyn and Patricia described their children as difficult:

...with [child] it’s just this ongoing struggle (Carolyn, 91-92)

I used to call [child] toad the monster... (Patricia, 684-685)

Both Patricia and Carolyn depicted their children as difficult, and research indicates that this is going to make mothering the children more difficult (Benoit et al., 1997; Deater-Deckard et al., 2005). By viewing their children this way, these mothers were more likely to see their children negatively, meaning that they may place blame on their child rather than excuse them or re-frame their behaviour, even if the children’s behaviours were developmentally appropriate (Culp et al., 2006; Dollberg et al., 2010; Lundahl, et al., 2006).

One way in which PAFT helped mothers with these behaviours was encouraging mothers’ child-centred perspectives (Balbernie, 2003; Kochanska, Aksaon, Knaack, and Rhines, 2004; Rosenblum, McDonough, Sameroff, and Muzik, 2008) and considering mind-mindedness (Meins, 2004). Beth suggested that by being more child-centred:

I could understand why they were doing things more and so in that respect you put yourself in their shoes and could understand why they you know I don’t know say crying for at that moment when there’s a tiredness and all that sort of thing...appreciate what is going on in their little minds... all you can do is go by what you see isn’t it? Why are you crying? Just shut up' so it makes you think you try to be calm... (Beth, 751-761)

Becoming more child-centred by using mind-mindedness, Beth reported being calmer and more understanding of her children and more able to ‘appreciate’ her children. By having the two sided view, she took away the negative perspectives and encouraged the positive. This
demonstrates a need for programmes to encourage mothers to take their children's perspectives and see the best way to help them through this viewpoint.

3c) Reflection was important to adapting mothering practices. Empathy for their children and mothers' self-realisation go hand-in-hand. For example, Ally suggested that self-realisation helped her greatly in improving her parenting practices:

...realising that it's not stuff they want, [children] just want you... you don't have to give them anything just give 'em you and that's enough...(368-375)

...I'd see shit I can do that, I can I can be a good mmm, this is me bein' a good mmm, Oh my God... (539-560)

These examples illustrated that Ally's realisation abilities assisted her in mothering which suggested a cyclical process in which confidence, realisation, and being capable with her children was possible. Research supports this finding as mothers who reflect on their behaviours are more sensitively in responding to their children's needs (Page, Combs-Orme, and Cain., 2007; Rosenblum et al., 2008), have children that express emotion more appropriately, display higher levels of empathy, and have securely attached children (Kochanska et al., 2004; Rush, Shelden, and Hanft, 2003).

3d) Maternal discourses influenced mothers' perceptions of themselves as mothers. Mothers reported that maternal discourses influenced their perceptions of themselves. One mother who experienced these discourses was Patricia, who used words like 'failure' to describe her sense of self as a mother:

...all the blame comes back onto the parents and obviously you haven't done something right and that's why baby's so clingy and that's why the baby won't go to anybody and because then I wouldn't leave him with anybody because I was too worried to everybody then got 'she doesn't leave him with me' and everything like that and it all goes in a big swings round really so that you feel like a big failure. (Patricia, 121-6)

Patricia felt 'blamed' for her child's behaviour. Of note is that she used 'parents' rather than the first person (e.g. 'me', 'my') in part of her description, possibly meaning she was trying to

65 The use of the 'other' in this quote is important as well, but this will be discussed in theme 6 below.
make it less personal and to suggest that this is generalisable to all parents/mothers. Mother blame is of particular importance in Patricia’s statement, and this may be due to feeling unable to meet societal demands placed on mothers to have a well-behaved child (Caplan and Caplan, 1999). Therefore she internalised this problem and developed a coping mechanism that attempted to ignore other people’s influence. Kane et al. (2007) reported this phenomenon as common, suggesting that oftentimes parents felt stigmatised due to their children’s behaviour, and this made them less likely to access support.

3e) Role of education in parent support programmes for reassuring and promoting positive child development and mothers’ consideration for children. The education that PAFT provided, encouraged mothers positively in their parenting. Susan explained that PAFT helped by reassuring her that her premature infant was developing appropriately:

\[
\text{I always said to [project worker] 'oh is she really behind'? 'Cause you know I was worried that she would be really behind but um she was like 'no, no she's fine you know for her size she's doing well'}... \text{(Susan, 111-116)}
\]

Patricia also described how PAFT assisted her with her child:

\[
\text{...[PAFT] made everything a lot easier...every time [project worker] used to come out it used to be at my worst point and then she used to come out and tell me what he should be doing and of course he's always ticked all the milestones and that was great and then she would just go over any problems and things that we had like she would go through the sleep patterns and things and try to put a few little things in place and it was also so much more encouraging...} \text{(Patricia, 130-136)}
\]

Susan and Patricia emphasized that not only did PAFT make things easier, but in seeing their children as developing at an appropriate rate, they saw PAFT as supporting them through information and reassurance. Research supports their view that encouraging mothers’ understanding of appropriate expectations for their children eases difficulties in the parent-child relationships (Culp et al., 2006; Stiefel and Renner, 2004). Research further

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66 One aspect of the process of change is the role that PAFT plays in adapting mothering practices. This theme is discussed more broadly below in theme four (programme elements) but is initially explored here as it connects specifically to change in mothering.
indicates that supporting mothers through educating them on understanding appropriate developmental expectations is one way of assisting mothers (Curtner-Smith, Culp, Culp, Scheib, Owen, Tilley, et al., 2006). Furthermore by PAFT addressing these mothers’ concerns, research indicates that parenting difficulties are eased (Kaitz, 2007). Patricia expressed that by being reassured, she was able to move on to specific issues she was having valuing the positive advice offered by PAFT:

I think probably without PAFT I probably would end up being depressed or something like that because of all the worries and everything that was going on... (Patricia 625-7)

Patricia’s point here about developing mental health issues due to the multiple stressors is supported in the literature (Waylen and Stewart-Brown, 2009). Families living in multiple stressful circumstances find it difficult to engage with a group programme outside the home, and thus more tailored/targeted services need to be provided to such parents (Patterson, Mockford, et al., 2002). Both family and societal environments create the framework in which women initially become mothers. Within these contexts, mothers are expected to create a relationship with their child, while also negotiating a range of other issues (Appleyard et al., 2005; Forgays and Forgays, 1993; Sokolowski, Hans, Bernstein, and Cox, 2007). However research indicates that parenting programmes can also support mothers in these environments, assisting them in negotiating the wide range of issues they face, and thus alleviating stress (Chazen-Cohen et al., 2007; Manby, 2005).

**Theme 4: Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as information and the empowerment-based model**

4a) Parenting programmes that assert that parents are always trying the best they can, empower mothers in parenting

4b) Role of group meetings and home visits in PAFT success

4c) Maternal stress and anxiety hindered parenting practices. PAFT helped in various ways, including behavioural suggestions and challenging negative ideas

4d) PAFT information and reassurance aided mothers’ confidence and relationships with their children

Mothers spoke very highly of their participation in PAFT. They suggested numerous
components that engaged them and encouraged their involvement in the programme. This theme looked specifically at PAFT programme elements that mothers perceive as supporting them.

4a) Parenting programmes that assert that parents are always trying the best they can, empower mothers in parenting. Empowerment-based models are well known to encourage positive parenting practices (MacLeod and Nelson, 2000; McAllister and Thomas, 2007). This means finding strengths of a family (or mother) and building on those, instead of focusing on issues that are going badly (as in deficit-based models). That PAFT is an empowerment-based model was seen in numerous mothers’ perspectives:

*Everything was always encouraging very positive nu never ever put me down or anything like that everything was always 'yep very good you’re doing the right thing but let’s try this'... 'Cause it was so positive and she was never 'I know you’re doing the wrong thing'... she put it in a way that was very encouraging.* (Patricia, 157-167)

...like if I said ‘oh is this wrong?’ [Project worker] wouldn’t say ‘oh yes that’s terrible’ you know ‘oh God she is so far behind.’ She’d just say ‘oh well if you do this, then she’ll start doin’ this’. But she had a way of encouraging her to do this and this and just showing where to run encourage [daughter], point her in the right directions... (Susan, 388-392)

Both Susan and Patricia expressed how PAFT encouraged their parenting through positive attitudes, which provides evidence for using the strengths-based model (MacLeod and Nelson, 2000; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). Both of these mothers also suggested that PAFT fit into their needs as a parent.

4b) Role of group meetings and home visits in PAFT success. Mothers perceived that home visiting aided families in their own environment, and mothers felt able to get support from the group meetings:

...support at home and then support outside as well where you meet new people... (Beth, 69-70)

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67 One key aspect that mothers valued is the project worker relationship; however this was its own theme and discussed above.
if you had a problem with your child, you could see the project worker and then two weeks later you could go to the meeting and say how things are going and you get that little more support... (Carolyn, 60-63)

Beth and Carolyn both described the combined support as positive. Both perceived the combination of home visiting and group meetings as a positive aspect of PAFT, which is consistent with research indicating the benefits of home and group settings for parenting programmes (Moran et al., 2004; Moran and Ghate, 2005).

4c) Maternal stress and anxiety hindered parenting practices. PAFT helped in various ways, including behavioural suggestions and challenging negative ideas.
Many mothers expressed that PAFT helped them with the stress and anxiety around parenting they felt:

...[books are] structured by months and it says by each month your child should be doing these things and maybe doing these and may possibly I don't know, there are 4 categories that maybe but there is one definite they should be and you read and think 'oh shit he's not'... it has definitely made me a bit paranoid about the development stuff but then having [project worker] and PAFT put it in context and say 'well actually there is an awful lot variation on when babies do certain things' (Elaine, 301-307)

I did used to get so stressed with him I just constantly wanted to shout at him all the time and stuff I was constantly nearly in tears all the time um one minute things would be all right things would just escalate and be completely out of control um then [project worker] used to bring me back down... (Patricia, 746-50)

PAFT was able to alleviate Elaine’s and Patricia’s concerns by placing their children’s development in the setting or ‘context’ in which they lived. A great deal of research indicates that mothers’ stress and anxiety has negative long term consequences on their child’s adjustment because mothers experiencing these difficulties are likely to have decreased positive interactions with their children (Chazen-Cohen et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2008; Kaitz and Maytal, 2005). Therefore programmes that assist mothers experiencing such difficulties can help mothers cope in their role and their interactions with their children (E. Craig, 2004; Kaitz, 2007).
4d) PAFT information and reassurance aided mothers' confidence and relationship with their children. Several mothers described feeling that PAFT information and reassurance encouraged their mothering practices:

...[PAFT] highlighted the things you didn't do and you thought 'oh thank God'. So a lot of the time it just sort of guided you down a good path... PAFT helps you see things that are specific to your children. (Carolyn, 368-375)

...I think I probably expect more from [child] than what um you know what she should be able to do...PAFT would say 'well no she shouldn't be doing that, don't worry'...a lot easier then because if I expect her to be able to do these things and she can't do them and then someone says it's okay she doesn't have to do them then it'll take the pressure off (Susan, 927-942)

Confidence as a parent...[project worker] said 'oh that's going well' then I must be doing an okay job than there so yeah. So your self-esteem as a parent then it kind of goes np (Beth, 696-701)

Various aspects of the information provided by PAFT helped these mothers, including guidance (Allen, 2007; Coleman and Karraker, 2003), appropriate expectations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2006; Stiefel and Renner, 2004) and confidence (Marshall and Lambert, 2006; Morawska and Sanders 2007; Porter and Hsu, 2003). By supporting mothers in several categories, PAFT gave mothers assistance through reassurance and programme information.

Theme 5: Family as a whole: Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems that were valued by PAFT

5a) The father's role in families influenced PAFT participation, such that the mother-father relationship was central to father programme involvement

5b) Families interacted as dyads, triads and a whole

5c) Interaction within families was valued and encouraged by PAFT participation

Mothers reported perceiving the family as a whole, but then explained other aspects of their families in dyads and triads. This theme examines the connections mothers felt existed between the relationships.

5a) The father's role in families influenced PAFT participation, such that the mother-father relationship was central to father programme involvement. If the
mother did not see the father as being involved in the family, she did not see him as engaging with PAFT. Mothers who perceived their partners as working with them in parenting, also perceived their partners as interested in participating directly or indirectly in PAFT:

... [PAFT] wasn't sort of a mummy thing if daddy came home from work daddy could do it... (369-370) ...anything that's involved with the children directly in the house he's more than happy to do (425-426) ... Patricia

... to be honest anything to do with the children tends to fall on my shoulders... (461-462)... I try to relay...the experience that day [with the programme] and he'll just 'hmmm' or 'mmm'...most men probably do that...he's just useless (468-471)... Beth

The contrast between Patricia's and Beth's points of view is readily apparent. Patricia stated that her partner participated in PAFT and that he also participated with the children, meaning that Patricia perceived him as actively participating in the home and PAFT. Conversely, Beth described the children as her responsibility ('fall on her shoulders'). She attempted to discuss PAFT with her partner, but perceived that he did not engage with the information. She then used gender stereotypes to explain her partner's lack of interest, thus perpetuating a gender stereotype that allowed her to rationalise her partner's behaviour.68

5b) Families interacted as dyads, triads and a whole. Relationships within the family were considered with different types of relationships depending on the members involved:

...at the weekends and things we tend to do things more as a three 'cause we just like to be all together. I mean very occasionally I'll go out by myself... normally we're all together as a family nun but he does look after [child]... play with him or whatever he's very involved... (Elaine 463-468)

...He always says I'm the arty farty one in the family that's what he calls me... so he's nun would be like out and 'come on let's go out come on [child] let's go cut the grass, come on [child] let's go dig. I've got to wash the cars, come help me' you know? 'Come wash daddy's motor bike' stuff like that. He's very practical hands on type parenting... ' (Carolyn, 271-276)

68 This discussion will continue in chapter 5: Coparents, however as this particular theme drove considerations for including coparenting, it is briefly discussed here.
Elaine and Carolyn expressed different relationships with their families. Elaine explained that her partner was ‘very involved’, that they often chose to be together as a family but suggested that her partner was capable as a parent. Carolyn suggested that her partner and she parent differently. Considering that Carolyn stayed at home with their children, she must have done some ‘practical, hands-on’ mothering, and yet this was in contrast to what she said.

5c) Interaction within families was valued and encouraged by PAFT participation. Mothers suggested that PAFT encouraged the various relationships within a family. Patricia claimed that:

... [PAFT] never really stopped with [child in PAFT] even though it sort of ends at three she sort of incorporated the whole entire family into it which also pretty much benefits me down to the ground. (Patricia 338-341)

This account suggested that PAFT’s inclusion of various aspects of the family encouraged her parenting and was a real benefit of participating in the programme. Ally further suggested that her:

[project worker] would get [partner] in and go ‘right listen it’s no good her bloody tellin’ if you’re not’... (Ally, 218-219)

This demonstrates that PAFT supported the parents in creating a coparenting alliance. Ally felt supported and PAFT encouraged the parents to agree on supporting one another. Susan further illustrated this point:

....if he’s worried about something he’ll say ‘oh maybe we should-you should ask [project worker] about this on the next visit’... (Susan, 605-607)

Susan suggested here that she acted as the messenger between the project worker and the partner. Of course this strategy would only work if the parents were communicating, as Patricia explained:

We’re quite good ‘cause we talk quite openly and um quite well together so that works okay. I guess that people who don’t talk to their partners sort of their partner needs to be
This method of the mother delivering information will only work if the couple feel a trust and safety in the relationship that allows for delivery of the information.69

Theme 6: Self-other interaction: Mothers perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them

6a) Role of social network as supportive and/or putting negative pressure on mothers
6b) Influence of relationships from families and intergenerational transmission
6c) Competition between mothers was alleviated due to PAFT participation

Mothers saw other people as influencing their parenting perceptions and practices. Social networks and families of origin provided mothers with mixed perspectives of the role of the other people, with mothers perceiving others as positive and/or negative.

6a) Role of social network as supportive and/or putting negative pressure on mothers. As mentioned in theme 1, mothers perceived the PAFT group meetings as a place to receive social support for mothering. However, many mothers expressed that they felt pressure based on other mothers and their children when outside the PAFT group setting:

...inevitably you mums you compare your child to others in your own mind even if you don’t want to you know you shouldn’t and then you worry and or you feel proud you know my child’s you shouldn’t do it but you can’t help it, it’s human nature...he’s doing x, y, z which that baby isn’t...(Elaine 351-360)

Elaine explained that all mothers compared their child to other children, and that it was an unstoppable force. This made her feel both concerned or proud, which illustrated a dualistic perception of others. Susan suggested that comparison offered a positive purpose:

...there’s no one to compare her to. She’s a first child and she’s not in nursery so you’ve got nothing to compare with... (Susan, 118-119)

Thus Susan indicated that not all mothers wanted to compare, but she wanted to see other children to better understand her own child. This comparison gave some mothers a

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69 This is just an initial point, but will be considered further in chapter 4: Fathers and chapter 5: Coparents.
reference point for their child’s development. However other mothers reported comparison as competition:

...lots of picky groups of parents and stuff and so much competition about my daughters’ doing this at this age and my daughters doing this at that age...there is no reason to sit there and say... ‘my daughter is so good’... (Carolyn, 348-353)

In this case, Carolyn explained that she felt ‘competition’ in parents’ groups based on what the other parents said. Mothers reported that these external perceptions put unwanted pressure on them, although this finding runs contrary to several studies indicating the importance of social networks for promoting parenting (Bornstein et al., 2006; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Walker and Riley, 2001).

6b) Influence of relationships from families and intergenerational transmission.

Mothers also described their relationships with their families. Some mothers felt uncomfortable asking their own families about parenting:

...‘Am I doing this right?’ or you know I don’t know there’s always grandparents... have got opinions of how to do things and it is you know 25 years ago and that’s all changed now. (Susan 968-972)

Susan explains that she was unsure about certain things she was doing as a mother but felt that she could not ask grandparents because of societal changes since they were parents. The literature supports that many parents, particularly mothers, feel uncomfortable asking their own parents for support (Dellmann-Jenkins, Blankmeyer, and Olesh, 2002; Smith and Drew, 2004; Strom and Strom, 2000).

In considering families, Ally went into more detail about her parents’ influence on her parenting:

...one of the main things is anger. ‘Cause I would scream and swear and shout at ‘em. And I II I admit that freely it wouldn’t take a lot for me to smack ‘em... I thought it was okay ‘cause that’s how I was treated as a child and so that’s how it carries on and she and it’s just a cycle... (Ally, 179-185)
Intergenerational transmission of parenting practices is widely recognised in the literature (Antonucci, Jackson, and Biggs, 2007; Izzo, Eckenrode, Smith, Henderson, Cole, Kitzman, et al., 2005; Lieberman, Padron, van Horn, and Harris, 2005). Ally illustrated this concept by saying that she was continuing the cycle of parenting. In this quote, she explained the anger she felt, and this emotion led to negative actions with her children, which is supported by the literature (Busch, Cowan, and Cowan, 2008).

6c) **PAFT participation alleviated competition between mothers.** Importantly to mothers, they felt that the negative aspects of others were alleviated by PAFT involvement:

...[PAFT] took away that you know that fear of getting into competitions with other parents about...’my child does this and my child does that’... (Carolyn, 81-83)

...suddenly had a wobble because I realised all my friends weren’t doing that and I was going against the advice and I thought ‘oh I’m dicing with death’ and I thought I can’t do that was a specific topic I talked to [project worker] about at length and she really helped with that and she found some extra information about it and helped me look at it in a more balanced way. (Elaine, 277-282)

Both Carolyn and Elaine explained that one aspect of their concerns about their understanding of mothering was based on what other people said, but PAFT assisted with their concerns. By receiving help from their project worker, they were able to consider the situation in a more objective, rational way. The project workers provided them with not only verbal support, but also informational support, meaning that their project workers provided multi-faceted support to assuage their fears.

**Summary**

The mothers’ perspectives discussed here illuminate their experiences as a mother and as a PAFT participant. These mothers provided initial findings upon which further research, using questionnaires, was conducted with their perspectives in mind.

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70 Ally is speaking in the past tense because she believed PAFT helped her stop this cycle
Phase 2: Questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed using quotes based on specific themes from the phase 1 analysis. In creating these questionnaires for mothers, the questionnaire was developed with statements from the following mothering themes:

- **Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement over time and mothers' perceived success.** This theme was included in the questionnaire due to mothers' perceived importance of this relationship in phase 1 and also to previous findings (e.g. Stolk et al., 2008).

- **Process of change in mothering: Mothers perceived that various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours, overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses.** As one research question involved change in parenting practices and had many elements in phase 1, it was included in this phase.

- **Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as information and the empowerment-based model.** Similar to the previous theme, numerous PAFT components promoted positive mothering practices, and thus examining these programme elements was vital to understanding the influence of PAFT on mothering.

- **Self-Other Interaction: Mothers' perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them.** The self-other interaction appeared very important to mothers in the interviews. This was unexpected in view of previous research (e.g. Bornstein et al., 2006) expressing the importance of other people in supporting mothers, and was thus included in the questionnaire.

Two themes were excluded from phase 2:

- **Mothers valuing connections between PAFT, community resources and the overall community network.** This theme was excluded because probing mothers' particular experiences in the community would likely prove too difficult in the questionnaire format. However, a few questions were included in direct relation to PAFT participation to explore

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71 Community resources were considered, but only in their relation to PAFT, and thus have been categorised as an aspect of 'programme elements' rather than on its own.
specifically the relationship between the community and PAFT from mothers' perspectives.

- *Family as a whole:* Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems that were valued by PAFT. This theme was excluded from the questionnaire because it was more closely related to questions about coparenting than specifically mothers' perspectives on PAFT.

**Participants**

Mothers were recruited from the two areas described in chapter 2. A total of 90 mothers attempted to complete some part of the questionnaire; however, five were excluded due to insufficient number of responses to the questions (two) and unsuccessfully attempting to complete the fathers' questionnaire (three) instead of the mothers' questionnaire. For further information regarding demographics of those mothers who successfully completed the questionnaire, please see Table 3.3.72

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72 0 is the number of missing values, unless otherwise indicated.
Table 3.3

Mothers’ Demographics for Completing the Mothering Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number of Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed: White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently in Paid Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-level(s)/AS-level(s)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree/diploma</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently with PAFT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 85 mothers completed at least one section of the questionnaire. Due to the breakdown of the questionnaire, mothers completed various parts of the questionnaire, ignoring parts or questions that they felt did not pertain to them. As can be seen in Table 3.4, mothers varied on their completion rate of each questionnaire.

Table 3.4

*Mothers’ Completion Rate for Mothering Questionnaires*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Title</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section A: You as a mother</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B: Mothering and PAFT</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section F: University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-Dimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)

Multi-dimensional scaling revealed several key regions influencing both mothering and PAFT.

‘You as a mother’ questionnaire. On the ‘You as a mother’ questionnaire (Section A), three primary regions were identified (see Figure 3.1). This analysis had good stress and RSQ values with Stress=.09 and RSQ=.96.

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73 A sample analysis can be found in Appendix E3.
Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children. This facet indicates that mothers perceive their children negatively, and that stress influences their perceptions of mothering. Mothers responded to one particular statement that appears central to the other statements: ‘When I feel stressed it goes around the whole family’ (Q9). This statement is slightly different from the others in that it is related to mothers' perceptions of their children, but is not specifically about their children. This suggests a potential connection between how mothers perceive their children and stress levels influencing the family.

Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children:
- My child can be difficult to manage (Q3)
- I have ongoing struggles with my child (Q5)
- My child's behaviour stresses me out sometimes (Q6)
- When I feel stressed it goes around the whole family (Q9)
- Sometimes my child makes me feel out of control (Q12)

Note. Two questions were excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the facets: I do not want to be one of those mums who gets into competitions with other mums (Q2); and During pregnancy everybody told me I would be fine at mothering (Q19).
**Conceptual understanding of mothering.** The statements in this region relate to mothers’ perceptions of mothering. Each of these statements relates to how mothers see themselves in their role as a mother and in their relationship with their children. It provides evidence that mothers have an internal concept of what mothering is and what they perceive to be their responsibility in undertaking this role. It encompasses statements that relate to child-centeredness, the mothers’ role, and general thoughts about the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual understanding of mothering:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mothering is about figuring out what is beneficial to your child (Q1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is easier to take care of children if you can put yourself in their shoes (Q8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I hate thinking bad things about my children (Q10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is my job to give my child boundaries (Q14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You cannot compare two children (Q15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is important for mothers to give their child space to be an individual (Q20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I want to stay home to bring my child up (Q22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceived societal pressure and other people’s influence on mothering.** This region relates to mothers’ perceptions of societal pressure and other people’s influence on their mothering. However it also contains some internal perceptions that seem to cross the boundary between a mother’s perceived external perceptions of her and her own internalised perceptions. While this is in one region, it is slightly more separated than the other regions. Q4 and Q11 answers almost overlap, indicating a great deal of similarity between the answers on each of these questions. This indicates that mothers who perceived being concerned with becoming mothers (or not concerned at all) also are more likely to exhibit ‘shouting’ (or not shouting). The similarity between these two indicates that the prenatal perception influences post-birth behaviour, as discussed in the literature (Dayton et al., 2010). Q7, Q13 and Q16 also are close together indicating the external focus on others influences the mothers’ perceptions. Finally, Q17, Q18, and Q21 are also similar, suggesting again how other people’s expectations influence the mothers’ expectations.
Perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering:

- All the way through pregnancy, I had mixed feelings toward becoming a mother (Q4)
- After my child was born, no one asked how I was (Q7)
- I constantly shout at my child (Q11)
- Other people judging my mothering makes me feel like a big failure (Q13)
- Lots of mothers try to tell me what to do (Q16)
- People really expect me to know what I am doing with my child (Q17)
- When my child is fussy, the blame comes back onto me (Q18)
- When I expect my child to do things and he does not, it puts a lot of pressure on me (Q21)

'Mothering and PAFT' questionnaire. The analysis of mothering and PAFT (section B) also had three primary regions identifiable (see Figure 3.2). The mothering and PAFT analysis had slightly high\(^7^4\) stress and moderate RSQ values of Stress=.16 and RSQ=.91.

\(^7^4\) This is a slightly higher stress value that should ideally be used; however analysis at the three-dimensional space did not aid interpretability.
PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers

Figure 3.2. Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the ‘Mothering and PAFT’ questionnaire

Note. Seven questions were excluded to provide clarity to the regions within the analysis: My project worker suggested I went to see a health visitor for an issue my child was having (Q25); PAFT is about having someone sit down and say try parenting this way (Q26); I think without PAFT I probably would be depressed because of all my worries about parenting (Q34); My project worker helps me see that my child is not so bad (Q36); I can say bad things about my child to my project worker and we talk about them (Q45); PAFT took away my fear of getting into competitions with other mothers (Q48); A lot of stuff that my project worker has done with me, I have done with other people (Q50).

PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers. This region relates to programme elements that mothers' perceive as influencing their mothering. These are specific activities and programme components that drive mothers' continual participation over time, which provides an illustration of how PAFT maintains mothers' programme involvement.
PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers:

- My project worker leaves parenting things up to me to make the ultimate choices (Q27)
- My child’s enjoyment of PAFT has kept us involved (Q28)
- PAFT shows me that you do not have to give your kids toys, you should give them your time (Q43)
- PAFT gives a practical response to raising children (Q46)
- PAFT is not just an information thing, it is a social thing (Q51)

**Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation.** There were many similarities in mothers’ reports of change as a result of PAFT participation. This region, which is slightly more spread out than the other regions, relates primarily to how mothers see themselves as changing due to PAFT participation. Five statements based heavily in change from PAFT involvement appear very close together, with the other three being slightly farther apart. The middle five (Q23, Q32, Q35, Q40, Q42) focus on perceptions of parenting and the parent-child relationship, except for Q23 which is about benefits of PAFT. From this, it appears that mothers may see change and benefits of PAFT as related. Q37 is about confidence and the community and therefore less related to change. Q49 and Q52 both report change, but more on a global level than the others, and related specifically to themselves as a mother, rather than parenting. Despite the distance between points, the region is related and important to change in mothering.

**Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation:**

- One benefit of PAFT is the community spirit of people involved in it (Q23)
- Everything with parenting seems a little easier to deal with because PAFT is helping me (Q32)
- PAFT helps me see that there are no right or wrong answers in parenting (Q35)
- My project worker gives me the confidence to get involved with the community (Q37)
- PAFT suggestions might not work but if they do, it will make your life a lot easier (Q40)
- PAFT makes me feel like I can keep going when things are hard with my child (Q42)
- I thrive on the chances that PAFT has given me (Q49)
- The mother inside me has changed a lot because of PAFT (Q52)

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75 In interpreting this analysis, qualitative content was crucial and thus was imposed on the interpretation space, which assisted in partitioning of the analysis.

109
Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers. This region relates to mothers perceiving support from their project worker and PAFT, which encourages positive parenting practices. While PAFT is in many of these statements, they could easily be replaced by the term 'project worker', and one way to understand this is through the mothers’ perceptions of their support from PAFT, which they see as being the face of PAFT (Gomby et al., 1999). This is also multi-faceted as mothers report receiving support (or not) from PAFT through the format (home and group), community referrals, specific information, and the trusted relationship with their project worker. The wraparound support from project workers appears central to this region as it is in the middle (Q29; Q44) with mothers perceiving their project worker as providing information specific to their child.

Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers:

- My project worker tells me the PAFT information in a positive way (Q24)
- If my project worker does not know an answer, she points me in the right direction to find it (Q29)
- PAFT highlights the things parents should do, guiding you down a good path (Q30)
- When my project worker leaves, I feel like somebody has listened to me (Q31)
- PAFT is good because it gives you support at home and support at group meetings (Q33)
- PAFT is like my friend turning up every month who helps me understand my child (Q38)
- PAFT makes you appreciate what is going on in your child’s little mind (Q39)
- I have a great relationship with my project worker (Q41)
- My project worker goes over any problems that I have (Q44)
- My project worker says I am a good mum and that gives me confidence (Q47)

Reliability Analysis

To better understand the relationships within each region, the relationship between each region’s statements were measured using Cronbach’s Alpha to establish their reliability as a scale. The previously validated questionnaire (University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice) was also tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha to ensure its scales remained reliable with this sample. As can be seen in Table 3.5, all new scales were considered reliable,
with each new scale being .67 or above.

Table 3.5

*Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability of Newly-Found and Previously Validated Questionnaire Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual understanding of mothering</td>
<td>.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ^The standardised questionnaire scales

After the scales were identified and re-coded as categories in their own right, skewness and kurtosis scores were calculated to ascertain which variables were parametric and non-parametric in order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis (Appendix F1). Most scales were parametric with the following scales being non-parametric: conceptual understanding of mothering; family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers; mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation; and mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation.

**Correlations**

Parametric (Pearson's) and non-parametric (Spearman's) correlations were conducted to better understand the relationships between scales in the measures.

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76 * denotes lower alpha level. These are slightly lower than the typical .7 considered best. Nevertheless due to the placement on the MDS analysis, and inter-item correlations, they were able to remain as their own scales in this analysis. The strength of the correlations below should be considered with this information.

77 Those z-scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
Parametric (Pearson's correlations). The parametric correlations show several important relationships between scales (see Appendix F1 for parametric correlation table).

Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children relates to a variety of other scales including; negatively to parenting satisfaction, $r = -.30, p < .01$; negatively to perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, $r = -.26, p < .05$; and perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering, $r = .40, p < .001$. Therefore mothers with high levels of negative attributions about their children are likely to have low levels of parenting satisfaction and perceived confidence due to PAFT participation. They are also likely to perceive high levels of pressure from others.

Mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation scale is related to other scales: negatively to perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering, $r = -.28, p < .05$; mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation, $r = .73, p < .001$ and parenting satisfaction, $r = .45, p < .001$. Mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation was also related to parenting satisfaction, $r = .40, p < .001$. Thus if mothers perceive high levels of societal pressure from other people, they perceive lower levels of confidence, and if mothers have high levels of confidence due to PAFT participation, they are also likely to have high levels of knowledge and high parenting satisfaction. In addition, if mothers have high levels of knowledge due to PAFT they are more likely to have high levels of parenting satisfaction.

PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers are related to change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation, $r = .64, p < .001$. Thus if mothers see PAFT programme elements as highly influencing them, they are likely to perceive a change in their mothering practices.

Non-parametric correlations (Spearman's correlations). The non-parametric correlations show several important relationships (see Appendix F1 for the non-parametric correlation chart).
Mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation, mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation and mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation are all positively correlated (relationship between confidence and knowledge is parametric, described above). Mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation is related to mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, $r_s = .75, p < .001$. Mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation is related to mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation, $r = .56, p < .001$. Mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation is strongly related to mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, $r_s = .53, p < .001$. Mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation is related to mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation, $r = .47, p < .001$. Mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation is related to mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation, $r = .55, p < .001$. Therefore the four relate to one another in understanding mothers' perspectives, meaning that if a mother scores highly on one of these, she is likely to score high on the others.

Mothers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation is also related to PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers, $r_s = .31, p < .01$; parenting satisfaction, $r_s = .27, p < .05$; and mothers' conceptual understanding of mothering, $r_s = .35, p < .005$. Therefore if mothers' attribute their ability to PAFT involvement highly, they are also likely to rate programme elements highly, parenting satisfaction highly, and have high rates of conceptual understanding of mothering.

Mothers' conceptual understanding of mothering relates to mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children, $r_s = .30, p < .01$. Therefore, if mothers have high levels of a conceptual understanding of mothering, they are likely to have high levels of negative attributions about their children.

Mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation is related to a number of scales: mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children, $r = -.27, p < .05$. Thus if mothers perceive PAFT as increasing their actions they are likely to perceive less stress and negative attributions about their child. Mothers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation is also related to perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering, $r = -.30, p < .01$, meaning that if mothers' perceived PAFT as improving their actions, they are likely to perceive lower levels
of societal pressure and other people's influence on their mothering. It is also related to PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers, $r = .39$, $p < .001$; Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation, $r = .24$, $p < .05$; Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers, $r = .34$, $p < .005$; and parenting satisfaction, $r = .34$, $p < .005$. Thus if mothers perceive they have better actions due to PAFT involvement, they perceive PAFT programme elements, change due to PAFT, support from the relationship, positively and high levels of parenting satisfaction.

Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers is related to several scales: PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers, $r = .76$, $p < .001$; Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation, $r = .74$, $p < .001$; and mothers' conceptual understanding of mothering, $r = .44$, $p < .001$. Thus if mothers see PAFT as providing support to their family, they are more likely to have high ratings for PAFT elements influencing them, perceive change to their parenting practices through the PAFT programme and receive higher scores on mothers' conceptual understanding of mothering.

Summary

This four pronged analysis from MDS to correlations illuminates several important findings for mothering and mothers' perspectives on PAFT. This analysis has suggested that specific regions of analysis are reliably rated in the mothers' experiences, suggesting that they perceive similar experiences in the family, in their role as a mother, and with PAFT participation. Next these findings need to be considered by mothers in focus groups.

Phase 3: Focus Groups

The focus group analysis aimed to validate and expand previous findings, while also considering any perceptions not previously found that are important to mothers' experiences. Support for the previous findings will first be briefly discussed, and then the new themes will be explored in more depth to provide additional information for interpreting the findings.
Participants

In phase 3, ten mothers participated in the focus group. Mothers had varying experiences with the project. One mother participated in the mother interviews, coparents interviews, and questionnaires (Susan). One mother participated in the coparents’ interviews and the questionnaire (Roberta). Six mothers completed questionnaires (Beatrice, Gwen, Molly, Kelly, Liz, Samantha). Two mothers had yet to participate in the research (Ellen, Dana).

Phase 1 and 2 Findings Validated in Phase 3 (for an analysis sample, see Appendix E4)

After transcribing the mothers’ focus group verbatim, the data were first analysed, using thematic analysis, to validate and ground previous findings from phases 1 and 2. Five themes found in phases 1 and 2 were identified in this analysis (in Table 3.6) and will be discussed in turn below.

Table 3.6
Themes Identified from the Findings of Phases 1 and 2 Validated in the Mothers’ Focus Group

| 1. Mothers’ perceived behaviours and cognitions influenced the entire family |
| 2. Numerous PAFT programme elements promoted positive mothering practices, including increasing mothers’ knowledge, ability, confidence, and action |
| 3. Family-project worker/PAFT connections were vital to mothers’ participation in the programme |
| 4. Various factors contributed to mothers’ process of change including mothers’ internal concept of mothering and experiences with PAFT |
| 5. Mothers’ internalised societal discourses about mothering |

1. Mothers’ perceived behaviours and cognitions influenced the entire family.

Mothers provided support for their involvement as central in their families:

*Samantha: ...one of the first things I learned was actually you know your child better than anybody else... no matter what everyone else behind you was saying you’re the mother, you’re the parent and the rules that go with that don’t necessarily sort of go into your own situation. So you are the best person to know your child and that feeds through*

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78 Names and identifying details have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality

79 While the ideal number according to literature is six to eight people in a focus group, due to the nature of fieldwork and evaluation research, it is important that those who would like to contribute are able to do so. Thus all ten were allowed to participate.
as your children get older...I was by the book got to do it this way, got to do it that way, putting more pressure on my child actually and myself... (267-284)

In this example Samantha explained that as the mother she is the most knowledgeable about her child, thus placing herself as central to her child’s life in an ongoing relationship. She supported previous findings by stating her perspective, that being a mother involves inherently her place in family relationships and as central to her child’s development.

2. Numerous PAFT programme elements promoted positive mothering practices, including increasing mothers’ knowledge, ability, confidence, and action.

Mothers reported that numerous aspects of the PAFT programme encouraged them to perceive themselves as positive and capable in their mothering practices:

- Kelly: ...[PAFT] makes you think as well 'cause sometimes you just carry on doing things without actually thinking what you’re actually doing, so it makes you think more about why you do something and what you’re doing it for (146-149)
- Dana: ...we try one method and it doesn’t always work and then you get ideas to do something else... (32-33)
- Gwen: It almost takes weight off you if somebody is saying ‘it’s okay’ (228-229)
- Susan: And it’s one on one so it’s not about all these children, it’s your child and no one else (576-577)
- Samantha: But they’re also there to fight your corner...’cause we had um development problems with my daughter... (647-649)
- Roberta: I think one of the things that PAFT does is sort of I don’t know why but we tend to be looking for permission to do what we are doing as mums...I think we tend to and I think PAFT gives us the confidence to take that permission... (1060-1065)

This list provided some examples of ways mothers find PAFT helpful, which included: encouraging mothers to think about mothering, obtaining behavioural modification guidance, being specific to the families’ needs, decreasing the pressure perceived by mothers, providing support in the community, and as Roberta indicated, PAFT gave mothers confidence to take permission in their mothering. This illustrates mothers’ perceptions that PAFT provides abundant, multi-dimensional support based on the families’ needs, thereby, supporting previous findings that PAFT is a more complex, wraparound support service.
3. **Family-project worker/PAFT connections were vital to mothers’ engagement and involvement in the programme.** As previously identified, one crucial aspect that promoted mother involvement in PAFT is the relationship between themselves and their project worker:

Molly: It's the relationship...that you build with your key worker... you have the same person.
Beatrice: ...when you see your person be able to talk and open and be able to talk...I think that's a major, major thing it's a real person you can talk to. (352-361)

Through this example Molly and Beatrice perceived the mother-project worker relationship building over time through continuity, and Beatrice expressed that the human element of PAFT engages mothers to enter a dialogue about their mothering with a trusted, supportive person.

4. **Various factors contributed to mothers’ process of change including mothers’ internal concept of mothering and experiences with PAFT.** Mothers indicated their process of change in mothering practices was influenced by numerous factors including PAFT:

Liz: I think for me PAFT has made me feel like rather than see motherhood as like a list of things like the house needs to be clean and tidy, and the children need to be fed, washed up, and sorted rather than see it as a list of tasks, I now see motherhood as more of an attitude.
Group: Yeah
Liz: Like to spend time with your children.
Kelly: Absolutely-enjoy them.
Liz: Yes yeah definitely and it's definitely PAFT that has kind of changed that for me rather than being task-oriented.
Kelly: I think it is exciting that PAFT can do that... (243-253)

In this example, Liz explained that she had seen motherhood as not about her relationship with her children but tasks that she should complete to fulfil an internalised concept of motherhood. As seen in phase 2 changing mothers' attitudes may assist in changing her negative perceptions of her child. Therefore, this appears to be a particularly important point in considering change for mothering practices.
5. Mothers’ internalised societal discourses about mothering. Mothers indicated that they internalised societal discourses about mothering, which placed stress on themselves and their children. They were asked where this came from:

Kelly: It’s societal definitely
Group: Definitely, yeah
Molly: Yeah there’s so much that comes in you should be doing... And at the end of the day you just gotta do your own thing because you know and once you say to yourself ‘right you know yes I’ve got all this information coming in’ and you just have to sift through it and say I’m not going to put myself under this pressure and then once you say that life becomes so much easier...and don’t go overkill by what’s coming in with other stuff you know government stuff and what other mums are saying because what other mums are saying is probably because they’re feeling under pressure... (192-215)

These mothers reported feeling that societal expectations influenced their perceptions of mothering, but as Molly suggested, mothers must choose rather than allow for others to dictate their mothering. Internalising these discourses and allowing them to influence mothering demonstrates ill effects (as seen above and argued elsewhere, e.g. Caplan and Caplan, 1999; Hrdy, 1999). It is thus important that mothers challenge these notions, and PAFT helps them do this.

New Themes Emerging from the Mothers’ Focus Groups

A further four themes were either expanded significantly from previous phases or emerged for the first time, which can be found in Table 3.7 and will be discussed in turn below.

Table 3.7

New Themes from the Mothers’ Focus Group

| 1. Mothers felt a sense of loss when PAFT stopped due to the support PAFT provided |
| 2. Mothers saw PAFT as being inclusive of all parents who need advice and/or support |
| 3. Politicalisation of parenting programmes by mothers: Mothers believed that parenting programmes could assist with antisocial values exhibited in society |
| 4. Community support for mothering was important for mothers’ experiences |

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1. Mothers felt a sense of loss when PAFT stopped due to the support PAFT provided. One point that had been somewhat indicated previously by mothers in the interviews, became increasingly clear within the focus groups, i.e., that mothers felt a lack of support when PAFT involvement ends:

- Gwen: Yeah I have to say I miss it now that my eldest one is three and sort of the visits have finished (362-364)
- Susan: Yeah I had [PAFT] with [child 1] not [child 2] and I really miss it with [child 2] and it's it's different issues and different topics with a different child...(401-403)

These quotes demonstrate the powerful nature the mothers attributed to their PAFT participation. They considered it to have offered them a unique and specific service that promoted their understanding and supported their mothering such that they desire support in a form like PAFT.

2. Mothers saw PAFT as being inclusive of all parents who need advice and/or support. Mothers valued that PAFT was inclusive of all parents. This meant that anyone could receive the specialised assistance that PAFT offered, and mothers from various backgrounds indicated this was a need in the community:

Molly: A lot of things are aimed at those with disadvantaged backgrounds and so if you're not 'oh you're fine' and you can just get on with it
Roberta: Actually you're spot on with that 'cause I'm middle class
Molly: Yes and it's just assumed that you're you're fine and you can't actually access the benefits or or things that because you know you're in a stable, happily married or you know middle class type thing so that's been been good...
Lez: Yeah, you don't need to have horrible problems and disadvantages for it to work. (963-973)

In this example, mothers stated that they felt that programmes aimed at mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds discount other mothers who may need the same or similar help. The mothers agree that PAFT's inclusive process as working for all parents is a strength of the programme. Roberta continues this discussion:

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As mentioned in chapter 2, PAFT is only delivered to parents of children younger than age three (or five if the child exhibits developmental delays). Thus mothers no longer receive home visits when their children reach three years of age. However, mothers are able to continue attending group meetings.
Roberta: ...just 'cause I'm middle class, I had a very abusive upbringing and I've been really struggling recently and I've slapped [child] and I've had to talk about that with [project worker] quite a lot and a couple of you around this table as well 'cause I'm really struggling and actually so this comes in as prevention as far as I am concerned Groups: Absolutely yeah Roberta: 'Cause if I didn't have that outlet you know if I couldn't say 'my God I'm going to kill someone' you would it's just necessary. It's not-it should not be a class issue... (1003-1012)

Through this example, Roberta explained that her upbringing was abusive and this did not relate to class. She attributed her 'abusive upbringing' to her current struggles in her relationship with her child, and suggested that having PAFT as an outlet allowed her to express her negative emotions and gain support. She concluded that parenting programmes supporting parents from all backgrounds, such as PAFT, would be better able to assist mothers.

3. Politicalisation of parenting programmes by mothers: Mothers believed that parenting programmes could assist with antisocial values exhibited in society. Within the focus group context, mothers discussed the politicalisation of parenting, indicating that prevention through parenting programmes was desirable in the community. This is consistent with prior research (Fonagy, 1998; Beckwith, 2005; Osofsky, 1998). Perhaps due to group processes (Forsyth, 1999), this concept generated a lot of discussion, with mothers discussing the project in the wider framework.

Samantha discussed the SEAL project, which is aimed at children in Key Stage 2 (Dfes, 2005). She reported that her daughter participated in this project:

Samantha: ...this SEAL project um is all about one to one play time with your child and I'm just thinking well you know my daughter's eight. We did one to one playtime but this is all new and the parents are 'wow yeah we just found out one to one quality time and doing it educational time game with my child' and I just well why wait til- why spend all that money addressing the older children and saying to them this isn't acceptable, hitting isn't acceptable, pinching isn't acceptable when you can install it at the beginning and not waste so much money trying to re-educate a whole group of children...(1050-1059)

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81 Roberta's abusive upbringing is explained in more detail in chapter 5: Coparents.
Samantha explained that the SEAL project teaches other parents what she was doing through PAFT when her daughter was very young. She argued for prevention over intervention saying that resources should be allocated to early childhood rather than ‘re-educating’ older children. Other mothers supported prevention over intervention:

Dana: If the government would like install it and fund it from now 'cause there's enough antisocial problems as there is you have to start somewhere so okay, it would take 20 odd years to figure it out for kids to go through but if they did that at least we'd be looking to resolve the issues what is around rather than just giving orders that don't work, start it that way
Group: Yeah, hmm
Samantha: That's positive prevention...
Kelly: That's what we need in our society (1039-1048)

Dana suggested that if the government provided resources such as PAFT to various problems in society some could be resolved, thus addressing some wider issues which would aid ‘society’. The mothers continued by discussing motherhood and society:

Samantha:...you are the responsible one. No one else is responsible, society isn't responsible, we are responsible
Roberta: Yeah we live in a funny society because we have a lot of state control which is fine because we have a lot of support but it means that people sometimes try to absolve themselves of that responsibility
Group: Yeah yeah
Roberta: And then when you try to take it, you think 'how should I do this,' you know and um PAFT has really you can discuss all the issues... (1068-1077)

Samantha and Roberta suggested that mothers/parents are responsible for children, although Roberta pointed out that ‘people’ do not take responsibility in all cases and may even actively avoid it. She further pointed out that when mothers ‘try to take’ responsibility they needed to find out how to do so, indicating that mothers allowed others to decide their responsibility and mothering practices, until mothers decide to take active ownership (which PAFT supports). Hrdy (1999) supports these ideas in stating that one of the most politicised topics is motherhood. She stated that this was a safe topic for many years because people agreed about what motherhood was with the default position of gender norms. She stated that due to the recent choices provided to women (e.g. abortion) motherhood has become a widely important and debateable topic.

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4. Community support for mothering was important for mothers' experiences.

During phase 1, mothers indicated that community resources were important, but for numerous reasons (mentioned above) this was considered in phase 2 only as an aspect of PAFT. In phase 3 community services were once again discussed. Mothers indicated that community support through PAFT was vital to their experiences and that this promoted their engagement with the community:

Samantha: I think definitely is that link in to the health visitor to the speech therapists, to the educational psychologist, just it's all that sort of stuff all sort of links in. And actually when you haven't got that 'cause we've moved outside of [area] we didn't have that you know and then it was all from scratch again. So whereas [child] through the stuff here, she would have had a statement when she went into school, we've only now a year on got the statement you know and stuff be they haven't got the knowledge to deal with this... PAFT was a really big benefit and that's one thing I wanted to get across because it wasn't in the questionnaire you know of identifying things that have gone wrong.

Beatrice: 'Cause when after your child's born I don't know how long 'til after you stop seeing the visitor seven months or that's it then isn't it? There's nothing, nobody- (701-715)

Samantha explains that due to her daughter's developmental delays, PAFT helped her through its connections within the community and stated that as the reason she wanted to attend the focus group (she drove almost two hours each way to attend). As mentioned in chapter 2, one of PAFT's aims is to be connected to other resources, and it appears in Samantha's case, they achieved this goal.

Beatrice's quote was another important aspect of this theme, which was that mothers felt dissatisfied and frustrated by their interactions with health visitors. This was different from phase 1 in that it was briefly mentioned by interviewees, but the stress and irritation mothers felt over their interaction became clear in this setting:

Kelly: And [PAFT] not giving a cut and dried answer...
Group: Yeah yeah yeah
Beatrice: Yeah they're like 'have you tried that?' And you're like 'of course I've tried that' and they [health visitor] ask you the most stupid, annoying thing or give you a really sympathetic 'abbbhh' (639-644)
Susan: 'Cause the health visitors are for text book children but if you've got a child who's slightly different with problems or you're not really sure about that then-

Samantha: Yeah, I mean actually they don't want to get involved you know-

Susan: They don't, no 'cause with [child] it was like 'well no you need to talk to the hospital have them sort it 'cause she's premature'. You know who else do I go to?

Samantha: Yeah that's it 'cause you think the health visitor-

Susan: Is the person you're meant to go to (668-677)

Furthermore the mothers felt that they could not go to the health visitor unless they had a specific medical problem, that required health visitors’ immediate attention:

Liz: I was stressed... I didn’t feel I could go bother the health visitors if you have questions and things...

Group: Yeah, hmm

Liz: But you feel like you should ask somebody (818-823)

It is important to note that in phase 3 as opposed to phase 1, the negative aspects of services were addressed. Thus in phase 1 (and part of phase 3) mothers felt that community services were good in relation to PAFT. However in phase 3 it became important to mothers to explain that services, particularly health visiting, left much to be desired. Perhaps one reason this became clearer in this context was that the mothers were together so they could discuss it more openly and gain support from one another, whereas in an interview context, this was more difficult to do. It is important to note that this finding indicated that mothers were less likely to receive support, if and when they needed it, without trust and positive perceptions of these services because it has been found that if mothers had negative perceptions of services, they were less likely to access them (Avis et al., 2007). However it appears that due to PAFT, these mothers receive the necessary, unique support they require.

Summary

Mothers validated previous findings and identified a few additional points for understanding the findings through the focus group discussion. In pulling these themes together, mothers assisted the research by grounding the findings in the participants’ perspectives and exploring some of the themes in the wider context.
Discussion

Findings proved exceedingly complex, with numerous components influencing mothers’ perceptions of their role and their relationships. Mothers provided a great deal of information on being the primary parent and exclusive programme participant, creating a framework for understanding their specific perspectives. In addition, by conducting the bottom-up evaluation, findings can be understood in the mothers’ context from the mothers’ perspectives. In considering the findings across the three phases, Figure 3.3, provides a schematic representation of the connections between the concepts emerging here. At the end of each concept description, boxes detail the specific findings from the research phases that informed the development of the concept.

Mothers’ Behaviours and Cognitions Influence Family Relationships (Box 3.1)

Research indicates that mothers with negative internal representations are more likely to have negative mothering behaviours and perceive their children more negatively (Benoit et al., 1997; Dollberg et al., 2010; Slade et al., 1999). Across each phase it was seen that mothers’ internal perceptions of themselves and their role as a mother influenced their perceptions and perceived behaviours with their child. This research provides support for the numerous studies indicating that mothers’ perspectives influence behaviour.

Parenting programmes support mothers through influencing their perceptions of family relationships. Mothers’ perceptions of children interacted with their internal state and influenced their behaviours. Mothers reported that their negative perceptions were challenged by PAFT involvement, and that by adapting these negative perceptions, mothers were able to have more positive interactions with their children. Research supports that by changing mothers’ negative perceptions, mother-child interactions also become more positive (Bohr, Halpert, Chan, Lishak, and Brightling, 2010; Puckering, 2004; Sroufe et al., 2005; Treyvaud, Rogers, Matthews, and Allen, 2010).

Furthermore, if parenting programmes are able to understand how to discuss and promote positive child perceptions, it is also important that project workers uncover and explore these internal thoughts to promote change in mothering practices. Thus by understanding
and promoting positive perceptions of their children, programmes can influence mothering cognitions and behaviours, which will support children’s positive development. Furthermore, programmes such as PAFT, support mothers who have concerns about mothering, which promotes the mother-child relationship, decreasing the mother’s perceptions of the child as difficult.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 3.1. Mothers’ behaviour and cognitions influence family relationships: Findings from each phase</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family as a whole: Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems which were valued by PAFT</td>
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**Internalised Perceptions of Mothering Relates to Others and Society (Box 3.2)**

Mothers reported an internalised perception of what mothering as a concept is or should be. When asked about their experiences of mothering concepts in the focus group, mothers felt they had an internalised concept and the expectations they placed on themselves were based on societal standards. This connection between societal expectations and mothers’ internalised concepts is vital, not only to understanding mothers’ perspectives, but also in developing parenting programmes. Parenting programmes need to be aware that in some cases mothers may decide what is appropriate for their children based on their own internal perspectives of what a ‘mother’ should do, rather than what is best for children.

One explanation for this finding may be in mother-blame. Caplan and Caplan (1999) argue that mother-blame has caused undue pressure on mothers. Because mothers are blamed when things go wrong with their children, but not given credit when their children do well, they often internalise societal perspectives of mother-blame. They suggest that due to mothers hearing negative perceptions about mothers, they feel stress and anxiety at being a mother, and feel that the responsibility falls on them. Research supports societal expectations being placed on mothers. Hrdy (1999) suggests that today’s mothers are overwhelmed by media images, and other constant influences that create difficult decisions that appear to be life and death. McCarraher (1999) supports this notion by suggesting that
parents take in a great deal of messages from the media that affect them and their perceptions of parenting.

Many researchers argue that women grasp how to be a good mother from society and internalise it through gender norms. Some suggest these messages come from how caretakers (particularly mothers) model caretaking to their children. Because so many traditional gender norms encompass mothering, and because gender organises people's understanding of the world (Haddock et al., 2003; Mahoney and Knudson-Martin, 2009; Walsh, 2003a), mothers have internalised gender norms based on these external factors. These norms are then further developed when mothers take maternity leave and find it difficult to return to their employment, together with the underlying societal assumption that mothers are better suited for caretaking children (Haddock et al., 2003; Silverstein, 1996). In order to end mothers' internalisation, at a societal level, gender norms need to be considered more deeply by individuals and wider society.

Following on from gender norms, this finding can also be considered through gender socialisation in society. Numerous researchers argue that gender role expectations continue to be raised based on past generations' ideas of gender (Philpot et al., 2009; Walsh, 2006) through families of origins and institutions such as schools. Research also suggests that these gender socialisation patterns can be seen in studies of new parents who tend to conform to gender stereotypes (Fraenkel, 2003; Haddock et al., 2003; Walker, 1999). In other words children learn 'women are caretakers' and this carries forward for when these children have families, and, without direct confrontation, the stereotypes persist.

One final important aspect to consider in this theme is about social support versus, social pressure. As explained previously, research argues that social networks are vital to mothers and children's outcomes (Bornstein et al., 2006; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Pevalin, Wade, and Brannigan, 2003; Zubrick, Ward, Silburn, Lawrence, Williams, Blair, et al., 2005). However this is questioned in light of the new findings provided here that indicate that social support may not be important in and of itself, but the importance may lie in the quality of support. According to the research presented here, mothers reported feeling
pressure from their social network. In considering the points above regarding mothers’ internalised sense of mothering based on societal expectations, it seems that mothers’ social networks continue to provide stress to some mothers. Therefore previous findings may need adjustment in considering the type and quality of support mothers receive from their social networks.

| Box 3.2. Internalised perceptions of mothering relates to others and society: Findings from each phase |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Phase 1** | **Phase 2** | **Phase 3** |
| Self-other interaction: Mothers perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them | Conceptual understanding of mothering | Mothers’ internalised societal discourses about mothering |
| | Perceived societal pressure and other people’s influence on mothering | Politicalisation of parenting programmes by mothers: Mothers believed that parenting programmes could assist with antisocial values exhibited in society |

**Programme Elements (Box 3.3)**

A large number of programme elements influenced mothers’ perceptions of PAFT. Across all phases, mothers explained that various programme elements assisted in their mothering and the mother-child relationship. Mothers felt that PAFT met their specific needs in context which promoted their involvement which is supported by research (Melhuish et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2003).

Mothers indicated their appreciation for the preventative nature of PAFT, which as previously suggested, promotes more positive parenting than intervention (Beckwith, 2005; Fonagy, 1998; Osofsky, 1998). Particularly seen in the focus groups, mothers also perceived PAFT positively due to its universal nature which mothers felt supported them through inclusivity and without stigma.82

In considering the community service aspect of PAFT, mothers felt that PAFT met their needs in a way other services did not which likely supported their engagement. As

82 For information on universal programmes, please see: Barlow and Svanberg (2009); Barlow et al. (2003); Kane et al. (2007); Parr (1996); Parr and Joyce (2009).
mentioned previously, when services met families’ needs, families were more likely to remain engaged in the programme (Law et al., 2009; Wall et al., 2005). Thus mothers perceived one benefit of PAFT as meeting their needs in the community where other services had failed them. Regarding the influence of mothers’ willingness to engage with services, studies have found that mothers who had various risk factors were more likely to engage with home visitation (Ammerman, Stevens, Putnam, Altaye, Hulsmann, Lehmkuhl, et al., 2006; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004). Mothers appreciated the home visiting component of PAFT. They felt that this was a particularly important aspect of the programme and encouraged their engagement in a way that group visits would be unable to provide. They also appreciated having the group meetings, and research indicates that a combination of the two is most supportive to parents (Lundahl et al., 2006; Moran et al., 2004).

PAFT’s role in increasing mothers’ knowledge, confidence, ability and action through programme information and support was also appreciated by mothers. Mothers saw PAFT as influencing their knowledge, confidence, ability and action positively. Conrad et al. (1992) found that if mothers perceived that they had high levels of knowledge and confidence, they had better interactions with their child. Studies of mothers’ confidence (Morawska and Sanders, 2007), self-esteem (Farrow and Blissett, 2007), and self-efficacy (Porter and Hsu, 2003) found that when these were low in mothers they were more likely to use negative parenting practices, which in turn negatively influenced child outcomes (Coleman and Karracker, 2003). By assisting with mothers’ self-confidence, PAFT assisted mothers in using more positive parenting practices.

Mothers also found the strengths-based model PAFT uses as providing support to their parenting. Mothers reported feeling that this model assisted their abilities as parents and stayed engaged in the programme. Mothers also reported that their mind-mindedness, child-centred perspectives, and reflexivity were encouraged through PAFT participation, and that these assisted their relationship with their children.

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83 For information on the importance of the strengths-based model, please see: Lundahl et al. (2006); MacLeod and Nelson (2000); Pearson and Thurston (2006).
Box 3.3. Programme elements: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers valued connections between PAFT, community resources and the overall community network</td>
<td>PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</td>
<td>Numerous PAFT programme elements promoted positive mothering practices including increasing mothers’ knowledge, ability, confidence, and action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as, information and the empowerment-based model</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers felt a sense of loss when PAFT stopped due to the support PAFT provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers saw PAFT as being inclusive of all parents who need advice and/or support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community support for mothering was important for mothers’ experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Process of Change in Mothering Practices: Change is Complex (Box 3.4)**

Strongly connected to all other concepts described here, mothers’ process of change was exceedingly complex, with no one issue appearing to fully influence mothers’ process of change. Instead mothers provided numerous important points that they perceived as driving their change. Mothers saw this primarily as related to PAFT but also family relationships. In considering PAFT, they indicated that one advantage was that it encouraged change through the individualised nature of the programme. But they also appreciated their relationship with their project worker, experiences within the programme, information provided, and the overall support PAFT provided. Another way PAFT supported mothers was through decreasing maternal stress and improving their mental health. Mothers discussed a number of factors they perceived as contributing to their stress, but PAFT support was able to impact these.

An additional important component of change in mothering is considering the current context in which mothers exist. Treyvaud et al. (2010) suggested that the context mothers live in influenced their well-being, which was important for development. The current research found that understanding the women in their context provided more in-depth
information on change, and explained that it was particularly multi-faceted, complex and context-specific, and provided the best framework to more fully understand this concept.

### Box 3.4. Process of change in mothering practices: Change is complex: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process of change in mothering: Mothers perceived various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours, overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses</td>
<td>Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>Various factors contributed to mothers' process of change including mothers' internal concept of mothering and experiences with PAFT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Project Worker-Family Relationship (Box 3.5)

The current research found support for the mother-project worker relationship being central to mothers' participation and change, supporting numerous studies (Korfmacher et al., 1997; Korfmacher et al., 2007; Pharis and Levin, 1991; Stolk et al., 2008). Mothers felt that their project worker was a collaborator with them, rather than an ‘expert’ which was also found in previous studies (Barlow et al., 2003; Manby, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006) It appeared that through this relationship mothers accepted information and enjoyed participating in PAFT. The mother-project worker relationship was related both qualitatively and quantitatively to mothers’ perceived change and participation in PAFT. By creating the therapeutic alliance with the mother, project workers were better able to support mothers in various manners and the family overall.

Of particular importance is that children were a ‘port of entry’ for mothers into PAFT. Mothers felt more engaged and likely to participate because their children enjoyed PAFT. This finding confirmed Sameroff (2004) and Karamat-Ali (2010) who suggested that children may be an easier way for parents to engage in interventions than by suggesting the parent was experiencing an issue. This also fit within family systems theory as by supporting families this way, they were better able to participate in PAFT fully, keeping the relationship as the ‘issue’ rather than the mother or child.
Box 3.5. Project worker-family relationship: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement over time and mothers' perceived success</td>
<td>Family support, including the project worker-family relationship provides encouragement to mothers</td>
<td>Family-project worker/PAFT connections were vital to mothers' participation in the programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conceptual Model of Mothering and Programme Participation

In order to understand how these findings connect, Figure 3.3 provides an illustration.

The process of change was placed at the centre due to the influence it has on the other concepts, and other concepts have on it. Mothers expressed numerous influences that relate to their process of change in mothering practices. As can be seen, numerous complexities exist within the model, and this is due to the complexity in mothers' experiences.

It is of note that mothers' perceptions of mothering make up one half of the model, while programme participation makes up the other half of the model. However, all the concepts meet at process of change. This indicates that in order to fully address mothers' process of change, both sides of the model must be identified and addressed, but the focus must remain on the two sides meeting to promote change in mothering practices.

The mother-child relationship is exceedingly complex, with numerous influences on it, particularly interesting points being the interaction between society and internalising a concept of mothering. This internalised nature appears to become a mother's drive in her mothering practices. As Waylen and Stewart-Brown (2009) suggest, mothering does not exist in a vacuum. Thus mothering needs to be considered in the societal and family context within which they exist. Therefore this conceptual model should be considered as a small portion of the various parts that influence mothers' and family relationships in the wider framework of society.
Conclusions
This chapter explored mothers' perspectives. As previously explained, mothers' perspectives often go overlooked in programme evaluation and their views are typically seen as not as important as outcomes. This chapter illustrates the complexity and variety seen in mothers' perspectives. Mothers reported a variety of different experiences with parenting and PAFT that promoted their mothering and their relationship with their children. Mothers perceived PAFT as meeting their needs in specific, unique ways. The model illustrates potential connections between the themes that unite mothers' perspectives of mothering with mothers' perceptions of PAFT participation.

Self-Reflexivity
As I was considering this internalised concept of motherhood, especially how mothers' appeared to develop this, I remembered a little girl I worked with. This little red-haired girl, Elisa, was a delight to be with, she loved to make up songs and one I particularly remember was about loving chocolate. Elisa’s mother was a high power attorney and in the two years Elisa was in my group, I met her mother once. However Elisa was fortunate to have had a very caring au pair. One day Elisa’s mother told Elisa that she would pick her up, and Elisa was particularly happy that day, telling everyone. But as pick up time came, her au pair arrived. Elisa was inconsolable. She and I sat together while she cried and as she calmed down she told me ‘when I grow up and have babies, I am going to pick them up everyday’. This idea seemed to comfort her and she went with her au pair home. As I considered the ideas here, it came to me, that at four years of age, Elisa was already making decisions about the mother she would become. As this thought comforted Elisa so much, I believe that thoughts like these will assimilate into Elisa’s cognitive framework. The findings from the mothers seemed to illuminate experiences like Elisa’s, making decisions from an early age about what kind of mother they will be and this may put pressure on women through inflexibility in their ideas of the mother they intended to be.

84 Name has been changed to ensure her confidentiality and anonymity.
Proposed Conceptual Model: Mothers

- **PAFT programme elements.**
  - Many different programme elements aided mothers in their process of change.

- Programme elements are assisted or hindered by the project worker–family relationship.

- Positive project worker relationships supported mothers' process of change particularly through engaging and promoting programme participation.

- Project worker–family relationship.

- **Mothers’ behaviours and cognitions influence family relationships.**
  - Addressing mothers' cognitions and behaviours that influence family relationships promotes mothers' process of change.

- **Internalised perceptions of mothering are related to mothers’ cognitions and behaviours that influence family relationships.**

- **Internalised perceptions of mothering must be considered and adapted to promote mothers’ process of change.**

- **Internalised perceptions of mothering relate to others and society.**

Figure 3.3: The hypothetical relationships between concepts based on mothers’ findings from the three phases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEGEND</th>
<th>TEXT IN BOXES</th>
<th>POSTULATED CONCEPTS (FOR DESCRIPTION SEE DISCUSSION).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LINES</td>
<td>POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONCEPTS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITALICIZED TEXT</td>
<td>RESEARCH FINDINGS USED TO THEORETICALLY CONNECT CONCEPTS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: Results

Fathers on fathering and PAFT: 'A father's role initially when the nipper is born is to support and help the mother' (Dale, 537-8)

Introduction

This chapter examines fathering in its own right, with a particular view towards involvement and parenting programmes. It looks specifically at fathers' experiences of fathering, perceptions of their family relationships, and their participation in parenting programmes in their own context. As mentioned in chapter 1, fathers are an important group to study due to research stating their importance in child development, shifting perspectives on fathers in families, and their continued exclusion from parenting programme evaluation. The findings from each phase are reported, followed by a general discussion of findings on specific fathers' perspectives.

Phase 1: Interviews

Participants

Interviews were conducted with five fathers from varying backgrounds, and all had attended at least one PAFT home visit. Several fathers had experienced, with their partners, parenting difficulties of different magnitudes. These are described in Table 4.1. At the time the interviews took place, all fathers were over the age of 21, heterosexual, and living with their partner.

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85 For more information on the rationale for studying fathers, see chapter 1.
86 This chapter is exclusively about fathers and intentionally does not contain information about mothering or parenting more generally.
Table 4.1

*Descriptions of Fathers Interviewed about their Experiences during Phase 1*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathers reported reasons for participating in PAFT&lt;sup&gt;87&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Years with PAFT</th>
<th>Children sex and ages (in years)&lt;sup&gt;89&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Visits attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ted First child died and difficult transition to fatherhood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 son (1)</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan Became a father at age 20 and child was born 14 weeks prematurely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 daughters (3, 12 weeks)</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silas Partner experienced stress and anxiety issues, chaotic household and child exhibits behavioural difficulties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 biological sons (3, 8)&lt;sup&gt;90&lt;/sup&gt; 2 foster sons (6, 9) 1 daughter (16 weeks)</td>
<td>A few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Lack of knowledge and confidence in being a father</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 son (1)</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale Travels as part of employment on a regular basis, feels guilt and sees partner as struggling while he’s away</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1 daughter (2.5)</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Information reported was stated by fathers during the interviews.

**Analysis**<sup>91</sup>

Using IPA (described in chapter 2), the analysis yielded six superordinate themes and are listed in Table 4.2.<sup>92</sup> These themes provided a platform for understanding the experiences of these fathers with reference to fathering and PAFT involvement, and will be discussed in turn.

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<sup>87</sup> Names and identifying details have been changed to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity.
<sup>88</sup> Note. All fathers reported having joined PAFT through mothers.
<sup>89</sup> Children's ages when the interviews took place.
<sup>90</sup> One son was from a previous relationship.
<sup>91</sup> Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
<sup>92</sup> The chart of the full breakdown for each theme, from quotes to subordinate to superordinate themes, is available upon request.
Table 4.2

Superordinate Theme Table from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Fathers' Interviews

| Theme 1: Parents’ relationship was central to fathering due to fathers’ initial link to children through mothers and perceptions of mothers related to fathers’ ideas of parenting |
| Theme 2: Father-child relationships were changing and highly valued, with fathers viewing their children as active participants in the relationship |
| Theme 3: Process of change in fathering practices included masculine discourses and the integration of being a father with the sense of self |
| Theme 4: PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation |
| Theme 5: Fathers juggled various aspects of their lives, particularly the work-life balance |
| Theme 6: Social support and generational influences affected fathering |

One aspect to consider when attempting to understand fathers is their inherent link to mothers. Biological fathers’ introduction to parenthood is through mothers, meaning that fathers ‘meet’ their children later, thus get to know and understand their children at a later stage (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Draper, 2003). The current research and previous literature support the view that biological fathers are introduced to parenting through the biological mothers and this influences their fathering (Fagerskiold, 2008; Golombok, 2000).

1a) Fathering was inherently linked to mothers, and fathers perceived themselves as secondary. Fathers reported being inherently connected to their children’s mothers. As observed by Allan:

93 The relationship between parents will be discussed more fully in chapter 5: Coparents. However this is important to understand fathers’ parenting framework.
94 This is also explored in theme 3b below: Transition to fatherhood.
95 In the current study all fathers were biological.
I'm a bit of a sucker for gore so I had to have a look when they were cutting [partner] open and it wasn't a pretty sight but I saw [child] come out... (Allan, 120-122)

Allan described that his personality encouraged him to see his child being born out of his partner and in doing so, the physical act of becoming a father through the mother is illustrated.

Fathers also perceived themselves as less important compared to mothers in everyday parenting, and many regarded this as best practice. Dale addressed his perception of fathering as related to his partner indicating that services should adapt for her, advocating for his lesser importance:

...I think everything needs to be for [partner], 100% for the mum. Maybe the dads could routine-ised behind the mums in a sense... basically [partner] would find out what she wanted and what would work for her really and I had to fit in around that routine that... it has to be 100% for [partner] and I have to fit into that okay for me (Dale, 433-445)

Because he saw himself as the secondary parent, he promoted that services should keep him there, with his partner being primary. This also demonstrated his support of the mother, a role fathers often play, i.e., as mother's helper, both in the current research and in previous studies (Day and Lamb, 2004; Parke et al., 2005). According to research (Draper, 2003; Doherty, Erickson, and LaRossa, 2006; Gottman and DeClaire, 1998), fathers should be included in parenting from pregnancy and early infancy to promote their involvement over time (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, and Cabrera, 2006). This indicates a need to connect fathers’ perceptions with research regarding child care practices.

1b) Fathers compared themselves to their partners. Fathers frequently described their role in comparison to mothers:

I do pretty much everything. Same as [partner] really same just help out with all of it (chuckles). 'Cause there's nothing I can't do... (Silas, 14-15)

I'm very conscious that [partner] puts in a 110% Monday to Friday and at weekends I probably do 50% of the work at best... (Kenneth, 574-575)
Silas and Kenneth explained that they had the ability to parent, although they may not have used these abilities as often as their partners. An underlying message was that they compare their role with their children to their partner, placing themselves as the secondary carer and helper to the mother. Some research indicates that mothering and fathering are still considered polar opposites (Henwood and Procter, 2003), despite findings that fathers are capable of caretaking their child even if they feel they are not (Golombok, 2000; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Perhaps one of the reasons this was espoused by fathers was that fathers remain secondary to mothers in society (Cabrena et al., 2007; Wall and Arnold, 2007). Thus while modern fathering as a concept grows, it only does so within the continued premise that mothers are of primary importance to children, resulting in fathers only being able to consider themselves in relation to mothers.

These quotes illustrated that mothers are considered vital to children’s development, while fathers feel they participate with their children when they are able, but are the secondary parent. Fathers reported acting as support, perceiving their time with their children as supportive to the time the children spend with their mothers. It may be that fathers did not realise their importance, because their framework for parenting was based on this outlook, and as a result their perceptions became reality.

| Theme 2: Father-child relationships were changing and highly valued, with fathers viewing their children as active participants in the relationship |
| 2a) Father-child relationships were based on fathers’ devotion to their children, and children as active participants in the relationship |
| 2b) Fathers valued their father-child relationships, expressing enjoyment and seeing the father-child relationships developing as their children get older |

Father-child relationships were seen as very important to fathers, and as developing over time. Research indicates that fathers often hold their children in high positive regard (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Fagerskiold, 2008). Research also proposes that when fathers believe in their own importance, they are more likely to ensure they spend time with their children (Freman, Newland, and Coyl, 2008; Hofferth, 2003; McBride, Schoppe, Ho, and Rane, 2004).
2a) Father-child relationships were based on fathers’ devotion to their children, and children as active participants in the relationship. Fathers see their child as an active participant in the relationship:

...she’s [first child] so interactive if that’s the right word to use, she’s really sort of excited when I get home and and you can’t kind of ignore her you have play with her... (Allan, 61-63)

...when I’m on holiday...I’m [first child]’s favourite, so at night she yells ‘daddy’ instead of mummy and I really like that ‘cause ‘yay I’m the favourite!’ It doesn’t last for long (Allan, 363-366)

Allan appreciated that his daughter valued their relationship. While he had two children, he specifically mentioned the older one because she spent more time interacting with him, and her bond with him encouraged him to interact. Kenneth also felt that his child was an active participant in their relationship:

We think he comes and finds sees me as more a playmate anyway. So mummy when he’s ill he’ll go find mummy, when he wants a bit of a laugh same and pull my arm or pull on my fingers or something...I can get him giggling but I think he’s most boisterous play, it might be more a bloke thing I don’t know. We have a good laugh together... (Kenneth, 210-216)

It is clear that Kenneth and his partner discussed their roles in their child’s life, with Kenneth taking a role sought by his child as ‘playmate’. As seen in a variety of research, play is often a role of fathers, and children look to their fathers for this interaction (Flanders, Simard, Paquette, Parent, Vitaro, and Pihl, 2010; Grossman et al., 2002; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Research indicates that, like Kenneth, fathers participate in boisterous play with their children, and this supports their social development in the long term (Gottman and DeClaire 1998; Parke, Dennis, Flyr, Morris, Killian, McDowell, et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2005).

2b) Fathers valued their father-child relationships, expressing enjoyment and seeing the father-child relationships developing as their children get older. Fathers expressed their deep value and appreciation about their children, particularly as the children...
developed and engaged with their fathers more fully, thereby promoting a connection between the two:

I felt as time goes on my engagement with him has gotten stronger and stronger and I don’t mean the bond with him but also but actually I do because that has gotten stronger ’cause when we first when he first arrived he was a poop factory that screamed. And I don’t mean against him in any way at all but [infants] are- they don’t- they can’t do anything, they scream, they poo they so that goes on for a period of time and only when he started to smile back did I start to feel engaged with him, did I start to see that actually this is going to be fun. And as time’s gone on and he’s done his first firsts, so starting to walk, starting to crawl, there’s more of an achievement factor for me in seeing it. So I feel now we’re getting closer and closer to that time when I take him down the park to kick the football ’round and that for me is kind of a level of achievement in a strange way for him and me as in he’s now not dependent on mum all the time (Kenneth, 610-622)

... it’s nice he’s not just clinging onto [partner] sometimes he’ll be clinging onto [partner] and he’ll fling himself and say ‘da.’ You know ‘I wanna cuddle with dad’. And that’s nice a really nice feeling I wasn’t expecting to see that ’til he was three or four years old and it’s nice that we see that emotion now (Ted, 266-270)

These descriptions illustrated that fathers felt important due to the interaction with their children. Both Kenneth and Ted are pleased that they have a relationship with their child, and the interaction they had with their children supports their parenting by encouraging their desire to be involved with their children. In both these narratives, fathers expressed a development over time that they expected of their child, and appreciated that they were able to engage with their children in a connected manner.

The interaction fathers had with their children encouraged their participation, and by feeling valued by their children in these interactions; fathers engaged more, creating a symbiotic relationship between the two. This supports the argument that fathers’ interaction with their children is core to their relationship (Barnett, Marshall, and Pleck, 1992; McBride et al., 2005).
Theme 3: Process of change in fathering practices included masculine discourses and the integration of being a father with the sense of self

3a) Fathers adapted their fathering practices by learning from experience and being inspired by self-realisation/reflection
3b) Transition to fatherhood was sudden, difficult, and changed fathers’ expectations of their lifestyles and relationships
3c) Numerous masculine and paternal discourses informed fathering
3d) Emotions developed and changed during the fathering experience, including fathers’ sense of loss (‘missing out’) and feeling conflicted
3e) Sense of self as person integrated with fatherhood

Theme 3 explored the process of change in fathering perceptions and practices. This was a complex theme that comprised varying and important dimensions to examine fatherhood. Numerous aspects of fathering experiences contributed to fathers’ changes over time.

3a) Fathers adapted their fathering practices by learning from experience and being inspired by self-realisation/reflection. One practice indicated by fathers was learning from experience:

...everyday we probably make a mistake or two or three but we learn from it... (Ted, 693-694)

...give it a go and see what happens like I said before see what happens you have to work with it 'cause if you agreed with it it was rubbish if it tried and [it] worked then that was good wasn't it? Might not necessarily agree with it until you do it (Silas, 129-132)

The message provided by Ted and Silas was that learning from experience through trial and error in fathering encouraged change. By doing this, they advocated that attempting various parenting tactics encouraged their learning and fathering practices. However they must have a second aspect to this, which was realising and evaluating whether what they did achieved their aim.

In explaining that change was inspired by realisation, Kenneth described that:

...when [child] arrived um I think the reality of the hard work dawned on us... I thought he was quite a cry-ey baby but looking back on it, he was a good baby, a lot of people have it a lot worse (Kenneth, 136-138)
Kenneth explained that he did not realise what fathering entailed until becoming one. But once given the task of fathering he learned from experience about his child. This supports that fathers feel under-skilled and experience difficulties in knowing what to do with their newborn infant (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Fagerskiold, 2008). Dale told a similar story:

... [confidence] it grows definitely. Sure it grows but then it gets knocked down again. Like the first time [child] had a tantrum in public where like she slumped herself down in a high chair didn't she? And started kicking her legs and bit (chuckles) and you're like just thinking uh uh I'm out of my depth now. You win. (Dale, 484-488)

Dale explained that change occurred through experiencing his child’s first tantrum, and this influenced his fathering perception. This indicated that fathering was a learning process to him. Ted further supported this:

...I think not having been a parent before and then all of sudden kind of like got the parenting thing and realize they're clever nature really because as soon as you get used to something it uh there is something new that's going to change next week, something next month...then you start thinking well what's next? What's next you know? And of course it's it's always something new but then as soon as as that the kid's doing that thing then you start telling him off for doing it (laugh). You know you find yourself oh that's great! He's sitting up! Then you go try and change his nappy or something and 'will you lie down! Don't be sitting up!' 'Oh look he's walking! Will you stand still!' Now he's talking he's making a noise- will you shut up!' And I think it goes through life like that (Ted, 9-20)

Ted laughed as he explained his perception of the dichotomy of fatherhood. He portrayed that realisation in fatherhood was based on better understanding his child, and that this understanding at first was exciting, but frustration was attached to each milestone. While Ted described this, he also suggested that realisation allowed him to conclude that fathering was a series of triumphs and irritations. Therefore through his experiences he adapted his perceptions of fatherhood into a summary of a concept of fatherhood.
3b) Transition to fatherhood was sudden, difficult, and changed fathers’ expectations of their lifestyles and relationships. Fathers discussed that their transition to fatherhood was particularly emotive, such as ‘panic’ (Allan, 69); ‘world gets turned upside down’ (Ted, 112); ‘shock’ (Kenneth, 134); ‘scary’ (Dale, 53). Perhaps due to the point raised above regarding their lack of knowledge, fathers’ felt that the transition to fatherhood was difficult:

...I saw [child] come out and I saw her tense up and scream so that was kind of the first real thing for me. ‘Oh my God, I’m a dad.’ That classic moment, Goosebumps and everything... It’s difficult to describe, I remember going all Goosebumpy and then thinking I need to sit down... (Allan, 121-127)

...before sort of all you gotta worry about is yourself, whereas then I gotta worry about him he was my number one priority...Never sunk in ‘til he was actually born. It wasn’t until I was driving back. He was born in the early hours of the morning. I was going to the hospital it wasn’t ‘til I was actually driving back that tweaked that I was actually a father (Silas, 73-78)

Allan and Silas both suggested that becoming a father occurred after the child was born, and that it was an internal process that was difficult to describe. The difficulty in transitioning to fatherhood is seen in a number of studies. Research indicates that a fathers’ transition feels sudden and several studies report that fathers feel unprepared (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Fagerskiold, 2008). Draper (2003) found that this transition was a continuous, complex negotiation from pregnancy to postpartum. She further points out that this transition needs to be considered in the context of wider society and family. Therefore aspects of both Allan’s and Silas’ experiences were addressed in the research, but the important thing to note was that this promoted fathers’ change in perceptions.

3c) Numerous masculine and paternal discourses informed fathering. Fathers voiced both masculine and fatherhood discourses as affecting their fathering practices:

...from a fathers’ perspective, that’s the way that men think a lot of time is how how is my world doing comparing, how is my world doing to someone else’s world? How is my son doing compared to someone else’s son of a similar age...? (Ted, 373-376)
I think there’s always that protective element that will always be there. I think ultimately that’s what I think the protective element is always there. You know. I’d hate for anything to happen anything to happen to [child] at all... I really want what’s best for her really. Make sure she’s all right. (Dale, 470-475)

In the first quote it appeared that an underlying discourse of fatherhood contained an aspect of comparison and perhaps competition. Ted suggested a wider discourse in stating ‘men’ think this way and that it was not just him, but all men, indicating that wider perspectives on fatherhood are inherently linked to masculine discourses. Similarly Dale suggested that the ‘protective element’ was ‘the father’, thus linking the concept of protection to fatherhood discourses and suggesting that this was something all fathers perceived as important. Literature advises that to examine fathering, masculine discourses must be understood (Addis and Mahalik, 2003; Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, and Reid, 2006; Mahalik and Morrison, 2006) and it appears from comments such as these, wider discourses influenced fathers’ perceptions.

3d) Emotions developed and changed during the fathering experience, including fathers’ sense of loss (‘missing out’) and feeling conflicted. Fathers expressed strong emotions about being fathers:

Typical bloke thing, really excited, it was a really really exciting time! Because pregnancy nine months but it builds excitement and anticipation and nerves and as the time gets closer and closer and the excitement builds and the nervousness builds... I was involved in it as much as I could be but when it happens it is still a shock to a bloke, well, it was to me. (Kenneth, 125-134)

...if [child’s] hit a milestone like the whole rolling over she did that for the first time yesterday afternoon which I missed and uh I got home from work and [partner] got her out put her on the floor to show me... 'look what she can do!'. And she never performs so she’ll just lay there... I do feel as though I miss out... (Allan, 347-357)

By having such a variety of emotions, fatherhood seems to allow fathers to speak more about these emotions than they may have previously been able (Fagerskiold, 2008). Allan expressed feelings of ‘missing out’ in his children’s development. Several fathers expressed this sentiment of having missed out on parts of parenting, but due to their full time
employment status, they were unable to be any more involved. This indeed was observed in earlier research (Ehrenberg Gearing-Small, Hunter, and Small, 2001; Ellison Barker, and Kulasuriya, 2009).

**3e) Sense of self as person integrated with fatherhood.** Fathers suggested that their sense of self as a father integrates with their self-concept. Thus their attitudes in life, and general ideas about how they react within themselves, were tied heavily to their self-concept in general, rather than their self-concept in fathering. In the quote below Silas discussed his reaction to his child’s tantrums when his partner would leave their child with him for a few hours:

> ...I believe I'd tried everything. I don't let things bother me. I other I got advice from other people and tried that and didn't work, I tried everything. I'd done the best to do what I could do it woulda been different if I just let [child] scream and not tried anything but I tried (chuckles) what more can you do? (Silas, 92-95)

Despite their child's distress, Silas did not become concerned because he had done everything he could for his child but nothing ended the tantrums. This illustrates that his perspective on life was to not let things bother him as he tried his best, and the same was true in his perspective on fathering. Kenneth supported this integration:

> I have quite a functional brain uh so if it says to do this it should do that...but with [child] I'm relaxed it doesn't bother me 'cause seeing him develop and change...I think that's the key thing he is learning... I'm seeing it to the letter of the law or not that's fine (Kenneth, 333-339)

Kenneth describes that the usual way he thinks is more cause and effect, but with his child he adapted that thinking to be consistent with how children develop, which is not linear. This revealed that his sense of self as a person adjusted to a real world context of being a father, and that his son was not going to fit in with his way of thinking in other contexts.

An important aspect to consider is regarding fathers' identity. Rane and McBride (2000) suggest that if fathers perceive themselves as 'nurturing' they are more likely to be involved with their children. The current research supports this in that fathers' identity was very important to their interactions in the family and with the programme. Thus encouraging the
integration of nurture into males' identities would be positive for father involvement in the family. Furthermore research indicates that in order to support fathers through intervention, their attitudes and perceptions of life must be addressed (Scott and Crooks, 2004). Therefore if PAFT supports men's integration of their sense of self with fathering, they are more likely to support fathers.

The fathers' process of change theme had a variety of complex aspects, although they had in common that each contributed to fathers' perceptions of change in their lives. These themes connected to provide a comprehensive perspective on fathering change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4: PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a) Project worker-family/father connection was vital to programme involvement, including for father's needs to be met. Fathers felt valued by the project worker in sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b) PAFT provided fathers' direction, improved their understanding of child development, and overall increased fathers' knowledge, awareness, and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c) If fathers were unable to attend, handouts provided them with information, knowledge to promote awareness of their children's development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fathers indicated that PAFT was important to their fathering practices. They suggested it improved their understanding of parenting and supported them even if they were unable to attend home visits.

4a) Project worker-family/father connection was vital to programme involvement, including for father's needs to be met. Fathers felt valued by the project worker in sessions. Some fathers were unable to participate in home visits, and thus fathers appreciated the support that PAFT provided their family. Silas experienced his partner as often stressed during the day, and he described how the project worker relationship assisted his partner:

*It used to happen quite often I'll tell you, [project worker] would come over and [partner] would feel a lot more relaxed, somebody to vent off at, someone to release tension to get some voice without being judged... *the support, the support there
really it's just it's somebody to turn to to get a bit of advice and get a bit of help when you need it really (Silas, 209-216)

Although unable to attend visits at this point in time, Silas appreciated that the project worker collaborated with his partner to help her feel less strained. Although indirect, the project worker’s alliance with his partner helped Silas to support his partner and the project worker-mother alliance.

In cases where fathers were able to attend home visits, the project worker-father relationship was important:

_I'm always here but you know [project worker] always talks to both of us... She doesn't you know single [partner] out as the mum...She speaks to us as parents which you know I really like feel like, if I want to say something I can say it..._ (Dale, 452-458)

Dale indicated that his project worker talked to both him and his partner, which encouraged engagement with PAFT. He also explained that PAFT promoted his inclusion, but he indicated that he may feel more included through PAFT, as opposed to other community resources in which he has not felt included.

While both fathers had different experiences, they both expressed appreciation at their project worker supporting the family, and that PAFT was able to support fathers by supporting the mothers. In addition these positive reports from mothers may encourage fathers to attend home visits in the future.

4b) PAFT provided fathers’ direction, improved their understanding of child development, and overall increased fathers’ knowledge, awareness, and confidence.

Fathers suggested that PAFT supplied them with information, thus increasing their knowledge in fathering:

Interviewer: Did your knowledge change because of PAFT?
Kenneth: Significantly. I as I said to you before I didn’t have any engagement with children before [child] at all and as a result what do you do with it? I remember saying to [partner] before we had [child] ‘what do you do in the evenings? What do you do to entertain them? What do you do to entertain them? What do you do to entertain them?’ I mean just that big
question because I don't know, I get bored in my own company after about 10 or 15 minutes so I mean how do you entertain a child? But yes it has it's shown that simple little things that could be perceived as dull and boring... he finds it really fascinating and for me I've learned to accept that's good for him and he enjoys it and on that basis go with it 'cause before a couple times I went 'okay what's next?'... (Kenneth, 405-418)

Kenneth stipulated that having little previous interaction with children, he was concerned about 'doing' things with a child prior to the child's birth. Furthermore, he asked his partner about parenting, meaning that she had to take the knowledge-giver role, but due to PAFT she may not have to take that role as much.

Fathers also saw PAFT as understanding and steering them and their child in a positive way:

Benefits have been to understand that your child is is developing and moving on at the rate that it should be- um you've got no barometer otherwise... If it's one of those things then you can start to take remedial action to correct it. So there's lots of benefits for knowing that you're on the right path and having these milestones otherwise you just don't know... well then they're excelling in that particular area but what else are they missing out on? It's good good from that perspective and certainly get benefits as a parent being able to see what's what (Ted, 403-419)

...PAFT gives you a knowing that you know however you're getting there you're going in the right direction. You find out that the development is either on track or I think everyone likes to think they're ahead you know but I think that's just- everyone's the same so you sort of try and find you know that she's meeting meeting targets they recommend for the whole people (Dale, 498-503)

PAFT helped Ted and Dale encourage healthy development with their children, and they stated that PAFT made parents aware of their children's development. Of note is that the fathers do not suggest this as reassurance, but more in increasing their knowledge base and being pleased to know that their child was doing well, which may be because fathers had little prior knowledge about child development and therefore are learning it (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Gottman and DeClaire, 1998). Allan further developed this idea, stating that PAFT made him more aware of his children, thereby promoting his observation of his children:

... and you actually start to watch for them and it brings it to the front of you mind more (Allan, 311-312)
Allan’s awareness of particular developmental milestones creates a connection between children’s development and the role of the father with their children. Fathers also indicated that PAFT support increased their confidence:

PAFT builds massive amounts of confidence in it. As parents but there’s there’s a view are we doing it right are we doing missing something really obvious? And you can’t beat that sense check from PAFT that is really valuable…as a result I think you do feel more confident certainly I feel much more confident as a father (Kenneth, 434-441)

…it gives you confidence that she’s meeting milestones in her life and sometimes you know meeting those things and you know sort of find that you’re going in the right direction… (Dale, 507-509)

PAFT increased their confidence as a father through advising them they were doing well, and evidence from PAFT that their children were achieving their milestones. As fathers often lack confidence (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Summers, Raikes, Butler, Spicer, Pan, Shaw, et al., 1999), increases in confidence through PAFT, tends to support fathers in being more involved in their family and with their children.

4c) If fathers were unable to attend, handouts provided them with information, knowledge to promote awareness of their children’s development.

Another important element in the PAFT programme for fathers was the use of handouts. The fathers reported that in cases where they were unable to attend a home visit they were able to ascertain information through the handouts. Silas and Allan explained:

…it’s behaviour wise ‘cause if you’re getting frustrated and you read the sheet then I think oh yeah they’re only doing it ‘cause of this and it’s their development and whatever so trying to do things that a bit to advanced for them, and you think actually, no they shouldn’t be doing that anyway. So it was good ‘cause it sort of reassures you it’s not just banging your head against a wall, they just don’t understand ya. (Silas, 147-152)

…you see in their mind how they’re sort of working it out…one of the sheets about about hand-eye coordination and skills and that sort of thing will kick in so it makes sense in your head as well as oh this cute little bundle is interesting and you’re not sure why…you kind of understand what’s going on there (Allan, 453-460)
In these quotes, Silas and Allan suggested that the information provided by PAFT on handouts encouraged them to engage with their child, regulate their emotions, promote empathy, and see their children as actively attempting to understand the world around them. As many fathers in this research and other studies (Burbach et al., 2004; Deave and Johnson, 2008; Draper, 2003; Fagerskiold, 2008) expressed little understanding of child development, fathers may be likely to have high expectations that their child is unable to meet. The information provided Allan with the ability to see two sides to his child, as enjoyable and understandable, and thus the PAFT knowledge promoted an in-depth understanding of children. This supported research indicating that by providing fathers with information and positive aid, they will be able to change negative parenting practices (Burbach et al., 2004; Fletcher et al., 2008; Lundahl et al., 2008).

By providing information in an easily accessible manner once a month, even fathers who are employed during the home visits were able to better understand their child. Although not in actual home-visit sessions, the handouts provided fathers with various important aspects, particularly knowledge and awareness in an easily accessible manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 5: Fathers juggled various aspects of their lives, particularly the work-life balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5a) Fathers experienced stress by juggling various roles and tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b) Work-life balance was important to understanding fathering experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to numerous factors, fathers felt they were juggling several aspects of their lives. Fagan (2000) suggests that the more daily issues fathers have, the less likely they are to interact positively with their child. Research also indicates that fathers are influenced by their context (Belsky 1984; Bost et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 1998; Palkovitz, 2007; Pleck, 2007). Thus outside influences on their lives inform their experiences in their families. Some research indicates that fathers' involvement in the family should be considered through a work-life framework, since fathers develop their perspectives of fathering through this perspective (Fagerskiold, 2006; Henwood and Procter, 2003), and paid employment was one of the issues that fathers juggled within their family life.
5a) Fathers experienced stress by juggling various roles and tasks. Fathers in the current research supported a variety of research findings indicating that they were forced to juggle numerous different aspects of their lives:

... I'm not sure what can be done to fix it in terms of I can't give up work at weekends, we've got jobs to do around the house, jobs to do generally. So you can't stop things now and he's still got to be fed, he's still got to be looked after... it's a juggle of time, what's important to do versus what would you like to do and what's fair... (Kenneth, 584-590)

Kenneth expressed that his child must come before his personal wishes. Fathers expressed that they would like more time with their children, but due to their need to support their families financially and complete day-to-day chores they were not able to be with their child as much as they might like, findings supported by previous research (Craig, 2006; Hatten, Vinter, and Williams, 2002; Lewis and Lamb, 2007). Families often assert that their current work-life divide is necessary for family well-being (Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Ellison et al., 2009), and society continues to believe that fathers should be the main breadwinner (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 2001; Finley, Mira, and Schwartz, 2008; Hauari and Hollingsworth, 2009; Salway, Chowbey, and Clarke, 2009). As seen above, fathers felt they were missing out on fathering, and one reason for this was their need to financially support their families. They also suggested that they do things with their children at certain times due to their juggling:

I do a bit more at the weekends 'cause I'm here more, there are no jobs that are specifically mine (Allan, 263-264)

... I'm lucky I do shift work 'cause it gives me time to spend with me kids (Silas, 63)

Allan and Silas suggested that while they shared responsibilities, they were limited because they only had certain times they could perform these. This was not reported negatively, but rather as simply a fact of their experiences. Therefore it appears that they complete tasks and support their family around their other responsibilities, such as paid employment.
5b) Work-life balance was important to understanding fathering experiences. In these interviews, fathers reported being the primary income earner. Historically, society believed that fathers’ role in the family was to provide resources, particularly financial (Bradley, Shears, Roggman, and Tamis-LeMonda, 2006; Christensen and Palkovitz, 2001; Featherstone, 2009). The work-life balance is important to investigate as it may have negative effects on the family, with research suggesting that when fathers are unable to fulfil their ‘expected’ role as provider, they withdraw from their family life (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Johns and Belsky, 2007). Fathers in the current research supported previous research and also suggested that a divide existed between their home and work lives:

... that was just the change in mindset so yes it probably has shifted...when you suddenly realise that this is how it’s going to be and [babies] not clockwork. At work I’m still the opposite I’m still ‘well you said you’re going to do it so where is it?’ and that still ‘why doesn’t that work, when it should work?’ But with [child] particularly relaxed about his learning (Kenneth, 347-352)

...it’s all quite intense. It’s a different way of working when you’re away, it’s so intense when we’re away so your mind focuses differently but always in your mind...being able to contact home and speak to [partner] and find out that everything is okay...(Dale, 292-296)

Fathers drew a division between their home and work lives. Kenneth adapted for his home life, although he stated that at work he remained inflexible with high expectations for his staff. This negates the research by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) which indicated that employment stress can leak into family life. Instead, Kenneth supported Barnett et al. (1992)’s research that fathers’ work-related stress can be shielded from their families if there are positive father-child interactions. Similar to Kenneth, Dale expressed that his work was so consuming that he focused differently than he would like, because he wanted to know that his partner and child were okay, but this did not interfere with his performance at work. Perhaps both Kenneth and Dale both had high levels of job satisfaction, which can lead to more positive father-child relationships (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). But the current research advocates that fathers’ ability to put aside their family mindset allowed them to be better employees.
This theme fits closely with the literature in the sense that many fathers would like to participate more fully with their child but see employment as non-negotiable (Craig, 2006; Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Ellison et al., 2009; Lewis and Lamb, 2007). The work-life balance caused fathers to juggle various issues, and in some cases expressed feelings of sadness that they were unable to participate more in family life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 6: Social support and generational influences affected fathering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6a) Generational influences: Family of origin and intergenerational transmission influenced fathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b) The role social support played in fathering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fathers felt numerous factors influenced their fathering, particularly their social network. This may be due to fathers changing their contact with their social network at the transition to fatherhood (Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006), but fathers reported that other people influenced their perceptions of fatherhood.

6a) Generational influences: Family of origin and intergenerational transmission influenced fathering. Fathers perceived an importance in others influencing their parenting, including intergenerational influences:

I remember my dad being the only guy standing at the school gates surrounded by all those mums. I'm pretty sure he loved it...it was just normal...My mum would come home I guess as I would come home but that's what I'd like to do but you know uh uh bills have to be paid (Allan, 413-419)

It's good to be involved. It's not something that I ever had that when I was little, never any involvement from my dad when I was little (Silas, 45-46)

Allan's and Silas' quotes are at the two ends of the spectrum. Allan stated that his father was a primary caregiver, while Silas stated that he had very little involvement with his own father. Research indicates that intergenerational involvement is one of the best predictors for father involvement, with those fathers who experienced their own fathers' as involved being more likely to involved (Walters et al., 2001), and other research suggesting that fathers want different from their own fathers' experience, which encourages more involvement with their children (Summers, Boller, Schiffman, and Raikes, 2006). Pleck and Masciadrelli (2004) and
Dick (2004) suggest that this dichotomy is typical, with both those who had father involvement and those that did not desiring this outcome. Therefore research indicates that both Allan and Silas are typical of current fathering experiences in that both extremes of father involvement from the family of origin result in the desire to be involved with their children.

6b) The role of social support played in fathering. Fathers also perceived social support as important to their parenting:

...all your friends and families come out and you get different friends and the ones that come out and still single you’ll see them less often and the ones who’ve got children you’ll see them more ’cause you have common interest and new people you meet you um I don’t think from nursery now or from antenatal classes um just general different things you get a whole new trench of friends and your life goes through a whole new phase you go through different phases with the kid growing up um but then your life changes as well really (Ted, 45-53)

...there’s isn’t really like a way to meet fathers like [partner] met mummies (Dale, 343-344)

In the first quote Ted suggested that after the birth of his child, parents make new friends that fit into the context of their life. In the second quote Dale stated that his partner made a social network within the community, but that this was not possible for him due to the lack of options in the community. Through this quote it may be that fathers feel they need more opportunities to create social networks in community settings.

Research supports this, indicating that it can be much more difficult for fathers than mothers to make friends following the transition to parenthood (Bost et al., 2002). Furthermore some research suggests that the lack of social support can negatively affect fathering (Guerrero, 2009). Some research indicates that social support for fathers may come more from their families (Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006; Summers et al., 2006). Therefore it is vital that fathers are able to develop social networks in their context.
Summary

The fathers' perspectives reported here illuminate their experiences as fathers and with PAFT. These initial findings provide some important insights into fathers' perceptions and these perceptions are connected to their fathering practices. The findings reported here offer some important perspectives on which to continue the research. One important point to highlight is that fathers perceived PAFT as helpful to their fathering even if unable to participate directly in the programme. This information is important to understanding fathers' perspectives and the next phase of the research: questionnaires.

Phase 2: Questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed using quotes based on specific themes from the phase 1 analysis. In creating these questionnaires for fathers, the fathers and fathering and PAFT questionnaire was developed with statements from the following fathering themes:

- **Father-child relationships were changing and highly valued, with fathers viewing their children as an active participant in the relationship.** Due to the fathers' perceived importance of the father-child relationship, this theme was included in the questionnaire.

- **Process of change in fathering practices included masculine discourses and the integration of being a father with the sense of self.** As one research question involved change in parenting practices and it had many elements explored in phase 1, it was included in this phase.

- **PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation.** Similar to the previous theme, numerous PAFT components promoted positive fathering practices, despite whether or not they had attended home visits. This theme was important to understanding programme elements that engaged fathers, and thus is vital to understanding the influence of PAFT on fathering.

- **Fathers juggled various aspects of their life, particularly the work-life balance.** Due to the importance of context to fathering experience expressed in the interviews and previous research (Cabrera et al., 2007; Dubowitz, 2009), this theme was included, with a particular emphasis on the work-life balance as influencing fathering.
Two themes were excluded from phase 2:

- *Parents’ relationship was central to fathering due to fathers’ initial link to children through mothers and perceptions of mothers related to fathers’ ideas of parenting.* This theme was excluded from the questionnaire as it was more closely related to questions about coparenting than specifically fathers’ perspectives.

- *Social support and generational influences affected fathering.* This theme was excluded in its own sense and was instead considered one of the aspects of life that fathers balance. Only questions about their contact with family were included in order to understand whether they felt involved.

**Participants**

Fathers were recruited from the two areas described in chapter 2. A total of 41 fathers attempted to complete some part of the questionnaire; however four were excluded, due to insufficient number of responses to the questions (two) and unsuccessfully attempting to complete the mothers’ questionnaire (two) instead of the fathers’ questionnaire. For further information regarding demographics, please see Table 4.3.footnote[96]

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960 is the number of missing values, unless otherwise indicated.
Table 4.3

Fathers' Demographics for Completing the Fathering Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number of Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting status</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>18 or under</td>
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<td>19-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
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<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Currently in Paid Employment</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-level(s)/AS-level(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree/diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently with PAFT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 37 fathers completed at least one section of the questionnaire. Due to the breakdown of the questionnaire, fathers completed various parts of the questionnaire ignoring parts or particular questions that they felt did not pertain to them. As can be seen in Table 4.4, fathers varied on their completion rate of each questionnaire.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Section</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section A: You as a father</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B: Fathering and PAFT</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B.2: Fathering and PAFT-visit attendance</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section F: University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-Dimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)\textsuperscript{97}

Multi-dimensional scaling revealed several key regions influencing both fathering and PAFT.

‘You as a father’ questionnaire.\textsuperscript{98} On the ‘You as a father’ questionnaire (Section A), three primary regions were identifiable (see Figure 4.1). The fathering analysis had suitable stress and moderate RSQ values with Stress=.14 and RSQ=.91.

\textsuperscript{97} Samples of this analysis are available upon request.

\textsuperscript{98} It is important to note that statements regarding paid employment existed across each region.
Men’s assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours.

Figure 4.1. Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the ‘You as a Father’ questionnaire

Note. Four questions were excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the regions as these outliers caused the model to be compressed: If I could I would definitely be a stay at home dad (Q8); A lot of fathering is whether you feel something is right or wrong (Q9); I have been lucky because I had a close family upbringing (Q14); I would be quite upset if I was excluded from family services (Q21).

Internal and external factors shape fathers’ involvement with their children and in the community. Numerous different factors play a role in fathers’ perspectives on fathering and influence his involvement. One aspect of these factors is its relationship to the community in which Q7, Q16, and Q27 all indicate that fathers’ understanding of the community are an external factor that influences father involvement. However when looking at the diagram, Q27 (about services) and Q28 (about missing out) are very related. Thus there is a connection between fathers feeling that they miss out on fathering, and their inability to access activities in the community illustrating an internal and external connection. This suggests that the internal pressure fathers feel to participate in fathering is related to the external emotional responses they have to fathering, i.e., fathers may feel a pull between the two, which may connect to the contextual points raised by previous research.
Internal and external factors that shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community:

- It is important that there is a place in the community where fathers are encouraged to talk to each other (Q7)
- You should win the lottery before you have children (Q11)
- My first feeling in becoming a father was panic (Q12)
- More availability of father services is the key to their involvement (Q16)
- After my child was born I was a dad, because something changed inside me (Q17)
- Your child can knock your confidence (Q22)
- I never had any involvement from my dad when I was little (Q23)
- I have tried to find some father-child activities in the community (Q27)
- Sometimes I feel as though I miss out on fathering (Q28)
- I need alternatives to shouting at my child (Q29)

**Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships,** particularly the father-child relationship. This region comprises statements regarding both fathers' process of change and the father-child relationship. This region is about fathers accommodating their understandings of fatherhood to fit within the context in which they exist. This provides evidence that fathers perceive the process of change in fathering developing within the father-child relationship. Fathers' perceptions of their relationship and the changes they have made to this relationship are detailed in this region.
Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship:

- Once I had a child, he became my number one priority (Q1)
- Becoming a father has been a motivation to spend more time at home (Q2)
- I feel much more confident as a father than I did a year ago (Q3)
- When it comes to bonding and being with my child I would like to do more (Q4)
- Fathering is a juggle of time, what is important to do versus what you would and what is fair to do (Q10)
- Learning how to be a dad is always evolving (Q13)
- When my child was born, my world was turned upside down (Q15)
- When my child arrived, the reality of the hard work dawned on me (Q19)
- You look toward the future all the time for your child, you think what is the next step forward? (Q20)
- I am fulfilling the traditional breadwinner role in the family (Q26)
- As my child does more and more physical things I feel more of an attachment to him (Q30)
- I realised that children do not run like clockwork but at work I am still the opposite: You said you were going to do it so where is it? (Q31)
- Getting to see my child develop, that is the magic in fathering (Q32)

Men’s assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours.

This region is comprised of questions that involve how fathers assimilate their understanding of their perceptions of fatherhood. The main difference between this and the above facet is that this is about how their life changes outside of the influence of the father-child relationship. The two statements that appear to relate to the father-child relationship (Q5 and Q25) firmly place the child as an object rather than a person or a relationship. They are both about the fathers’ thought process other than in connection with a relationship, and about what the father as a person believes.

Men’s assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours:

- When my child first arrived, he was a poop factory that screamed, babies cannot do anything (Q5)
- As soon as I could after our child was born, I went back to work because I found it easier to be there (Q6)
- Since becoming a father I have made slight changes to my work-home life but nothing significant (Q18)
- I asked a question on one of these parenting internet forums (Q24)
- Soon after my child was born I remember taking him off by myself and thinking what happens if he kicks off (starts screaming/crying)? (Q25)
‘Fathering and PAFT’ questionnaire. Fathering and PAFT (section B) analysis had two regions identifiable (see Figure 4.2). This analysis had excellent stress and good RSQ values with Stress=.08 and RSQ=.97.

Figure 4.2. Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the ‘Fathering and PAFT’ questionnaire

Note. Four questions were excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the to the regions as these outliers caused the model to be compressed: Benefits of PAFT have been to understand that my child is developing at the rate that he should be (Q37); I do not think I gained from PAFT (Q38); As a father you have the opportunity to attend or not attend PAFT visits (Q41); We are here for PAFT visits as a family unit and the project worker comes along and interfaces into that (Q47).

Project worker relationship with families and fathers. This region is comprised of the project worker element that encourages father participation. This particular sample of fathers had mostly attended at least one home visit and they indicated they had similar perceptions about the importance of the project worker. The way that Q46 and Q49 overlap indicates that fathers see their project worker as addressing them as parents and allowing the father to speak. Therefore it seems that the project workers invite the fathers to participate
(or not) and that fathers are then able to provide input on development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project worker relationship with families and fathers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There are always pamphlets left behind by PAFT for fathers to follow up on (Q43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The project worker meets my needs to learn about my child (Q44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My project worker is very good at talking and listening to people and that encourages me to get involved (Q45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If I want to say something during a PAFT visits, the project worker considers my input valid (Q46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I do not feel excluded from PAFT (Q48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When I am at the visit rather than addressing all the questions and options to my partner as the mother, the project worker addresses me as well (Q49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is quite nice to see what PAFT and the kids are doing rather than just reading about it from the handouts (Q50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement.** While this region appears as if the questions are less related than other analyses, fathers reported that these aspects of PAFT were positive. Fathers reported several aspects of PAFT that they found encouraging. Q34 is slightly farther away than the others. However, considering that the question is about fathers discerning important versus non-important information, it is apparently less related than the others, possibly due to fathers being interested in all the information provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I have a flip through PAFT handouts and take out what information I think is useful (Q34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT builds massive amounts of confidence (Q35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The project worker has been through everything we are going through as parents (Q36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If I could I would definitely be more involved with PAFT (Q39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The PAFT handouts make me start to watch for what my child should be doing, bringing it to the front of my mind (Q40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My knowledge about children has significantly improved because of PAFT (Q42)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Analysis
To better understand the relationships between the regions, each region’s statements were measured using Cronbach’s Alpha to establish their reliability as a scale. The previously validated questionnaire scales (University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice) were also
tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha to ensure its scales remained reliable with this sample. As can be seen in Table 4.5, all new scales were considered reliable, with each new scale being .7 or above.

Table 4.5

*Cronbach’s Alpha for Reliability of Each Newly-Found and Previously Validated Questionnaire Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external factors that shape fathers’ involvement with their children and in the community</td>
<td>=.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship</td>
<td>=.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours</td>
<td>=.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project worker relationship with families and fathers</td>
<td>=.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement</td>
<td>=.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation^</td>
<td>=.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ perceived confidence due to PAFT participation^</td>
<td>=.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ perceived ability due to PAFT participation^</td>
<td>=.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ perceived actions due to PAFT participation^</td>
<td>=.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. ^The standardised questionnaire scales*

After the scales were identified and re-coded as scales in their own right, skewness and kurtosis scores were computed to ascertain which variables were parametric and non-parametric in order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis (Appendix F2). Most scales were parametric with the following scales being non-parametric: men’s assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours; and PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement.

**Correlations**

Parametric (Pearson’s) and non-parametric (Spearman’s) correlations were conducted to better understand the relationships between scales in the measures.

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99 Those z-scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.

100 Note. The work-life balance occurs within various aspects of the model, creating an overall importance, not simply its own region. Therefore it is not seen as its own concept in the correlations. It will be explored in the discussion section below.
**Parametric (Pearson's correlations).** The parametric correlations show several important relationships between scales (see Appendix F2 for parametric correlation table).

All four aspects of the University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice scales were related. With fathers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation, $r = .70, p < .01$. Fathers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, $r = .80, p < .001$. Fathers' perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation, $r = .63, p < .001$. Fathers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation, $r = .86, p < .001$. Fathers' perceived ability due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation, $r = .56, p < .001$. Fathers' perceived confidence due to PAFT participation is related to fathers' perceived actions due to PAFT participation, $r = .67, p < .001$. Therefore the four scales relate to one another in understanding fathers' perspectives, meaning that if a father scores highly on one of these, the others scores are also likely to be high. This supports PAFT's notions of the relationship between these scales.

Internal and external factors that shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community is related to process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship, $r = .35, p < .05$. Thus if fathers have high levels of factors influencing their involvement, they are also likely to have high levels of process of change in the father-child relationship.

Fathers' process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship is related to the project worker relationship with families and fathers, $r = .65, p < .001$. Thus if fathers perceive high levels of process of change through family relationships, they also see the project worker-family relationship as having an influence.
Non-parametric (Spearman's correlations). The non-parametric correlations show several important relationships (see Appendix F2 for the non-parametric correlation chart).

Men's assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours is associated with process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship, $r_s = .34, p < .05$; and relates to project worker relationship with families and fathers, $r_s = .60, p < .005$. These connections indicate that fathers' process of change influences their perceptions of becoming a father such that if they view one positively, they will also view the other positively. In addition, if fathers have high levels of assimilation into fatherhood, they are also likely to perceive the project worker relationship positively.

PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement is related to two scales: Internal and external factors that shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community, $r_s = .63, p < .001$ and the process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship, $r_s = .47, p < .01$. This means that if fathers saw PAFT factors highly, they also perceive internalised and externalised factors for involvement highly. This finding also indicates that if fathers viewed PAFT factors as promoting change they were more likely to rate their own change in fathering highly.

Summary
This four pronged analysis from MDS to correlations illuminates several important findings for fathering and fathers' perspectives on PAFT. This analysis has suggested that specific regions of analysis are reliably rated in the fathers' experiences, suggesting that they perceive similar experiences in the family, outside the family and in their role as a father, and with and without PAFT participation. These findings create a larger platform from which to understand fathers' perspectives, but first, the findings need to be verified by fathers in focus groups.
Phase 3: Focus groups

The focus group analysis aimed to validate and expand previous findings while also considering any perceptions not previously found that are important to fathers’ experiences. Support for the previous findings will first be briefly discussed, and then the new themes will be explored in more depth to provide additional information for interpreting the findings.

Participants

In phase 3, five fathers participated in the focus group. One father had participated in the coparents interviews and questionnaires (Jeremy). Two fathers had completed questionnaires (Owen, Douglas). Two fathers had participated in neither of the previous phases (Mark, Jack).

Phase 1 and 2 Findings Validated in Phase 3

After transcribing the fathers’ focus group verbatim, the data were first analysed, using thematic analysis, to validate previous findings from phases 1 and 2. Four themes found in phases 1 and 2 were identified in this analysis (in Table 4.6) and will be discussed in turn below.

Table 4.6

Themes Identified from the Findings of Phases 1 and 2 Validated in the Fathers’ Focus Group

1. The father-child relationship was highly regarded by fathers, and fathers expressed desire for and involvement with their children
2. Process of change in fathering practices was based on various components, such as family relationships, paternal discourses, and the fathers’ sense of self as a parent
3. Fathers needed to juggle various elements in their lives, including the work-life balance
4. PAFT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability, and action

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101 Names and identifying details have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality
102 Only five fathers participated despite more than 80 receiving an invitation. While the ideal number according to literature is six to eight, one father was forced to drop out on the day of the focus group due to his child taking ill.
103 Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
1. The father-child relationship was highly regarded by fathers, and fathers expressed desire for and involvement with their children. Fathers continued to explain that their relationship with their child was important to them:

Owen: ...just simple games that I do with my son that just ideas to test his ability to do something that I just wouldn’t have thought of doing before and it really opens your eyes out about the way they learn and why they develop and that’s really really helped me I think because when you have a child you start with you don’t know you don’t know what to expect or what’s exactly going to happen so I found it very, very beneficial... (48-56)

Owen explained that he enjoyed learning about and playing with his son, which enabled a more in-depth understanding of who his child was. Like many other fathers in the current research and previous studies (Draper, 2003; Deave and Johnson, 2008), Owen suggested that in his experience of fathering he lacked knowledge and expectations of children’s development.

2. Process of change in fathering practices was based on various components, such as family relationships, paternal discourses, and the fathers' sense of self as a parent. As previously found, process of change in fathering was based on a variety of interlinking factors:

Jack: ...I mean I felt certain for the first nine months that I was massively out of my depth and you know I was God I was drowning you know? I was totally out of control I had no idea what the hell I was doing or for myself as well you know I didn’t change myself quick enough to um you know adjust to it um and I just put it down to the fact that they [mothers] carry them for nine months therefore you know they’ve they’ve done that, they’ve made that mental change... There was a sudden change for me and I suddenly went ‘oh okay I can do it I totally get it now.’ Um it took a long time to come and it was so frustrating beforehand ‘cause I kept thinking well why don’t I why isn’t this natural? It was really, everything was forced it was um you know I wanted to love him but I wanted to be you know I wanted to be the father but um it was all very forced and it took a long time before suddenly I went ‘right’ you know and now it’s completely natural, I get it. (860-880)

Jack uses his relationship to his family (both mother and child), paternal discourses, and his adapting sense of self as rationale for his transitioning to fatherhood. This transition successfully occurred eventually, although it was difficult and time consuming. The current
research and previous studies support Jack’s perspective by suggesting that the transition to parenthood is difficult for many fathers (Draper, 2003; Fagerskiold, 2006).

3. Fathers needed to juggle various elements in their lives, including the work-life balance. Juggling various aspects of their lives, particularly work and life, was a consistent theme both here and in the literature on fathering:

Mark: ... I guess because we sort of fall into a nice routine, [partner]’ll run the house really well and I’ll do what I can to help out but I’m not going to start trailing on her toes but that’s probably ‘cause I’m working anyway ‘cause it can be quite hard to switch off from one or the other you know and I usually end up working a bit later or when we put her [child] to bed I carry on working, it can just be hard to because there is no out the door distinction it’s just shut the door when she’s asleep, it’s open so I can hear what’s going on when she’s awake (440-448)

Mark suggested that juggling his work and life can be difficult as he often works in the home. Working from home provided numerous benefits and drawbacks, as Mark introduced, being unable to draw a division between the two scenarios may cause some stress. Many fathers perceived their partners as helpful to their work-home divide, and literature supported this as necessary for many families’ well-being (Ehrenberg et al., 2001).

4. PAFT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability, and action. One final theme that fathers explored was that PAFT supported fathering:

Jeremy: ... Particularly about the games sort of what actually children are getting out of it and where they are in their development you know you know that’s very good because you get a PAFT visit at regular intervals you’re you’re kind of seeing where where your child is, what they are doing, what’s going on in their minds (61-66)

Jack: I think it’s for me it’s the confidence of of knowing that I’m doing okay or we’re doing okay. We’re we’re on up the things we do with him. We’re increasing the um the complexity of the things we’re doing with him at the right pace. Um I mean I don’t know I’m a first time parent I get no idea you know so you know I don’t want to be sat there- there’s all sorts of things I want to be doing with him and I know it’s he’s not old enough yet so it’s learning when I can do that stuff (91-98)
These fathers suggested that certain aspects of PAFT encouraged their understanding of their children. Fathers had a complex view of PAFT and saw various aspects that promoted their fathering. PAFT information promoted fathers’ awareness, confidence and knowledge of child development, provided reassurance, understanding of children, and fathers’ involvement in their relationships. All three fathers expressed that PAFT assisted them in their parenting, and that several complex components empowered them in developing their relationship with their children.

New Themes Emerging from the Fathers’ Focus Groups

A further three themes were either expanded significantly from previous phases or newly added, having not been mentioned in either of the previous two phases. These can be found in Table 4.7 and will be discussed in turn below.

Table 4.7

New Themes from the Fathers’ Focus Group

1. Fathers suggested that they felt societal expectations based on roles, but these were different to mothers’ societal pressures
2. Explanations for fathering skills and abilities: These were connected to fathers’ time with their children, gender role perceptions (e.g. ‘natural’ ideas of parenthood), and placed in comparison to mothering skills and abilities
3. Learning and support from others was an important aspect to fathering

1. Fathers suggested that they felt societal expectations based on roles, but these were different to mothers’ societal pressures. Unlike previous discussions, fathers explained that they felt societal expectations, but this was different to the pressures mothers’ experience:
Jeremy: That’s also an expectation placed on us by society. Uh yeah we’re uh it’s very much the traditional father that you go out and earn money and and you hardly ever see your children. Uh and I really don’t like that... (205-207)

In this example, Jeremy described his perceived view of society’s expectations of fathers, which Mark supported with his experience of returning to work after the birth of his first child:

Mark: ... it just happened that um my wife became pregnant at exactly the same time as a colleague of mine who is female and um when the baby was born I had um I think a week’s paternity leave that the company didn’t make up for and then I had two week’s holiday. Came back and start with everybody was like ‘oh how’s the baby? How are you finding it?’ Um then very, very shortly afterwards when I went back to the office the conversation was all about work again and yet when my female colleague comes back in every now and again just to visit it’s all about all about her baby and even now she works part time and it’s all about the baby. We had kids at the same time, very good friends. For me it’s ‘how’s work?’ And for her it’s ‘how’s the baby?’ (341-353)

Mark suggested that societal pressure expected him as a man to get back to work, while women were allowed to be mothers, which literature supports (Featherstone, 2009; Singley and Hines, 2005). Jeremy agreed with Mark’s point and extended it:

Jeremy: As men well you don’t generally discuss your children and if you do you know you get uh-
Mark: You get ripped for it, I mean I do...
Jeremy: If I do talk about my children it’s only briefly, you can’t. You can’t. And actually for me my children are an important part of my life (363-372)

Mark and Jeremy supported one another by suggesting that as fathers they were unable to discuss their children for fear of being teased by their colleagues. This indirect attack on fathers encouraged them to feel undervalued through workplace culture and promoted creating a strong division between their work and family life (Featherstone, 2009; Russell and Hwang, 2004).

A differing perspective that came out from the focus group about societal pressure was in the views of Douglas, a stay-at-home father:
Douglas: ... I'd love to say that I'm not susceptible about what society expects of me... But that's just not true... but occasionally I do feel twinges of you know like, "I'm at home", you know I do feel that I sort of have to rarely do I feel I have to back it up but yeah it does. I run very uh I definitely feel the expectations of society tells me with children and stuff like that uh and with regards to breadwinning my wife earns a lot more than I could uh [chuckling] and she's much more interested in a career than I ever was... (225-237)

Douglas described that although for the most part he was comfortable in his role as the stay-at-home parent, he still felt pressure on occasion regarding being a breadwinner and defending their choice for him to stay at home. Overall though he appeared good natured about it, laughing as he said he was not interested in a career, meaning that he was able to happily stay with his children. According to research, men who stay home with children have less rigid stereotypes (West, Lewis, Ram, Barnes, Leach, Sylva, et al., 2009) indicating that the societal norms would not adversely affect them as much. However it appeared that even fathers who choose non-traditional roles have societal perspectives embedded.

2. Explanations for fathering skills and abilities: These were connected to fathers’ time with their children, gender role perceptions (e.g. ‘natural’ ideas of parenthood), and placed in comparison to mothering skills and abilities. Fathers stated numerous theories regarding developing their skills and abilities, however these were often placed in comparison to mothers’ skills and abilities. Many fathers felt that they did not have as much time with their children as mothers, which contributed to their perceptions of lower capabilities:

Jack: From my point of view, I'm I'm never there I'm out working all the time and so you know I just see [child] in the evening briefly and then at weekends and um so it's very much [partner] is the main parent and I have to effectively trust that she's doing the right thing for him during the day I have no idea you know I'm out other things to worry about... (125-130)

Jack saw trust in his partner's parenting as important to his responsibilities. Perhaps to indicate their perceived lack of confidence or knowledge, fathers were regularly comparing their parenting to their partners, which seemed to place 'mothering' as the ideal form of parent:
Douglas: I have got to say I was always have always for as long as I can remember I have thought about this a lot when it's nature versus nurture debate I was pretty much like it's a blank sheet, for me it was all nurturing you know? It was I was very sceptical about you know sort of gender roles being something innate. But I uh I've never felt more male than since doing this and I've never felt like less able to do, especially the second child 'cause with one I was okay 'cause I could focus give them my entire attention one thing at a time which suited me fine...Second one come along I know I even said 'you know can't do two, don't know how to do two, can't do two' and that's absolutely right, two's a wreck in the head and God I'd love to go to work but yes it and I do feel that in some ways my wife is more suited more suited to do the mothering in many ways she could cope with things that I really struggle with a lot better than I could um (laughing) but she's also much better at the working thing than me as well so I guess the point is she is better than me...we're a bit stuck really (301-320)

Douglas suggested that he believed in nurture, and this belief allowed him to negate gender norms' existence. However he revealed that since the birth of his second child, he now believes in gender as organising people, concluding that his partner would be a more capable parent. Douglas, in considering his own perceived inadequacies, looked to mothers for an explanation. Perhaps due to societal norms, Douglas was able to say how incapable he felt, without feeling the strain that many mothers reported. This illustrates that perhaps by comparing themselves to mothers, fathers are able to see themselves more realistically because they are not expecting themselves, and society is not expecting them, to do everything well. As Silverstein (1996) suggests, whenever fathers participate in child care, they are perceived more positively, while mothers have a societal responsibility to participate in child care. Therefore fathers are able to do less and still be considered in a positive light.

Jack supported gender as organising parenting by stating it was necessary in order to succeed in his paid employment:

Jack: ...I run my own business so um you know I the business is always in my head but I find it contrary to what I imagined it would be I find it a lot easier to walk in through the front door and forget. It's uh but equally I walk out going to work um it's almost like I'm going out to hunt for animals...so that so I can't have any dreamy babies in my head um 'cause I'm really concentrating on um maybe that's just a natural thing I don't know...-
Jeremy: That's a good point actually... (383-394)
Jack rationalised his ability to completely forget about home when he goes to work as being due to evolution. Jack suggests that evolutionarily his work would have been hunting, so he needed to remain focussed, and if his child was in his mind he would experience difficulty concentrating. By suggesting it as evolutionary and from a hunter-gatherer society, he ends by suggesting this was a natural experience, to which Jeremy agreed. Jeremy indicated that when he went to work, his family was no longer in his mind. Thus there may be some reason that fathers saw themselves as forgetting family due to natural and evolutionary influences. By suggesting this was natural, there may be less need to be concerned or change their perspective, however this would remain contrary to many of the other points that fathers have listed as aspirations for their relationship with their children.

3. Learning and support from others was an important aspect to fathering. In many cases fathers perceived and understood parenting from those around them. As seen in previous studies (Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006; Raikes and Belotti, 2006), fathers’ value social and knowledge support in their journey from friends and family. For example:

Mark: ...I mean um my sister-in-law was was of the opinion before they had their first child they read every book they could between them, her and her husband and they got so bogged down... it was one of the books- this is what we’re doing... Nobody, her mum couldn’t tell her...it was ‘nope we’re not having it’, it’s [book] that’s the only way. And they they really struggled for you know that that’s fine now they’ve still got a few problems but...we looked at how they struggled and we don’t we don’t have a clue how it’s going to be. All we can do we know there’s some big change coming but prepared to be unprepared you know? Just brace yourself and try to deal with it and deal with it in our own way...we just thought oh we’ll see how it goes and if this works great and if it doesn’t okay maybe we’ll speak to a friend in a similar situation or ...but so far it’s been quite successful... (520-540)

Mark told the group about his sister-in-law’s struggles during her child’s infancy because she decided to ignore the people around her in favour of one author, and then she struggled. This story indicated that Mark and his partner learned from family about the need to take parenting as it comes. Jack also suggested an influence from others:

104 This theme was excluded after phase 1 and considered only in light of services, but re-emerged during the focus group phase.
Jack: ...I've seen a number of my friends growing up, their fathers were always at work or going abroad and things like that and I know how much it's affected the children and uh one of my best friends always mentions it you know that that's his biggest regret and things like that and a thing he would change so I desperately don't want that to happen... 

By interacting with those around him, Jack committed to being an involved father, and thus his current social network encouraged his fathering practices.

The reason this theme may have emerged again is due to fatherhood being such a significant part of fathers’ lives. While some research suggests fathers receive less social support than mothers (Bost et al., 2002), Knoester and Eggebeen (2006) argue that fathers are likely to increase their family connections after the birth of their child. Therefore mothers may receive more social support through social networks, while fathers may do so through their families.

Summary
Fathers validated previous findings and identified a few additional points that illuminated understanding the findings through the focus group discussion. Fathers assisted the research by grounding the findings in their perspectives and exploring some of the themes in the wider context. One issue that became clearer in this discussion was the importance of gender roles in fathers’ experiences. Perhaps due to shifting perspectives on fatherhood, they relied on gender stereotypes to explain their experiences.

Discussion
The findings provided a complex and intricate view of fathers, with numerous factors exhibiting influence on their perceptions and behaviours. Fathers provided a great deal of information on perceiving themselves as the ‘secondary’ parent and programme participant. In considering the findings across phases, Figure 4.3 provides a schematic representation of the connections between the concepts emerging here. At the end of each concept description, boxes detail the specific findings from the research phases that informed the development of the concept.
The current research found support for previous research (Henwood and Procter, 2003; Lewis and Lamb, 2003) indicating that society has changed regarding fathering roles and fathers in the current research appreciated this. It further found support that parenting programmes that support fathers in their relationships will assist fathers in their new father framework (Doherty et al., 2006; Lee, 2006). Furthermore, the bottom-up approach allowed for fathers to be perceived in and of themselves without being compared to mothers by the research deemed important by many fathering advocates (Cabrena et al., 2007; Phares, 1996; Silverstein, 1996), which illuminated components unique to fatherhood. That said, many fathers' assumptions of parenting in the current research was so ingrained that mothers were their comparison point.

Process of Change in Fathering Practices (Box 4.1)

Process of change in fathering practices was a complicated and developing concept for fathers across all phases. Their process of change appeared to occur primarily after their children were born and continue over time, with fathers becoming more engaged through their interactions with their children.

Adjusting to fatherhood, fathers indicated a two-stage process of assimilation and accommodation perspectives, meaning that fathers conceptualise having children fit in with their current schemas, and adapting these schemas to fit in with their environment. This dual stage process allowed fathers to continue within their previous life (e.g. paid employment) while also adapting to their internal changes associated with being a father (e.g. altering perspectives on caretaking). One reason for this two-dimensional change is that fathers struggle to create a new identity through 'new fatherhood'. Historically, gender roles required fathers to fall into very few categories of the family, primarily the breadwinner (Day and Lamb, 2004; Featherstone, 2009). However as new fathering as a concept develops, with fathers taking on more responsibility in the family (or desiring the opportunity to), fathers have very few role models and may lack the necessary understanding to do this. Therefore
the process of change is tied into wider society and fathers must establish new identities surrounding fathering practices.

Fathers reported on the transition to fatherhood across all three phases. Fathers reported that they only became fathers after the birth, and did not have an understanding of what fatherhood would entail. Therefore the transition to fatherhood was emotive and complicated. Fathers saw this as a massive change in their lives, with many reporting various difficulties, particularly feeling unprepared, as supported by the literature (Draper, 2003; Deave and Johnson, 2008). They did indicate that information and relationships supported them in this transition, and that this may be an important area for service development. Negative fathering can have long-term effects on children (Guerrero, 2009; Scott and Crooks, 2004; Vogel et al., 2006). But by making fathers feel and act capable in their fathering practices shortly after becoming a father may promote positive relationships. Doherty et al. (2006) found that by teaching fathers skills at this transition, they are more likely to have positive father-child interactions. Some evidence indicates that supporting fathers before the birth encouraged fathers' earlier transition. Draper (2003) argues that by encouraging fathers during pregnancy through concrete experiences such as ultrasounds can enable a more positive transition to fatherhood.

A central aspect in the process of change revolved around family relationships, especially the father-child relationship. As the father and child relationship developed, the father changed his practices. Therefore it appears that in fathers' expressed appreciation of their children is a motivation to change his practices. In addition, if fathers perceive their importance to their child they are more likely to be involved with their child (Freman et al., 2008; McBride et al., 2004). Thus when the child is born, fathers began to perceive their importance and thus may change to ensure they become more involved with their children. Research also indicates that having reciprocal relationships between fathers and children, promotes fathers' involvement (Barnett et al., 1992; McBride et al., 2005). Therefore as children interact more with their fathers, their fathers are likely to interact more with them making this a unique aspect of the father-child relationship.
This theme should be considered within the possibility that the process of change influences some fathers one way and other fathers another way. Thus this should be viewed with a perspective that what works for one father may not for others. It is about finding the unique components that contribute to change for each father.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4.1. Process of change in fathering practices: Findings from each phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of change in fathering practices included masculine discourses and the integration of being a father with the sense of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Relationships (Box 4.2)

Family relationships particularly impacted father involvement. In all three phases family relationships provided fathers with opportunities for involvement in relationships and the programme.

One family relationship that fathers deemed important was with the mothers. Consider that in the majority of cases, fathers became a parent through the mother. If it had not been for the mother, father would not be a parent, therefore in the sheer act of becoming a biological parent, the father is put second to mothers. Wall and Arnold (2007) argue that culture keeps fathers as secondary to mothers. However the current research suggests that this oversimplifies the matter, fathers reported being secondary across all phases due to varying factors, and this should not be overlooked. In illustrating this example, Douglas, a stay-at-home father in the focus group, compares himself to his partner and indicates that she parents better than he does. This provides initial evidence that even when fathers take on aspects of new fatherhood that involves caretaking (or being the primary caretaker), given the underlying assumptions within society that mothers are the ideal parent, fathers espouse these principles.

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105 To be further discussed in chapter 5: Coparents.
Across phases fathers reported an appreciation and desire for interaction with their children. By enjoying their child, fathers are more engaged and more likely to support this relationship. Research indicates that father involvement is relatively stable over time (Lamb and Lewis, 2004), thus it is important that fathers are encouraged to participate in this relationship from early infancy. However involvement may be determined by identity. Rane and McBride (2000) found that fathers who had a positive identity in caretaking were more likely to be involved with their children. Therefore identity needs to be understood within the framework of relationships.

Family relationships also influence father involvement in services. The current research found that if fathers were involved in the family, they were more likely to be involved in services, which is supported by previous research (Lee, 2006; Phares et al., 2006). Therefore it may be possible to encourage fathers to participate in the family or services if they become involved in one first.

### Box 4.2. Family relationships: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ relationship was central to fathering due to fathers’ initial link to child through mother and perception of mother related to fathers’ ideas of parenting</td>
<td>Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship</td>
<td>The father-child relationship was highly regarded by fathers, and fathers expressed desire for and involvement with their children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father-child relationships were changing and highly valued, with fathers viewing their children as an active participant in the relationship</td>
<td>Explanations for fathering skills and abilities: These were connected to fathers’ time with their children, gender role perceptions (e.g. ‘natural’ ideas of parenthood), and placed in comparison to mothering skills and abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Various Internal and External Factors such as Employment and Context Determine Father Involvement in the Family (Box 4.3)

Fathers’ participation in the family and the programme is influenced by a number of components. Fathers experienced both internal and external influences to being involved. One reason that numerous factors might be particularly important to fathers in parenting, is
that they are often expected to negotiate the home and work life quickly with re-entering the workplace shortly after the child being born. Fathers feel they have many pressures on their time and are expected to juggle these effectively. Because fathers typically exist in the 'public' sphere (Goodrich, 1991; Philpot et al., 2009; Silverstein, 1996) or 'served as the bridge to the outside world' (Dick, 2004, p. 81), they have to negotiate all elements that compete for their resources, even though many fathers expressed a desire to be more family-focussed.

Therefore the elements are varied and influenced fathers in different ways. Three of the most commonly found factors in the current research and previous studies are discussed below.

**Context.** The current research found support for previous studies indicating that context was a particularly important aspect of fathers' involvement in the family (Bost et al., 2002; Cabrera et al., 2007; Dubowitz, 2009; Palkovitz, 2007). In considering all three phases, context routinely provided rationale for fathering practices, with fathers' relying on their individual circumstances for explaining their perceptions and behaviours. The current research also found support that context must be understood in complicated frameworks, such as fathers would like to be more involved with families and yet are unable due to workplace and societal expectations. Context is also important for promoting change, finding that in order to promote change it must be clearly implemented in their social context (Crooks, Baker, and Hughes, 2006). The current research indicates that only by understanding fathers within their unique individual, cultural, and societal perspectives can father involvement be promoted.

**Work-life balance.** While some research indicates that perceptions of fathers should develop through an employment-based lens (Fagerskiold, 2006; Henwood and Procter, 2003), the current research challenges this. The current research found that paid employment influences across aspects of fathering and is not an individual dimension of fathering that can be considered on its own as previous research had indicated (Dick, 2004; Fagerskiold, 2006). The current research indicates that employment is embedded in various perspectives on fathering. Employment is only one aspect of the fathering experience and should be considered as such.
Masculine and fatherhood discourses. Some fathers indicated that masculine and paternal discourses created their perceptions of fatherhood. Some researchers suggest that in order to understand fathers, men’s construction of masculinity must be considered (Addis and Mahalik, 2003; Gottman and DeClaire, 1998). Mahalik and Morrison (2006) and Addis and Mahalik (2003) suggest that the best way to promote fathering is by changing fatherhood schemas within men’s identities. Encouraging fathers to challenge and understand their masculine gender assumptions will promote men’s participation in fathering. Furthermore, because fathers provide information for children regarding gender roles (Crooks, Baker, et al., 2006), encouraging fathers to consider these will advance more equalitarian gender identity in the future.

Box 4.3. Various internal and external factors such as employment and context determine father involvement in the family: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fathers juggled various aspects of their lives, particularly the work-life balance</td>
<td>Internal and external factors shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community</td>
<td>Fathers needed to juggle various elements in their lives, including the work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support and generational influences affected fathering</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers suggested that they felt societal expectations based on roles, but these were different to mothers' societal pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations for fathering skills and abilities: These were connected to fathers' time with their children, gender role perceptions (e.g. 'natural' ideas of parenthood), and placed in comparison to mothering skills and abilities</td>
<td>Learning and support from others was an important aspect to fathering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PAFT Elements that Encourage Positive Fathering Practices (Box 4.4)

Fathers indicated that numerous PAFT elements supported their parenting. In particular, increasing knowledge, confidence, skills, and actions supports fathers.
All fathers reported an increase in knowledge, confidence, ability and action due to PAFT participation. They attributed change to PAFT's information, promoting awareness, developmentally appropriate expectations, and general guidelines for being involved with their children. Therefore PAFT encouraged fathers in their relationship with their children through a number of different elements. Kelly and Wolfe (2004) report that fathers have lower parenting skills, and by improving these, positive parenting practices are more likely to be implemented. Lundahl et al. (2006) suggest that increasing fathers' confidence, decreasing fathers' anxiety and stress, and changing fathers' attitudes promotes fathers' positive parenting. PAFT empowered fathers to parent actively and positively.

A particularly unique component of PAFT's support for fathers was that fathers felt supported by PAFT through handouts even if they were unable to attend visits. Fathers found the information provided by PAFT to assist their understanding of their child and increase their knowledge base. Similar to the indirect approach PAFT has to fathering practices, Fletcher et al. (2008) developed material for new fathers and engaged them through reading brief information on selected topics. The current research supports this by finding that fathers may feel assisted and engaged by reading brief materials rather than having to actually engage with PAFT. This is different to books in that the information was brief and more manageable to the competing demands in fathers’ lives. In addition, because fathers had positive reports from their partners about their project workers, they were more likely to trust and be willing to engage with the information. Furthermore by receiving positive reports from mothers about PAFT, fathers reported being interested in understanding PAFT, thus promoting fathers’ engagement with the programme.

| Box 4.4. PAFT elements that encourage positive fathering practices: Findings from each phase |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phase 1                                      | Phase 2                                                    | Phase 3                                                           |
| PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation | PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement | PAFT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability, and action |

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Project Worker Relationship to Fathers and Families (Box 4.5)

The project worker relationship was important to fathers in direct or indirect ways. If fathers were able to attend sessions, then the project worker actively encouraging their participation was important. However if fathers were unable to attend the home visits, it was very important that their partner had positive views of the project worker. It also seems that the project workers’ support of mothers enthused and assisted fathers’ participation.

While father-project worker relationships remain largely unexamined, the current research addresses this and suggests two differing components, the direct and indirect avenues to engaging fathers in the programme, indirectly through the mother, and directly if fathers are able to attend home visits. Therefore parenting programmes may be able to meet fathers’ needs through indirect involvement as long as the mother-father connection allows this.

In considering further those fathers who attend home visits, one issue that remains of importance is that some research and policy indicates that more men should be encouraged to become project workers because fathers are more likely to be engaged through other men (Lloyd, O’Brien, and Lewis, 2003; McAllister, Wilson, and Burton, 2004; Page, Witting, and Mclean, 2008). While little evidence actually exists that this works in practice, it has been adopted into policy (Dfes, 2007b). Like a few previous studies (Bowman, Scogin, Floyd, and McKendree-Smith, 2001; Walters et al., 2001), the current evidence found no support for this, and in fact, many fathers reported liking that their project worker was a woman. Kazdin et al. (2005; 2006) suggests that the alliance between parents and practitioners encourages fathers’ participation and engagement in services. Therefore services should not be concerned with the gender of the practitioner, focussing instead on the practitioners’ ability to create relationships with parents.

| Box 4.5. Project worker relationship to fathers and families: Findings from each phase |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Phase 1                                    | Phase 2                         | Phase 3                              |
| PAFIT encouraged fathering practices and participation | Project worker relationship with families and fathers | PAFIT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability, and action |

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Conceptual Model of Fathering and Programme Participation

One potential way that these concepts and findings may be related is found in Figure 4.3.

Family relationships and the process of change in fathering practices appeared to strongly influence one another, thus their placement at the centre of the diagram. PAFT affects these from one side of the model while various influences from internal and external factors from the other side. Within this model it is central to note that different aspects of fatherhood will matter differently for individual fathers and families.

It is important to mention that PAFT as a programme and the project workers influence fathers together. Due to the indirect and direct nature of PAFT involvement in fathering, they are combined in the model to account for fathers who are unable to attend visits. They are also combined because they both appear to influence the other factors but do so together. Thus the PAFT programme material and the project worker-family relationship are helpful in promoting change in fathering.

Conclusions

This chapter illuminated fathers' perspectives. Due to being viewed as less important that mothers, fathers are typically overlooked in research, programme participation and evaluation. Therefore this chapter examined and provided some indication of fathers' views, particularly the complexity and the internal and external influences to involvement in both the programme and families. The current research addressed issues that Pleck (2007) and Palkovitz (2007) suggested that a large number of factors could influence the father-child relationship and it is crucial to identify the factors that might lead to an in depth understanding for fathers and children to promote this relationship within the complex nature of the family. In terms of services, PAFT met fathers' needs by supporting fathers both directly, if they were able to attend home visits, or indirectly by engaging them through information that promoted their understanding of their children. The model illustrates
potential connections between the themes that unite fathers' perspectives of fathering with fathers' perceptions of PAFT participation.

Self-Reflexivity
Including fathers proved to be an interesting but occasionally difficult task. While fathers were typically happy to 'enlighten' me (Ted's word), accessing them was a challenge. For instance, during the interviews, many of the mothers were in the house. While most went and completed another task while I interviewed the father (e.g. washing up, giving the child a bath etc), a few mothers were in close vicinity. I found this difficult, particularly when one mother, shouted through the room to 'correct' a father's answer to a question I had asked. While at first I was surprised and found the situation off-putting, I began to realize that this was creating a more ecologically appropriate evaluation. This was these fathers' lives and I felt fortunate to be able to understand them in their context. Based on experiences like this findings, I see coparenting of the utmost importance as an avenue to explore.
Proposed Conceptual Model: Fathers

Process of change in fathering practices.

PAFT elements that encourage positive fathering practices.

Fathers process of change and family relationships can only understood through the influence of internal and external factors that determine their involvement.

Various internal and external factors such as employment and context determine father involvement in the family.

Project worker–family relationships and PAFT elements influence fathering practices and involvement with PAFT.

Project worker relationships and programme elements link and are related to fathers’ process of change and family relationships.

Family relationships.

Project worker relationship to fathers and families.

Figure 4.3: The hypothetical relationships between concepts based on the fathers’ findings from the three phases.

LEGEND

TEXT IN BOXES POSTULATED CONCEPTS (FOR DESCRIPTION SEE DISCUSSION).

LINES POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONCEPTS.

ITALICIZED TEXT RESEARCH FINDINGS USED TO THEORETICALLY CONNECT CONCEPTS.
Chapter 5: Results

Coparents on coparenting and PAFT: ‘There is a tendency in society to cast the father as the second class parent’ (Jeremy, 1409)

Introduction
This chapter discusses the coparents’ findings in more detail and will explore whether the coparenting relationship has an indirect influence on mother and/or father engagement and involvement in parenting programmes. It looks specifically at coparents’ experiences and perceptions of family and programme involvement. As stated in chapter 1, coparents are an important group to study due to the unique influence on child development and the importance of the coparenting relationship for programme involvement. The findings from each individual phase will be reported, leading to a general discussion of findings on specific coparents’ perspectives that will conclude the chapter. It is important to note that coparents will be considered here as their own concept separate from mothering and fathering, as the coparenting relationship is a unique relationship.

Phase 1: Interviews

Participants
Coparent interviews were conducted with seven sets of cohabitating coparents in their homes. All coparent sets were heterosexual, romantically involved, and had at least one biological child with which they participated in PAFT, and both parents had attended at least one home visit together. Several coparents had experienced parenting difficulties of differing magnitudes as described in Table 5.1.

1 Names and identifying details have been changed to ensure participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.
Table 5.1

Descriptions of Coparents Interviewed about their Experiences during Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Coparents reported reasons for participating in PAFT</th>
<th>Years with PAFT</th>
<th>Children sex and ages (in years)</th>
<th>Visits Attended (Father)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>First child died and difficult transition to parenthood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 son (1)</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>Became parents at age 18 and 20 and child was born 14 weeks prematurely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 daughters (3, 12 weeks)</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Silas</td>
<td>Experienced stress and anxiety issues (P), chaotic household and one child exhibits behavioural difficulties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 biological sons (3, 8)</td>
<td>A few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 foster son (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 daughter (16 weeks)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Kenneth</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and interest in child’s development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 son (1)</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberta</td>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>Needing information due to a number of issues including difficult family of origin (R) and child exhibits developmental delay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 daughter (2)</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally 110</td>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>Discussed in Appendix G</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 sons (8, 11)</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 daughter (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>Little social support, D travelled as part of employment on a regular basis, and saw C struggling ‘as a single parent’ while D’s away</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1 daughter (2.5)</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Information reported was stated by coparents during the interviews.

Analysis 111

Using IPA (described in chapter 2), the analysis yielded seven superordinate themes. 112 These themes provided a platform for understanding the experiences of these couples with reference to coparenting and parent programme involvement. Each theme is described in Table 5.2 and discussed in turn below.

107 Children’s ages when the interviews took place.
108 One son was from a previous relationship for Silas. Thus one son was Silas and Patricia’s son and the other was Silas and his previous partner’s, although Silas had sole custody due to previous partner’s mental health difficulties.
109 They were also expecting their second child with Roberta being 8 months pregnant at the time of interview.
110 Ally and Pete were a family that had experienced multiple difficulties, and thus their interview does not fit within the context that the other parents reported. Therefore their analysis in comparison to these themes is located in Appendix G.
111 Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
112 The chart of the full breakdown for each theme, from quotes to subordinate to superordinate themes, is available upon request.
### Theme 1: Dyadic relationships between the mother, father, and child differed and could complement one another

1a) Differing roles were played by each parent with their child, which were sometimes defined by gender.

1b) Mother and father relationship differences caused conflict or appreciation between parents, and triggered some parents to act as a mediator between one another and the child.

The first superordinate theme that emerged was that individual relationships existed within the family and that these differing relationships may support parenting processes. Research indicates that having different relationships between families' members can encourage parenting partners in supporting one another (Barrows, 2009; Carneiro, Corboz-Warnery, and Fivaz-Depeursinge, 2006; Coley and Schindler, 2008).

1a) Differing roles were played by each parent with their child, which were sometimes defined by gender. Parents reported that the individual roles and relationships that they had with their children were different:
Roberta: ...I just don’t give her a bath so I meditate when she’s in the bath...I was always quite keen that Jeremy does the bath because you know you were at work a lot more then I think.  
Jeremy: Yes.  
Roberta: And I just thought it was a good bonding thing...  
Jeremy: Initially, I was probably a bit reluctant.  
Roberta: Which is fair enough, you know, you were a bit forced.  
Jeremy: But yeah I actually really enjoy doing it now and [daughter] seems to enjoy it so- (690-701)

Jeremy and Roberta discussed that their roles were partially determined by the time and their responsibilities they had with their children and outside the home. But this also allowed for task allocation that would allow for both their needs to be met. In addition, by both participating in care tasks, Jeremy was provided the opportunity to engage with his daughter where he enjoyed developing their relationship.

Kenneth and Lily described that sometimes they perceived their differences as based on gender role assumptions:

Kenneth: ...we’ve always sort of had that code between the two of us and that carries on really with everyday with what we do. So if one’s uh uh- we always help each other out.  
Lily: I think the only difference is and it might be that I’m a full time looking after [child] at the minute... I think a woman is programmed to know what his routine is (126-132)

Kenneth pointed out that their relationship has ‘always’ had an underlying assumption that they assist one another, and while Lily agreed, she also stipulated that a difference lies between their experiences. She indicated that the gender role division between mothers and fathers meant that she knew her child due to an internal ‘programme’ that she was unable to control as it was part of womanhood, meaning that Kenneth was by nature placed as the second parent. In the literature many fathers report that mothers are better caretakers and that they feel less competent than their partners (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Lindsey et al., 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, and Sokolowski, 2008). Perhaps this finding is due to mothers making comments that dis-empower fathers, or simply as Lily
suggested, that spending more time with your child or being a woman encouraged understanding, and thus caretaking of children.

1b) Mother and father relationship differences caused conflict or appreciation between parents, and triggered some parents to act as a mediator between one another and the child. Despite the fact that the individual relationships were often different, parents felt these complemented one another in many cases, creating a positive coparenting alliance. Susan and Allan reported that Susan often disciplined their toddler due to personal strengths:

Allan: … you tend to be better at discipline than me 'cause I tend to get upset (chuckles)
Susan: Yeah... [cheering] Who’s the adult? Who’s the adult? Who’s the adult?
Allan: I can throw a tantrum as well (chuckles)
Susan: Yeah so I got Allan in one corner and [child] in the other (both laugh)

(401-407)

Allan and Susan illustrated how parents can support one another in parenting. This description placed Susan between her partner and child, but this complemented Allan in that he was not forced to discipline, which he found difficult. This exemplifies the balancing nature of some coparenting relationships. Kraemer (1995) and Barrows (2003; 2009) support this point suggesting that mothers and fathers can complement one another’s strengths and weaknesses.

In other cases, coparents reported feeling that they had more conflict over their differing expectations and relationships with their child:

Jenna: I think that’s my only gripe actually that non- So I cook all [child]'s food and I've, we've both agreed that he would have a balanced healthy diet and he started off that way no problem. Any vegetable whatever then nothing was an issue. Then kind of got to... eight and half, nine months and he decided he was going to be fussy... he started I'm going to feed myself. And 'you're not putting a spoon anywhere mummy near my mouth mummy unless it's got yogurt on it.' And Ted's answer to that is if Ted's snacking, [child] can snack.
Ted: What's that-me snacking?
Jenna: You snack all day. His snacks are unhealthy and so- I disagree with [child] having chocolate or salt and vinegar crisps [chuckles] or whatever. If he's hungry feed him something healthy, cut an apple up so that's the bit that I wish that Ted would do a little bit more of the all around diet... (361-375)
In this dialogue Jenna voiced conflict in the coparenting relationship because of Ted’s parenting. In response to Jenna’s irritation, Ted commented with joking or sarcasm, to which she replied angrily at him. During her response to his sarcasm, he chuckled, undermining her and likely escalating her frustration, rather than diffusing the situation or considering it through a conflict resolution lens. It appeared that Ted decided this was an invalid concern and he was not going to address it. Furthermore it seemed possible that their contrasting views were entrenched, which would likely make resolving the issue more difficult. This dialogue illustrated conflict in the individual relationship, which is likely to create difficulties in the coparenting alliance. Furthermore the undermining of Jenna’s concern by Ted could lead to further strains on other aspects of the relationships (Cannon et al., 2008; Gottman and Silver, 1999; Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Hawkins et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2005).

This theme was largely based on parents’ perceptions of their individual relationships with one another and their children. The underlying point in this theme relies on the parents’ rationale for their responsibilities and roles in the family and the ways they see these intersecting.

**Theme 2: Domestic responsibilities and paid employment: External factors impacted coparents’ relationships, which required parents to negotiate with one another**

2a) Several components required navigating in the coparenting relationship, including domestic responsibilities, and the work-home divide, which could exert stress on the relationship

2b) When considering coparenting and child care, coparents’ drawing on one another for support promotes the relationship, although in some cases consulting one another may cause stress

The second superordinate theme involved the numerous external factors that can impact the coparents’ relationship, such as employment, domestic responsibilities and childcare. Several studies have found that these external factors influence the coparenting relationship (Conger Wallace, Sun, Simons, McLoyd, and Brody, 2002; Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Khazan, McHale, and Decourcey, 2008; Singley and Hayes, 2005). For example, Lindsey et al. (2005) found that external, environmental factors, such as employment and social support, impacted
coparenting practices differently for mothers and fathers.

2a) Several components required navigating in the coparenting relationship, including domestic responsibilities, and the work-home divide, which could exert stress on the relationship. Parents expressed negotiating numerous factors as a key aspect in their day-to-day relationship. In some cases, these factors were ongoing issues that were continually being addressed within the relational context and viewed as a cause of stress within the relationship. For instance, some mothers felt irritation that their partners did not aid them in domestic responsibilities:

Jenna: ...I wish that Ted would do a bit more but when I throw the rattle at him he'll make the effort, so that's fine for a couple weeks. (321-323)

Jenna expressed a common complaint among women following the transition to parenthood. Numerous studies suggest that women feel they perform an inordinate amount of the domestic responsibilities (Craig, 2006; Hochachild, and Machung, 1997). Some research illustrates that no matter how gender-equal a couple is at the transition to parenthood, this transition creates gender inequality (Fraenkel, 2003; Haddock et al., 2003). Research also suggests that it is actually about the perceptions rather than the actual time spent in tasks. Khazan et al. (2008) investigated mothers’ and fathers’ expectations for childcare at the transition to parenthood. As in other studies they found that when mothers’ expectations for child care had been violated by the father, negative family interactions were more likely to occur. This was supported by Jenna and Ted in the above example.

In addition to parents’ perceived domestic responsibilities, some mothers and fathers expressed their surprise at the amount of management they did. They felt that they needed time together as a couple, but also felt that numerous aspects of life required their attention. This was particularly true of fathers, but many parents felt pressured about their use of time after becoming parents:

Kenneth:...you end up juggling everything, the relationship, [child], the house, work, shopping, it sounds daft...but all of a sudden for someone so small... they overtake the greater percentage of daily tasks than their size dictates they
should... you kind of look at your life and say 'oh yeah I'm ready to deal with that 'cause [parenting] is only an extra half hour of your day'... (212-222)

In some cases, parents perceived this 'juggling' as aiding their ideas of parenting (Barnett et al., 1992). It allowed them the ability to manage different parts of their lives.

As part of this juggling some fathers suggested that considering the rationale behind work aided their perceptions of it:

Jeremy: ... there's always the pressure of work... but you have to think about why are you doing it?... (1194-1195)

Using the mindfulness-based approach gave Jeremy an ability to consider the reason for work, which he indicated was to support his family. Several studies indicate that if couples express mindfulness their relationship satisfaction is higher (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell, and Rogge, 2007; Wachs and Cordova, 2007). Therefore Jeremy being so mindful was able to put his relationship and family first before his employment. This most likely also assisted his coparenting relationship by providing Roberta support through his considerations.

2b) When considering coparenting and child care, coparents’ drawing on one another for support promotes the relationship, although in some cases consulting one another may cause stress. Child care was another area in which some coparents reported stress on their relationship. However some parents reported that their partner’s point of view allowed them to cope better with their situations. Patricia discussed that their child had difficulties whenever she left him with her partner:

Silas: It would be just straight unhappy frowns on [child]
Patricia: I used to leave him but it was literally about three or four hours he'd scream and then that was it...
Silas: Well I just switched off to it.
Patricia: Just to let me out wouldn't you?
Silas: Yeah
Patricia: 'Cause I'd have it 24 hours a day so just like go out anyway...
Silas: Yeah you just switched off to it don't you. He'd just sit there screaming like anything just take your head of... no point in getting stressed about it 'cause can't do nothing about it... (170-182)
Silas explained that through his relaxed view of their child's separation anxiety, he was able to support Patricia. Literature suggests that when mothers feel less competent and perceive their partner as competent in parenting, they are less likely to interfere in interactions (Cannon et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). As Patricia felt less competent due to her child's behaviour issues (discussed in chapter 3: mothers), Silas was able to reduce her stress in parenting.

It is important to note that while Patricia found Silas supportive in that he was less concerned about their child's behaviour, other mothers felt more stressed by what they viewed as their partners' nonchalance. This appeared based on mothers' perceptions of whether their partners were supportive, which leads to the next theme regarding parents' perceptions of one another.

**Theme 3: Underlying perceptions of the other parent influenced coparenting practices and cognitions, and includes the transition from single to couple to parents**

3a) Belief in coparent as good at parenting, trying their best and having positive skills to contribute to the coparent and parent-child relationships

3b) Perspectives, attitudes, and shared value structures in life, including separate and combined sense of selves (as mother, father, and we), integrated with couple and parenting practices

3c) Coparents perceived the couple and parenting relationships as ongoing, changing and able to cope with life changes

3d) "Turning toward" within the relationship aided the parenthood connection: Coparents based their "turning toward" on supporting one another in any issues arising in their lives, their perceived equality of abilities, and their underlying acceptance of one another

3e) Transition to parents: Differing experiences and altering family dynamics and roles

Theme number 3, parents' underlying perceptions of one another, was based on mothers' and fathers' perspectives of the other in multiple domains of their lives. Parents revealed numerous judgements about parenting collaboration, their relationship development and their journey as parents over time. Expressing both positive and negative descriptions, these underlying perceptions explored their shared experiences and narratives of parenting.
Few studies have investigated if and how partner’s perceptions of one another relate to coparenting. Looking closely at parents’ perceptions over time, McHale and Rotman (2007) analysed longitudinal data on the transition to coparenting and found that parents’ prenatal mental representations of their partner predicted later coparenting solidarity. Therefore parents who perceived their partner negatively before the child’s birth had lower levels of cohesion and solidarity than parents who did not express negative outlooks about their partner. Additionally Cowdery and Knudson-Martin (2005) explained the co-construction of mothers’ and fathers’ identity, suggesting that coparenting roles develop in relation to one another. This can be seen in the current research, particularly in the way mothers and fathers perceived their roles in relation to their partners.

3a) Belief in coparent as good at parenting, trying their best and having positive skills to contribute to coparent and parent-child relationships. Parents detailed their coparenting relationship development immediately following the first child’s birth. Some mothers described their partner as being particularly helpful, which provided a platform for positive perceptions of their coparenting partner:

Jeremy: ...we really didn’t know what we were doing- Roberta: ...you got a Cat Stevens CD and you used to play that for me so I would relax for the night feeds... (784-797)

Carrie: ...my partner’s really good, even though the cot was on my side he would you know ‘oh should I get her?’ And you know he’d come around the bed and give her to me... (307-308)

Jeremy, Roberta and Carrie expressed feelings of appreciation and perceiving their partner positively. However these perspectives need to be considered from the lens of the transition to parenthood. Many researchers suggest that the first year after a child’s birth can be a particularly difficult transition for parents (Condon, Boyce, and Corkindale, 2004; Feinberg and Kan, 2008; Shapiro, Gottman, and Carrere, 2000). In other words, having a child will not bring together a couple who is experiencing relationship difficulties; instead the child is more likely to push the parents farther apart (Cowan and Cowan, 2003; Elliston et al., 2008). During this major life-transition, a key goal is for the couple to establish a definition of the
newly altered family (Dallos, 1998; Galvin and Brommel, 2000; Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Lewandowski, Aron, Bassis, and Kunak, 2006). Jeremy, Roberta, and Carrie defined themselves as within a supportive coparenting relationship and thus will have more positive attitudes regarding their partners in parenting.

3b) Perspectives, attitudes, and shared value structures in life, including separate and combined sense of selves (as mother, father, and we), integrated with couple and parenting practices. Parents’ perceptions of themselves integrated with their perspectives on one another and informed their coparenting identity. Silas and Patricia explain the importance:

Patricia: ...we just kind of click don’t we? We’re just people that generally work together.
Silas: Yeah
Patricia: We the amount that we’d been through if we didn’t then we certainly wouldn’t be sat here now. We’d be in 2 different directions definitely. (574-578)

Patricia and Silas explained that their attitudes regarding working together were important to their sense of self as a couple and as coparents. Similar to the quotes in 3a, expressing a shared value structure for relationships and perceiving partners as supportive greatly assisted the coparenting relationship and the couples in developing their sense of self as coparents based on their sense of selves as parents and people. Previous research indicates that during the transition to parenthood, parents must adjust their own self-knowledge and also their relationship sense of self, to become a family (Andersen, Chen, and Miranda, 2002; Cowdery and Knudson-Martin, 2005). This appears partially true here, because this adjustment was reported as being completed as part of a couple, which meant that the coparenting relationship was developed out of the couple relationship.

Some parents explained their development of the coparenting relationship and alliance as an expanded skill from their relationship before children. Thus parents expressed teamwork as an aspect of their overall relationship sense of selves, not simply as parents:

Kenneth: ...we’ve always sort of had that code between the two of us...we always help each other out... (127-129)
Lily: We normally do work together, we have a particular partnership... (363)
Kenneth and Lily's explanation as supporting one another as a shared perspective is evidenced in previous studies. Research supports that parents' commitment to a shared value structure can assist them in establishing patterns of working together (Deutsch, 2001; Khazan et al., 2008). For instance, Zimmerman (2000) found that when parents had a shared value structure they had higher marital satisfaction.

In some cases, the establishment of the family can be seen through the underlying joint narratives of parenting together. These narratives were typically based on perceived similarities in value structures, which in turn created an accepted 'we' identity:

Allan: We had very similar ideas...it's kind of a culture thing we both come from similar neighbourhoods in a similar part of the world very similar parents...stable families um we both have very similar ideas about what's right and what's wrong...

(394-399)

In this quote, Allan discussed his perception of their transition to a 'we' identity. McHale, Kazali, Rotman, Talbot, Carleton, and Lieberson (2004) suggest that coparenting identities develop out of relationships and thus the associations need to be understood more fully. It is apparent that Allan developed his understandings of his relationship with Susan while they were dating. This created the platform for their parenting practices, indicating that to him coparenting was developed on top of the couple relationship instead of in relation to it as indicated in research (Feinberg, 2002)

3c) Coparents perceived the couple and parenting relationships as ongoing, changing and able to cope with life changes. In considering the coparenting relationship, some mothers and fathers described their development as coparents as a relational process:

Carrie: ...she [child] was crying and you just think what's wrong? and then my partner tried to 'help'... and so he got a telling off... let me take her and let me and see if I calm her down with my wisdom of being a mother for 48 hours...then quite quickly then we sort of you know found our boundaries...

(299-305)

Lily: I needed support
Kenneth: You needed support and found it so hard in the first two or three weeks I couldn't...

(170-176)
Lily: ...I think I had more understanding...I just thought it [transitioning to parenthood] would be really tough, but we'd ride it out...and actually I remember sitting there thinking oh God you know is this what the world's now come to?...
Kenneth: ...the weeks turn into months, the months turn into sort of 6 months you realise actually things are moving on... (228-236)

Several studies support this understanding of the relationship as a process, as this allows for flexibility in the relationship. For example, Bell, Goulet, Tribble, Paul, Boisclair, and Tronick (2007) interviewed mothers and fathers about their experiences in establishing themselves as parents over the transition to parenthood. They found that parents began enmeshed (at one week postpartum) then were differentiated (at six weeks postpartum) and finally a more integrated family system developed (at 16 weeks postpartum). The authors suggest that the establishment of the new family through the birth of the first child requires significant changes to the family system and that any difficulties faced by parents during this transition should be considered within ‘messy processes’ framework (p. 196). Carrie, Lily, and Kenneth all describe their relationship as developing and changing due to becoming parents. They support Bell et al.’s ‘messy processes’ framework and this in turn assisted their adjustment to becoming families.

3d) ‘Turning toward’ within the relationship aided the parenthood connection:
Coparents based their ‘turning toward’ on supporting one another in any issues arising in their lives, their perceived equality of abilities, and their underlying acceptance of one another. ‘Turning toward’ was a particularly important aspect of the coparenting relationships. The term ‘turning toward’ was borrowed from John Gottman, a renowned couple researcher and therapist (Driver and Gottman, 2004; Gottman and Silver, 1999; Hicks, McWey, Benson, and West, 2004) to define when couples come together rather than move apart. Similar to Roberta’s description of Jeremy playing her the Cat Stevens CD during breast-feeding, many parents described ‘turning towards’ in their dialogues:

Patricia: ...we try to stick on the same the same line
Silas: Yeah
Patricia: Yeah it doesn’t work then we generally I don’t know, we discuss it quite a lot don’t we?
Silas: Yeah
Patricia: And see what we're going to try and see what's going to work best and but generally it is the children know they're not going to get something out of one and not the other ... they know when we're deadly serious and that is it and they and we generally discuss that at the dinner table we show that line so they know you know they don't get away with much
Silas: In front of the children back each other up then once the children are out of sight then we'll discuss it afterwards
Patricia: Yeah yeah so they don't know
Silas: That's so they don't know if we've disagreed over something but then sort it out between us after when they're gone but if they're there at the time then show a united front in front of them
Patricia: Yeah if they saw that gap they take us for a ride I think... (525-549)

Patricia and Silas discussed ‘turning towards’ in this dialogue and throughout their interview. They were committed to a consistency in their parenting that develops through a joint decision. This illustrated how ‘turning towards’, coming together with any issues, supports coparenting practices. In addition, the fact that Silas and Patricia were able and willing to work so closely demonstrated their underlying positive perceptions of one another as supportive in parenting.

3e) Transition to parents: Differing experiences and altering family dynamics and roles. A final concept of the underlying parent perceptions category is in the joint transition to parenthood. The transition to parenthood can be a particularly difficult shift from a couple to coparents (Cowan et al., 2006; Feinberg and Kan, 2008; Khazan et al., 2008) with parents often experiencing strain (Schulz et al., 2006). However, research indicates that by strengthening the parents’ relationship at the transition to parenthood, parent-child involvement increases and relationship satisfaction declines at a less drastic rate (Feinberg et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2008; Schulz et al., 2006). In addition, research indicates that programmes that support parents during this transition encourage a more complete balancing of any strain on the relationship and the parent-child relationship (Feinberg and Kan, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2008). Therefore PAFT may promote the parent-child relationship by supporting the coparenting relationship in several ways including information and support.113

113 PAFT’s influence will be discussed in Theme 7.
As discussed in the fathers’ chapter (4), fathers become parents through the mothers.
Mothers can feel supported by fathers during the transition to parenthood, which in turn
aids both parents’ positive perceptions of one another and creates the platform for their
coparenthood (Cowdery and Knudson-Martin, 2005; McHale and Rotman, 2007). This in
turn specifies the father’s role as the mother’s caretaker and/or helper, which mothers can
be particularly appreciative of and provided fathers with a role during this transition:

Allan: ...with our first daughter, Susan got really puffy cheeks and so in the
morning I’d take like measurements to make sure
Susan: Taking photographs. He looked after me really well didn’t you? ‘Cause the
main thing was to keep me um calm
Allan: Relaxed
Susan: Keep the pressure down and stuff (368-373)

In this dialogue, Allan played a role in supporting Susan during pregnancy, which she
appreciated. According to literature his support during the pregnancy would have decreased
her strain, allowing her to focus more fully on having her needs met (Van Egeren, 2004).
Furthermore his support would have assisted her emotionally which is also important for
mothers during pregnancy (Howard and Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Possibly due to fathers feeling they become parents through the mothers, some parents felt
that fathers were not as able and knowledgeable compared to mothers (Deave and Johnson,
2008; Feldman, 2007). Mothers approached this in varying ways. In some cases, mothers
supported their partner, often giving specific examples. Other times mothers disagreed,
suggesting themselves as more capable:

Dale: ...I do everything I can with my child I'm not saying that I do everything as
well.
Carrie: You teach her things different from me... you read to her differently than I
do...she does pick up different things from you than me - (124-128)

Kenneth: ... [parenting] makes sense to me now, 'cause the way my head works, I
need to understand why something is happening, I remember my partner used to say
to me... 'child' will go to sleep some time, he will go to sleep'
Lily: You might have to get up in four hours... but he will go to sleep
Kenneth: Yeah and my head saw it as he's asleep so he's not going to sleep. It's
short term vision saw major problem, major crisis and you're like 'no he will go
When Dale stated that he was not as good a parent as Carrie, Carrie interrupted him to bolster his perceptions of his capabilities. She believed that he played a unique role in their child’s life, which provided him a re-direction that they were not in competition. By changing the focus she provided a positive perception of her partner, which supported fathering in the coparenting relationship (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, et al., 2004; Van Egeren, 2004).

On the other hand, Kenneth and Lily suggested that she was more capable in parenting than he was, at least early in their parenthood. In the situation of their child not sleeping, Kenneth did not understand how to deal with the situation and Lily acted as the teacher to encourage his parenting. One key point was that although Lily was educating Kenneth she did not attempt to take their child and do it herself (at least in this example). It is important to note that the dialogue between them placed Lily as the expert, and if Kenneth had felt unable to learn from her or resented her teaching, they may have reported more conflict. Research, such as Lindsey et al. (2005), suggests that when parents perceive themselves as competent, they find it less necessary to intrude on their partners’ parenting, meaning that with any future children, Kenneth would perceive himself as competent, and thus Lily would interfere less with his parenting.

The ‘underlying perception’ theme connects inherently to the ‘process of change’ theme. These two themes influenced one another such that they adjusted and adapted to contextual situations. As can be seen in a few of the quotes above, perceptions adapted and provide a platform for the coparenting relationship.

114 This is similar to the father analysis fathers ‘learning from experience’ theme (chapter 4, theme 3a), but is suggested by coparents as well.
Theme 4: Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the developing family relationships, leading to the coparenting alliance

4a) Mindfulness, awareness and self-reflection created a grounding and was an integral aspect in parenting behaviours and cognitions

4b) Parenting was viewed as process-oriented, active, adaptable, and changing over time

4c) Maintaining responsibility to their child as a base for coparenting relationship encouraged positive process of change in coparenting

The process of change theme examined parents' ideas about developing and adjusting their coparenting practices. This theme linked closely with the previous theme and a few other concepts, including coparents developing together as parents, and their shared commitment to their child.

4a) Mindfulness, awareness and self-reflection created a grounding and was an integral aspect in parenting behaviours and cognitions. Some parents reported being mindful and aware of one another's needs which promoted the coparenting relationship.

Due to Dale's employment in the military, he went away from Carrie and their daughter for long stretches of time. Dale and Carrie discussed what happened when Dale returns:

Interviewer: So when Dale gets back is it relief or is it you're not doing it right?
Dale: Oh yeah (all laugh). I'm not even going to let [partner] answer that! (all laugh)
Carrie: We both know how it goes really. 'Oh Dale's home that's lovely!' Oh, now he wants to 'help'.
Dale: But my helping's two months old-
Carrie: Yeah and everything's changing even if he's gone for a couple of weeks because she's like a Polly Parrot in repeating everything and she's like a sponge and everything's that you're showing her and things move on so quickly so things that happened a couple of weeks ago that's not necessarily that's not necessarily what happens now you know. And so and so...it's silly things 'ah you know you've let your coat here and it's really bugging me, nothing else is but that!'
Dale: ...That's how it is
Carrie: We just usually have cross words just to get ourselves bedded back in, just you gotta get used to each other again...(898-924)

Dale and Carrie suggested that they need to negotiate when Dale returns from time away. It is important to note that both contributed to the discussion, illustrating Carrie and Dale's awareness of the patterns that happened when he returns, and thus they were able to
prepare, reflect and accept that it takes some time to re-establish their coparenting relationship. Research indicates that coparents being aware and supportive of one another supports change. For example, Shapiro et al. (2000) explored aspects that aided couples’ marital satisfaction and found that high levels of fondness, admiration and awareness within the couple provide a buffer against the decline often seen in couples. In the above dialogue, Dale and Carrie display their fondness and admiration especially through their joking and laughing with one another. This indicates that they are less likely to have had a decline in their marital satisfaction at the transition to parenthood.

4b) Parenting was viewed as process-oriented, active, adaptable, and changing over time. An additional component in this theme involved parents’ ideas about ‘learning how to parent’ or adapting to their child’s needs. Many parents described their mutual change in parenting practices as a process that occurred over time, which linked closely to parents’ writing of their couple narrative:

Susan: I think we’ve got better at it [parenting] haven’t we?
Allan: Definitely something you get better at.
Susan: Yeah such a big learning curve with the first one... (436-438)

Patricia: We just plodded along really...
Silas: I have done dad things my way but with my partner’s educational background in childcare...A few clashes of what I thought would work with what she thought would work...You’ve got to change together... (154-159)

Both sets of coparents saw themselves as changing together, and through this change they worked together to do so. They suggested that their work together assisted their parenting, particularly together (Cowan et al., 2006; Hawkins et al., 2008; McHale and Rotman, 2007). It is also of note that neither couple suggested that the mother is more knowledgeable, with both suggesting that they learned together. By learning together they are supporting the coparenting relationship as demonstrated in the literature (Cowdery and Knudson-Martin, 2005).

4c) Maintaining responsibility to their child as a base for coparenting relationship encouraged positive process of change in coparenting. A further element
of the process of change theme was the child’s placement as the centre of the parents’ worldview. In some cases parents described this change - from the couple to the triad - as positive, and in other cases, it was seen as negative:

Roberta: I think we’re just both really interested in [child]...we don’t spend as much couple time but I think the time we do spend together is really valuable because we do spend it with our daughter. And that’s sort of another dimension to our relationship and that’s cool... (1328-1333)

Jenna: ...[our child is] my top priority and it’s it’s maybe sometimes if my partner looks after our child I have a routine...every four hours he would have a bottle, my partner would push that and I would shout at him and then storm off and get the bottle myself and then he’d be like ‘I’m looking after him today!’ And I’d be like ‘well you’re not doing it quick enough!’ (235-241)

Jenna and Roberta described that their perspectives on relationships changed, although in very different ways, with Roberta seeing their child as a positive base in their relationship, and Jenna seeing a shift that she made by herself. Both of these perspectives are supported by the literature, which states that parents who feel supported by one another have a more positive coparenting alliance than parents who do not (Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Krishnakumer and Buehler, 2000; Shapiro et al., 2000).

The process of change for coparenting practices included elements of self-reflection, support for one another and the overall developing coparenting alliance. One important aspect was that coparents saw their relationships as impacting their process of change, but managed to keep their focus on their child, which promoted their developing together.

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<th>Theme 5: Coparents felt unsatisfied with services, with both parents feeling that fathers were excluded and mothers were being forced to act as a gatekeeper to service information</th>
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<td><strong>5a) Fathers undervalued in society and thus by services, which further perpetuated the mother as the expert, leading fathers to feel a lack of direct support from other fathers and parenting programmes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5b) Mothers expressed frustration at the lack of services for fathers, which required mothers to be gatekeepers, which gave mothers unwanted power and pressure</strong></td>
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Theme 5 was based on parents' perceptions of the need for society and services to promote fathers' involvement in the family. Some parents perceived society as continuing to ignore fathers' desire to be involved in their families, and that services contributed to this exclusion by aiming to support mothers. Both parents also felt that fathers should be included to allow mothers to feel less pressured as the information holder in the family.

5a) Fathers undervalued in society and thus by services, which further perpetuated the mother as the expert, leading fathers to feel a lack of direct support from other fathers and parenting programmes. Many fathers reported feeling left out of community services. Fathers felt that their status as a parent was only accepted as additional to the mother:

Jeremy: ... There is still this tendency to to cast the father as kind of of the the second class parent ... it's 'well okay well you can come along too or whatever.'
(1409-1414)

In considering fathers as 'second class', fathers felt they were mothers' helpers. They felt that services propped up this notion by not encouraging fathers' participation which is supported by the literature (Feinberg, 2002; Lewis and Lamb, 2003; Mockford and Barlow, 2004). Services should aim to include fathers to reduce the negative effects perceived by many fathers.

However due to gender assumptions or current community or societal perspectives, some parents felt that mothers should promote services for fathers, with mothers acting as the link between fathers and the community. These parents viewed mothers as essential to fathers' involvement in the community and the family more generally:

Jenna: ... it'd be hard to include them more because I guess most fathers' work... if you arranged something for fathers... I don't think they'd turn up... men actually go into a room with their babies... if you did something like okay both parents could go then they would probably end up talking to one another about their experiences...
(473-479)

In this example, Jenna suggested that the best way for fathers to become included in services was through mothers, due not only to the influence of external factors on father
involvement, but also her perceptions of men as not being interested in communicating with
one another. Therefore this further perpetuates the view that community services should be
centred on the mother, a finding that is supported in the literature (Connell et al., 1997;
McBride et al., 2005) but contradicted by many of the parents in the current research.

5b) Mothers expressed frustration at the lack of services for fathers, which
required mothers to be gatekeepers, which gave mothers unwanted power and
pressure. Some mothers did not appreciate fathers’ exclusion from services. Despite mothers’
desire to encourage fathers’ involvement, these mothers felt burdened from having to obtain
information for fathers at ‘mother-only’ events. Mothers felt they had too much pressure to
remember the information despite wanting their partner involved:

Carrie: ...you try to come home and relay everything you found out and some of
these new mum groups...there wasn’t anything for my partner, there wasn’t
anything for dads and I had to come back and go 'oh there were some leaflets and
sort of talked about this and I can’t really remember what else'... for me there just
wasn’t enough for dads. (82-107)

Carrie explained that in attending services she was left with having to communicate the
information to her partner, and that she felt that she was required to be the main parent with
the information and knowledge of parenting, but services necessitated her doing this. This
illustrated that parents perceived services as used by and developed for mothers, thus
indirectly excluding fathers. In addition, because fathers typically have a lower knowledge
base (McHale, Kazali, et al., 2004), this reinforced mothers as having more knowledge and
possibly power in parenting.

Roberta and Jeremy felt that fathers should always be included. They stated:

Jeremy: I’m not only assume it was okay- [for service involvement]
Roberta: I would expect it.
Jeremy: ...I don’t think fathers should be excluded in any way and-
Roberta: I think that’s horrendous if they are
Jeremy: And if I was I would probably be quite upset about it
Roberta: I would to... (923-929)
Roberta and Jeremy discussed their perception that Jeremy as a father should be entitled to attend anything parenting-related that Roberta attended, thus carrying an assumption that Jeremy was a part of community services. In addition, Jeremy and Roberta expressed their shared commitment to fathers' inclusion in community services, which created the alliance platform. An interesting aspect of this expected inclusion was that Jeremy was one of the only fathers who chose to attend PAFT group meetings and was comfortable being the only male there:

Jeremy: I've been to few of the group meetings but nh yeah. It's good I'm probably like like the only father there (1394-1395)

Roberta and Jeremy were unique in their implementing of their equality in a way a lot of other parents did not see as possible. One reason that Jeremy was able to attend the group meetings was due to a flexible employment environment and also his relationship with Roberta. As seen in quotes throughout this analysis, Roberta and Jeremy supported one another and thus were able to challenge the social norms of fathers attending groups where there were no other fathers.

Parents suggested the societal need for the fathers' inclusion and value in coparenting. In this theme parents expressed their need to ensure that as societal changes shift to include the concept of new fatherhood, which includes fathers in families, services must shift to meet this need. This will assist both parents in coparenting by increasing fathers' skills to be involved and decreasing the pressure on mothers to inform fathers.

**Theme 6: The role of other people in influencing the coparenting relationship and individual parents**

- 6a) Intergenerational transmission and family of origin affected coparenting practices
- 6b) Other people offered support, information and/or stress to parents
- 6c) Fathers can mediate stress placed on mothers by others

Parents reported that people outside the coparenting relationship often influenced their relationship and perceptions of parenting. They suggested that these may be their families of origin or their social network. These 'others' provided both positive and negative insights into
parenting, which in turn affected coparents' perceptions. As with many of the other themes here, the influence is based on perceptions. Castle, Slade, Barranco-Wadlow, and Rogers (2008) found that both mothers and fathers were influenced by perceived social support.

6a) Intergenerational transmission and family of origin affected coparenting practices. Parents reported their families of origin as influencing their parenting perceptions and practices as supported by research (Cowan and Cowan, 2002; Curran, Hazen, and Mann, 2009; Stright and Bales, 2004; Van Egeren, 2003). Silas and Patricia explained that they had difficulties asking their families to watch their child, even though they lived close by, due to their child exhibiting behavioural issues:

Patricia: ...the family don’t generally step in- ’cause they know what [child]’s like so they don’t generally take him off too much. Well your mother isn’t too bad
Silas: No not-
Patricia: No
Silas: She won’t come offer her services
Patricia: No
Silas: If you ask she’ll take him, but she won’t offer
Patricia: And they genuinely think that is the way we brought him up rather than the way he is, it is it can be quite difficult (344-353)

As Patricia and Silas’ child was perceived as so difficult by their families, this placed pressure on them because they lacked support from their families of origin. This was of particular importance because many grandparents report that being involved with their grandchildren is important to their sense of selves (Smith and Drew, 2004). This may further Patricia’s feelings of mother-blame (described in chapter 3) and cause strain to the coparents’ relationship.

Another aspect found important here and in previous studies is intergenerational transmission of the coparenting relationship. For instance, Perren (2005) found that if parents saw their own parents as negative, they were more likely to perceive negative changes in their own marriage after their first child was born. Roberta explained that she was concerned about intergenerational transmission in parenting, but that her relationship with her partner mediated this concern:
Roberta: You know we both got different strengths and we're prepared to form a relationship with them. That was what we said because that was one of my key things when I was pregnant because my parents' relationship was so dreadful and my upbringing was so horrendous you know my mother used to hit me and really beat me...we've always had a very different relationship from them but we realized that the space between us was really good and we could fit a child in that space really nicely and it would be happy child because the space was good.

Jeremy: Yeah that was the thinking about it yeah exactly. She took- as I said earlier we thought about it long and hard before we decided to bring a child into the world (943-954)

Roberta explained that in deciding to have children she was concerned that her parents' relationship and her abusive upbringing might cause difficulties in parenting, which research evidence supports (Busch et al., 2008; Curran, Hazen, Jacobwitz, and Sasaki, 2006; Stright and Bales, 2004). However due to her partner's support, she was able to move past this concern. Jeremy indicated that he supported Roberta while she was having concerns and that having children was a conscious choice between the two of them. Research indicates that when parents make a conscious choice to have a child together, the relationship suffers less strain (Feinberg, 2002; Golombok, 2000; Pajulo, Helenius, and Mayes, 2006). As mentioned previously, reflective capabilities are important for mothers, particularly in promoting change in their parenting practices (Curran et al., 2009; Kane et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2003). The fact that Roberta spent so much time reflecting on her experiences suggested that she would be able to overcome them. Furthermore some research indicates that when parents can anticipate difficulties due to their families of origin they are more able to adjust to the difficulties (Curran et al., 2009; Perren, 2005). Roberta used her abusive experiences in discussion with others stating that:

Roberta: I struggle with it quite a lot. It is a very difficult thing...I have a fantastic relationship for support...I had a a a go about this yesterday I was on an internet forum...there's a thread on this forum and it was about there's this guy in the UK who's just been put in prison for raping his own daughters and and people on this forum were saying 'let's send him to prison, I'm sure he'll get special treatment there' and going on and I was like oh my God...you're supposed to be nice, middle class people and you're saying crap like this. 'And I just said 'you know I was abused as a child and I know exactly what it's like and it's my privilege to break that cycle.' And if you say and if you do that kind of behaviour to someone else you validate it... (957-977)
Roberta explained that she struggled with her upbringing influencing her parenting, but that she actively battles any urges that might mean she exhibits negative parenting practices. She mentioned that her partner was supportive of her parenting, which literature supports in indicating the importance of the father in preventing maternal child abuse (Guterman et al., 2009).

6b) Other people offered support, information and/or stress to parents. Parents also explained that after having a child, social networks can provide support:

Susan: All our friends and family got together and got us so much stuff.
Allan: Everyone kind of closes around 'cause it was quite special really. (237-239)

Susan and Allan felt protected and taken care of when their child was born extremely premature, which supports Castle et al. (2008) that parents who perceive positive social networks have less distress at the transition to parenthood. Other parents suggested that their social network provided information:

Jenna: ... when we were expecting [child]... [friend] enlightened us to joys of fatherhood. Ted was a little bit shell shocked after this enlightenment I think...the thing I remember most is the first two weeks after he’d had the baby he had a whole list of things he wanted to go and do and said ‘don’t be surprised if you don’t get out of your dressing gown.’ And Ted’s like ‘right’. He was like ‘wait you’re telling me I’m going to get two weeks of paternity leave and I’m not going to get to do anything! No way.’ ‘And sleep forget it. And nappies oh my God they’re horrendous’ (all laugh). And it was just a real kind of male honest approach to what it’s like to be a dad in the first few weeks. And he actually sent an email a few weeks ago going-
Ted: Told ya
Jenna: Yeah, ‘told ya how’s it all going? Still really really hard work, blah blah blah. But it is all worth it’ and it was a real honest approach to it. Not like ‘oh it’s all lonely. It’s all lonely and then it comes with the ups and downs’ so um it was quite an honest approach and what it was like to be dad (481-494)

Jenna and Ted had fatherhood explained to them at a social event. While this was told as a joke in this instance, they did not heed the warning of their friend. In fact Jenna indicated that Ted did not believe their friend’s advice, which may be supported by gender differences that indicate that women find it easier than men to accept support and information from others regarding parenting (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, et al., 2004).
Parents also suggested that others could be a source of pressure. For example, Dale and Carrie told a story of an antenatal class to illustrate the pressure placed on parents:

Dale: But you can take that back to the antenatal class and this is where where for me it all summed up how classic it was. They were on about the placentas-
Carrie: Yeah (laughing)
Dale: And Carrie goes I've been told I have a high placenta, is that good?
Carrie: I didn't know what that meant
Dale: Yeah I didn't have a clue. And the next thing was 'oh yes a high placenta is excellent, that's very good' and then everyone else was like, the husband to the wife is 'have you got a high placenta?' (all laugh)
Carrie: They went round the room! 'You've got one of those?'
Dale: If you don't have a high placenta you know-
Carrie: You're out! (all laugh). No room for you, you are the loser in this competition!
Dale: I felt sorry for the woman who might have had to say 'no mine's really low' but no one said that. (all laugh)
Interviewer: Everyone said yes?
Dale: Yeah 'mine's the highest, mine's the biggest' and that that to me summed up straight away what parenting could possibly be when you hear about things like competitive dad's syndrome and competitive mum syndrome, you know it's out there... (699-719)

Dale and Carrie explained that this experience was an eye opener for their parenting. Another point was that Dale and Carrie are laughing and finishing one another's sentences during this story, taking mutual delight in this, suggesting that while it did not change their view, it did not affect their parenting nor make them feel that they were in this competition, almost making it seem as if being together in their own relationship allowed them not to worry about the world outside.

6c) Fathers can mediate stress placed on mothers by others. Carrie reported falling back on her relationship with Dale when feeling concerned by other parents:

Carrie: ...I found that when I was off on maternity leave and then you do become so consumed by the world of mummies I think and you can't help that 'cause you are surrounded and you do think about you know what their son's doing, what their daughter's doing, you can't help that... his day's been completely different to mine. And I'll say something obviously I think is massive you know '[another child]'s
started pulling himself up and [our child]'s not doing that... so then I'd come home and talk to Dale and he'd sort of go 'yeah so?' (laughs). (724-734)

By having Dale as an outside person that Carrie voiced concerns to, a person who was not 'consumed by the world of mummies', Dale provided her with a safe place. The major concerns she had did not affect Dale's perceptions of Carrie, their child, or their relationship, which allowed Carrie to be grounded by his perspectives. This 'turning towards' (discussed in theme 2) may be an important mediating factor in allowing the external world to influence their relationships. In addition, by Carrie and Dale illuminating this positive couple attachment, where they ask one another for support, research indicates that the coparenting relationship is strengthened. Attachment and roles were investigated by Perrone, Webb, and Jackson (2007), who suggested that these had a complex relationship. They suggest that couples' attachment influences their perceptions of other roles the parents play in employment, marriage and parenting. Therefore due to the secure attachment that Dale and Carrie report, Dale supported Carrie when she felt concerns from outside their relationship.

This theme indicated that coparenting relationships may be central to how relationships with others are perceived and developed. In the quotes above, it can be seen that coparents consider their relationships with their family of origin and their social network, but this can put additional strain on the family relationships, particularly if the coparenting relationship is not supportive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 7: PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7a) PAFT provided information, support, reassurance and confidence to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b) Project worker-family connection was important to parents' involvement in PAFT and feeling that PAFT met their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c) Handouts provided a dual purpose if parents were unable to attend as they aided fathers through information and reminded mother about the visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7d) PAFT provided coparents with the awareness and opportunity to explore, discuss, and negotiate parenting practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some research indicates that many parenting programmes contain information that could be used by any parent, not simply mothers (Feinberg, 2002). However this information does
not specifically assist the coparenting relationship, influencing instead the parenting practices separately (Lindsey et al., 2005). Theme 7 addresses these previous findings more specifically, concluding that PAFT supported parents in several ways, including even if coparents were unable to attend home visits. As home visits typically take place during the week while many fathers engaged in paid employment, the impact of the programme on fathers was often perceived as indirect rather than direct.

7a) PAFT provided information, support, reassurance and confidence to parents. When asking parents to describe what programme involvement offered, they all expressed positive benefits. Parents suggested that programme involvement aided their knowledge, understanding of their child, confidence, and provided them with useful information that encouraged the parent-child relationship:

\[
\text{Jenna: ...understanding of how their brain works, the social understanding...the}
\]
\[
\text{personality traits that [child] shows and then how to bring out the other personality}
\]
\[
\text{traits... (392-395)}
\]

As Jenna states, PAFT provided information on child development which encouraged their interaction with their child to promote his development. Parents reported feeling that PAFT provided them with positive ideas that developed their understanding and offered a valuable understanding of their child. For instance:

\[
\text{Kenneth: ...it's the sense checking on a regular basis is so invaluable}
\]

\[
\text{Lily: Yeah}
\]

\[
\text{Kenneth: Gives you that little sort of nudge and bit of reassurance in itself and you}
\]

\[
\text{can't you can't put a value against that sort of thing... (433-437)}
\]

Kenneth and Lily described that PAFT provided them with reassurance that their child was doing well, and that they see the way that PAFT promoted their understanding of their child as 'invaluable'. This was a unique part of PAFT in that due to delivering the programme to parents and children together, the project workers can provide one-on-one support that is tailored specifically to the families' needs. According to Kenneth and Lily this was a vital and important aspect of the service as it met their needs for understanding their child. Similarly Carrie and Dale suggested that PAFT provides them with confidence through information:
Carrie: ...Really good and it was just really good to get guidance about our routine and things... I think it just gives you confidence
Dale: It's like an external verifier
Carrie: It is yeah. That's exactly what it is! (583-589)

Carrie and Dale proposed that PAFT provided impartial information that was outside their social group but still external to them as parents. They suggested that their project worker gave them direction and confidence in their parenting.

7b) Project worker-family connection was important to parents' involvement in PAFT and feeling that PAFT met their needs. As with other groups, some parents explained that they saw project workers coming to the families' environments as assisting in meeting their families' needs:

Robert: ...I thought the fact that they came to the house was really great. That they came prepared to meet [child] in her own patch and-
Jeremy: Yes
Robert: You know talk to us about her and-
Jeremy: And they've always been er very er reactive to [child] herself.
Robert: Yep
Jeremy: And sit on the floor and play with her and during bringing certain things for her to try out and that's nice
Robert: It is nice 'cause she really enjoys it and they really good 'cause they always let her approach them at her own pace and what have you. And they always just so really positive about things. It's just really great actually... nice to access stuff through someone like [project worker] so that's quite cool. It's really useful actually. (386-401)

Jeremy and Roberta appreciated that PAFT met their child on her terms and they suggested that this met their needs as a family. It is important to note that the project worker meets all families' members in their environment and that Jeremy and Roberta appreciated that the project worker provides empowerment as a couple and child development information. Literature has yet to examine the influence of practitioners on coparents, thus the current research investigating coparents' perceptions of both parents' involvement is important for engaging future families.

7c) Handouts provided a dual purpose if parents were unable to attend as they aided fathers through information and reminded mother about the visit. In cases where
only one parent attended home visits, the attending partner’s feedback was key to a non-
attending parent’s acceptance of programme involvement:

Silas: ...there are days coming back from work and [mother] you’d be all happy, new ideas we can try...you could see the stress had gone for the day...it’s nice to have some suggested things you can try... (416-420)

As Silas illustrated, parents felt positive that the programme provided handouts as well as feeling positive about the project worker. The handouts supplied fathers with information and aided mothers’ ability to include the father. Without direct contact with a PAFT project worker, information sheets were passed from mothers to fathers, providing fathers with the ability to understand their children’s development and support the mothers. In turn, this indirect contact and handouts aided parents in creating an alliance on best parenting practices.

7d) PAFT provided coparents with the awareness and opportunity to explore, discuss, and negotiate parenting practices. By providing information sheets, parents felt able to discuss their overall parenting ideas and expectations:

Allan: I can’t ever remember consciously talking about this is how we will raise our children...
Susan: But then [programme] makes you talk about those things when you read the handouts ‘cause...it gives you a topic to talk about... because we’ve got these handouts saying in this stage children can get difficult and in this stage this is how you can approach it...that helps our communication... (408-433)

Allan and Susan suggested that PAFT engaged parents on wider parenting issues, which in turn supported parents in examining and adapting their parenting attitudes. This further promoted coparents’ ability to find a common platform for parenting practices. It assisted mothers in being able to discuss the sessions and provided the fathers with the information so that mothers were not left to rely solely on their memories of the session, which would give them ultimate control over what fathers were told.

While many of the points addressed here are not currently investigated in the literature,

115 As seen in chapter 4: Fathers
parents still felt that PAFT supported them. It is important to note that even if fathers were unable to participate directly in programmes, some strategies existed to promote their involvement.

Summary

The phase 1 analysis acted as a framework for initial considerations for the coparenting relationship. Coparents perceived numerous influences on their parenting practices, such as the family members' differing relationships, external influences on the relationship, perceptions of one another, process of change, society and service provision, their social network and PAFT. This combination of themes offered a groundwork for the next phase of questionnaires that would base the research on coparents' unique perspectives.

Phase 2: Questionnaires

Due to the nature of questionnaire research, mothers and fathers contributed their perspectives on coparenting individually. Thus the following section is divided into Coparenting as a Mother and Coparenting as a Father. The questionnaires were developed using quotes based on specific themes from the phase 1 analysis for mothers as coparents and fathers as coparents. The questionnaire was developed with statements from the following coparenting themes:

- **Dyadic relationships between the mother, father, and child differed and could complement one another.**
  To better understand the relationships between members of the family, individual family relationships were included in developing the questionnaire.

- **Domestic responsibilities and paid employment: External factors impacted coparents' relationships, which required parents to negotiate with one another.** Because a number of varying influences from outside the coparenting relationship appeared to impact on coparenting practices, this theme was included in phase 2.

- **Underlying perceptions of the other parent influenced coparenting practices and cognitions, and includes the transition from single to couple to parents.** A main underlying theme that existed in phase 1 was how parents perceived one another and how this impacted coparenting practices, and was therefore included in phase 2.
Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the developing family relationships, leading to the coparenting alliance. As one research question involved change in parenting practices and it had several elements explored in phase 1, it was included in the questionnaire.

Coparents felt unsatisfied with services, with both parents feeling that fathers were excluded and mothers were being forced to act as a gatekeeper to service information. Coparents felt strongly that services needed to change to meet with societal discourses that promoted father involvement. Therefore this theme was included in this phase.

PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents. Numerous PAFT components promoted positive coparenting practices, regardless of whether both parents attended home visits. This theme was important to understanding how programme elements influenced coparenting, and is thus vital to understanding PAFT effects on coparenting.

One theme was excluded from phase 2:

- The role of other people in influencing the coparenting relationship and individual parents. This theme was excluded in its own sense and was instead considered only as one aspect of the external factors impact on coparenting.

Mothers as Coparents: Phase 2

Participants

Mothers were recruited from the two areas described in chapter 2. A total of 57 mothers attempted to complete some part of the questionnaire. For further information regarding demographics, please see Table 5.3.\footnote{0 is the number of missing values, unless otherwise indicated.}
### Table 5.3

*Mothers as Coparents’ Demographics for Completing the Coparenting Questionnaires*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number of Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting status</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed: White and Black Caribbean</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in Paid Employment</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification</td>
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<td>Missing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-level(s)/AS-level(s)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree/diploma</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently with PAFT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the breakdown of the questionnaire, mothers completed various parts of the questionnaire, ignoring parts or questions that they felt did not pertain to them. As can be seen in Table 5.4 mothers varied on their completion rate of each questionnaire.
Table 5.4

**Mothers’ Completion Rate for Coparenting Questionnaires**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Section</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section C: Coparenting as a mother</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section D: Coparenting and PAFT</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section E: Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin et al., 2001)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One noteworthy point is regarding the answers to the ‘are you a coparent?’ question. Many mothers answered that they were not even though they were cohabitating with a partner. Table 5.5 illustrates the division of mothers who saw themselves as coparents by parenting status. As can be seen in the figure almost 30% of married mothers reported not being coparents despite cohabitation.

Table 5.5

**Mothers’ Answers to ‘Are You a Coparent?’ by Mothers’ Reported Parenting Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Status</th>
<th>Are you a coparent?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-Dimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)\(^{118}\)

Multi-dimensional scaling revealed several key regions influencing both coparenting as a mothering and PAFT.

**‘Coparenting as a Mother’ questionnaire.** On the coparenting as a mother scale four primary regions were identifiable (see Figure 5.1). The ‘coparenting as a mother’ analysis had good stress and moderate RSQ values with Stress=.12 and RSQ=.94. Each region is labelled and described in turn below. It is important to note that each facet is according to

\(^{117}\) Two mothers, who completed the coparenting questionnaires, did not tick their parenting status.

\(^{118}\) Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
Mothers as coparents’ perspectives only.

Figure 5.1. Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the ‘Coparenting as a Mother’ questionnaire

*Note.* One question was excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the regions as this outlier caused the model to be compressed: Sometimes I feel like I am nagging my partner (Q31).

**Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles.** This region of the analysis illustrated the differences mothers perceive between mothering and fathering. The statements all express the differences (or similarities) in parenting between the mother and father, measuring consistency (or lack thereof) in parenting. It also contains statements that relate specifically to the mothers’ perceptions of the fathers’ involvement and fathers’ interest in the children’s perceptions, although this one is slightly further from the others (Q15). This facet indicates the mothers’ perceptions of mothering and fathering as differing conceptual ideas.
Mothers and fathers as separate parenting styles:
- When our child is fussy about something, my partner's answer is to give in to what our child wants (Q7)
- If daddy is around, I do not get a look from our child (Q14)
- My partner would love to be a stay at home dad (Q15)
- After I found I was pregnant, my partner wanted me to tell him what to feel (Q16)
- After our child was born, I was keen to get some routine and my partner did not see the benefits (Q26)
- When fathers try to take an active role with their children, it is seen as a competition between parents (Q40)

**Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family.** This facet contains mothers' perceptions of the roles coparents play in the family. It is comprised of the actual roles that each parent fulfills in their children's lives and the responsibilities each parent participates in the family. In looking at the diagram it appears that the region could almost be divided in two as Q5, Q12, Q17, and Q21 appear in a slightly lower space than the other statements. These four statements were related based on the family relationships. Two questions are particularly related: Q36 and Q38. It appears that if a mother agrees (or disagrees) that being a woman leads to knowing a child's routine, then she is likely to also agree (or disagree) that fathers will not attend community events. This seems to illustrate an underlying gender assumption in the mother on coparenting roles, which in turn may lead to more gendered stereotypes in their perceptions.
Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family:

- Before we had children, I cannot remember talking about how we will raise them (Q5)
- Anything to do with the children tends to fall on my shoulders (Q12)
- Since our child was born, my partner is no longer my main priority (Q17)
- It is difficult for my partner to be involved with our children due to his work (Q21)
- When my partner does not know what to do with our child, it is very stressful for me (Q24)
- Before our child was born, I had more understanding as to what parenting was than my partner (Q30)
- Parenting can often seem like it is full of spectacular failures (Q34)
- I am the emotional support to our child and my partner does the playing (Q35)
- If you arranged something for fathers in the community, I do not think they would turn up (Q36)
- I think a woman is programmed to know what a child's routine is (Q38)
- After our child was born, there was not anything for dad in the community (Q39)

The coparents' relationship develops and changes over time. This facet is made up of a number of statements that involve mothers' perspectives of the developing coparenting relationship. Q32 is slightly farther away and is related to how mothers perceived their own abilities within the coparenting relationship, which is slightly different as it relates directly to how mothers felt when children came home from the hospital. Q2 and Q11 are also slightly farther in the table. This is likely because these two questions ascertain information about the couple before the relationship and not related to children.
The coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time:

- My partner tries to be as involved as much as he can with the children (Q1)
- My partner has always been okay about doing housework (Q2)
- If I was worried about something then I would talk about it with my partner (Q3)
- My partner is more than happy to do anything that is involved directly with the children (Q6)
- My partner looked after me really well during the pregnancy (Q8)
- Before having a baby, my partner and I had very similar ideas about everything (Q11)
- My partner makes me feel good about myself (Q18)
- When I get angry at my partner for not helping enough, he will make the effort (Q20)
- We have a child now and that brings us closer together (Q27)
- We had sorted all our relationship differences before we decided to have a family (Q28)
- When we brought our child home from the hospital, we really did not know what we were doing (Q32)
- I feel stronger for my partner because he is such a great dad (Q37)
- The give and take in our relationship does not bother me in the least (Q41)

Coparenting influences family relationships. This region is comprised of statements based on family relationships. It includes items indicating that family relationships change due to children, and act as the platform of the marital relationship upon which coparenting is based. While this group of statements was particularly related in the Figure, two statements are farther from the centre, Q22 and Q42. These statements are different from family relationships, Q22 because it focuses on what mothers see is the relationship between the father and child. Q42 is slightly different because it involves skill transferral between fathers and children, but it still is valuing (or not) the family relationships.
Coparenting influences family relationships:
- It makes you feel good as a mum when you see your partner helping you out (Q4)
- Children make your life take a different focus (Q9)
- If my partner was excluded from community services, I would be upset about it (Q10)
- It is important to encourage a teamwork aspect rather than a competition between parents (Q13)
- It is very important that we have a consistent parenting approach between us (Q19)
- My partner needs to know why our child is doing something (Q22)
- We made a decision together that we wanted to have children (Q23)
- I do not think fathers should be excluded from community services (Q25)
- Parenting is highly stressful. You need a strong relationship (Q29)
- We know it is a benefit to our child if we work together (Q33)
- My partner teaches our child things differently from me (Q42)

‘Coparenting and PAFT’ questionnaire. On the Coparenting and PAFT questionnaire for mothers two primary regions were identifiable (see Figure 5.2). The ‘coparenting as a mother and PAFT’ analysis had excellent stress and excellent RSQ values with Stress=.08 and RSQ=.98. Each region is labelled and described in turn below. It is important to note that each facet is according to mothers as coparents’ perspectives only.
Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers.

This region's statements are about mothers deciding their partners' involvement in PAFT. Q47 and Q49 are very close to the division with the other facet. While they somewhat relate to PAFT's support of the coparenting relationship, considering that the handouts are provided to the fathers through the mothers and mothers are the ones who typically 'deal with issues' and relay this information to fathers, they fit better in this category conceptually. Q58 appears farther away as it relates to mothers forcing fathers' involvement, which is different to others in the region, although if looking at the two closest points, 55 and 46, they are also about the mother deciding the fathers' involvement, just in slightly different terms. Q50, Q51, and Q53 also appear related, due likely to mothers' perceptions of how they relay the information to fathers, particularly through PAFT support. Therefore it may be that mothers are the gateway to fathers' involvement through varying pathways.
Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers:
- I get my partner to sit down and read the PAFT handout rather just nagging him about parenting (Q46)
- PAFT helps us know actually how to deal with issues our child is having (Q47)
- PAFT try and involve the dads by giving the handouts (Q49)
- If PAFT did not have the handouts to remind me of what they said, I would have no idea (Q50)
- No one tells parents that they are doing a good job, but PAFT does (Q51)
- If people do not talk to their partners then their partner would need to be around for PAFT visits (Q53)
- My partner tells me to ask the project worker things about our child at the next meeting (Q55)
- Sometimes I thrust the PAFT handouts in my partner’s face so that he will scan it (Q58)

PAFT influences coparenting and the family. This facet encompasses statements that examine mothers’ perceptions of PAFT as they inform coparenting. The statements describe that PAFT encourages (or discourages) the coparenting relationship and how PAFT incorporates both parents. Q57 appears higher in the region than many of the other statements and this is most likely due to the role of it being more factually based, asking about father attendance in the mothers’ views. Q54 appears slightly farther outside the region, most likely based on how mothers perceive the necessity of father involvement in actual home visiting sessions.

PAFT influences coparenting and the family:
- PAFT told us we were doing really well with our child (Q44)
- PAFT is reassurance for us that we are doing the right thing with our child (Q45)
- PAFT encourages parents to talk about parenting (Q48)
- In an ideal world if my partner could be more involved with PAFT it would be fantastic (Q54)
- My partner is generally at work during the day when PAFT comes (Q57)
- My partner is very supportive about PAFT (Q59)
- PAFT is not just a mummy thing, daddy can do it as well (Q61)
- PAFT never really stops with my child, my project worker incorporates the whole family (Q62)

Reliability Analysis
To better understand the relationships between the regions, each region’s statements were
measured using Cronbach's Alpha to establish their reliability as a scale. The previously validated questionnaire scales (Coparenting Questionnaire) were also tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha to ensure its scales remained reliable with this sample. As can be seen in Table 5.6, all new scales were considered reliable, with most new scales being .7 or above, and one being .6.119

Table 5.6

Cronbach’s Alpha for Reliability of Newly-Found and Previously Validated Questionnaire Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles</td>
<td>=.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family</td>
<td>=.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time</td>
<td>=.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparenting influences family relationships</td>
<td>=.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers</td>
<td>=.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT influences coparenting and the family</td>
<td>=.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>=.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>=.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>=.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *The standardised questionnaire scales

After the regions were identified and re-coded as scales in their own right, skewness and kurtosis scores were calculated to ascertain which variables were parametric and non-parametric in order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis (Appendix F3).120 Most scales were parametric with the following scales being non-parametric: Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles; the coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time; cooperation; triangulation; conflict; and relationship satisfaction.

Correlations

Parametric (Pearson’s) and non-parametric (Spearman’s) correlations were conducted to better understand the relationships between scales in the measures.

119 * denotes lower alpha level. This is slightly lower than the typical .7 considered best, although due to the placement on the MDS analysis, and inter-item correlations, it remained as its own scales in this analysis. The strength of the correlations below should be considered with this information.

120 Those z-scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
Parametric (Pearson's correlations). The parametric correlations show some important relationships between scales (see Appendix F3 for parametric correlation table).

Coparenting influences family relationships is significantly related to two scales: negatively related to coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = -.36$, $p < .01$; and positively related to PAFT influences coparenting and the family, $r = .45$, $p < .001$. Meaning if mothers score highly on perceived roles and responsibilities in the family, they are less likely to see coparenting influencing the family. If mothers perceive that coparenting has an influence on family relationships, they are also likely to view PAFT having an influence on the coparents and family.

PAFT influences coparenting and the family is significantly related to mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers, $r = .53$, $p < .001$. If mothers see themselves as the gateway between her partner and PAFT, she is also likely to see PAFT as influencing coparenting.

Non-parametric (Spearman's correlations). The non-parametric correlations show several important relationships (see Appendix F3 for the non-parametric correlation chart).

All of the Coparenting Questionnaire scales were significantly related with conflict and triangulation, $r = .56$, $p < .001$. Conflict was negatively related to cooperation, $r = -.54$, $p < .001$ and triangulation was negatively related to cooperation, $r = -.52$, $p < .001$. This means that if mothers score highly on conflict, they will likely report much triangulation and if they experience either of those highly, they are likely to score lower on cooperation and vice versa.

Relationship satisfaction was significantly related to a number of scales. These included: coparenting influences family relationships, $r = .30$, $p < .05$; the coparents' relationship develops and changes over time, $r = .58$, $p < .001$; cooperation, $r = .56$, $p < .001$. Relationship satisfaction also had significant negative relationships with: coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the
family, $r = -.41, p < .005$; triangulation, $r = -.55, p < .001$ and conflict, $r = -.50, p < .001$. Thus if mothers have high relationship satisfaction she is likely to see coparenting influencing family relationships, the changing coparenting relationship and cooperation as existing in her coparenting. In addition, she is likely to report low scores on roles and responsibilities in the family, triangulation and conflict.

Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles is significantly related to a number of scales: coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = .48, p < .005$; triangulation, $r = .32, p < .05$, and conflict, $r = .31, p < .05$. Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles is also negatively related to coparenting influences family relationships, $r = -.32, p < .05$. This means that if mothers perceive mothering and fathering as highly separate, they are more likely to perceive high levels of roles and responsibilities in the family, triangulation and conflict. Mothers with high rates of mothering and fathering as separate are also likely to perceive coparenting as not influencing family relationships.

The coparents' relationship develops and changes over time scale was significantly related to a number of other scales including: coparenting influences family relationships, $r = .46, p < .001$ and cooperation, $r = .58, p < .001$. It was also had significant negative correlations to: coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = -.39, p < .005$ and triangulation, $r = -.50, p < .001$. Therefore if mothers perceive high rates of a developing and changing coparenting relationship, they are likely to perceive low levels of coparents roles and responsibilities and triangulation. Also if they have high rates of developing and changing coparenting relationship, they are likely to perceive high rates of cooperation and perceiving that coparenting influences the family.

Coparenting cooperation had significant positive relationships to several scales: coparenting influences family relationships, $r = .55, p < .001$ and PAFT influences coparenting and the family, $r = .39, p < .005$. It had a significant negative relationship to coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = -.49, p < .001$. This means that if mothers perceive high levels of cooperation in their coparenting, they are more likely to perceive high levels of coparenting influencing family relationships and PAFT as influencing coparenting and the
family. Mothers with high cooperation were also likely to perceive low levels of roles and responsibilities in the family.

Coparenting triangulation had significant positive correlations to several scales: coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = .53, p < .001$ and mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers, $r = .38, p < .01$. There was also a significant negative correlation between triangulation and coparenting influences family relationships, $r = -.44, p < .005$. This means that if mothers perceive triangulation as high in the family, they are likely to perceive high rates of roles and responsibilities in their coparenting and mothers as influencing PAFT involvement. Mothers who perceive high levels of triangulation are also less likely to perceive coparenting as influencing family relationships.

There was a significant positive relationship between coparenting conflict and coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family, $r = .55, p < .001$. Conflict had significant negative correlations to both coparenting influences family relationships, $r = -.41, p < .005$ and the coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time, $r = -.38, p < .01$. This means that mothers who perceive high conflict in their relationship are also likely to perceive high levels of coparents’ roles and responsibilities. It also means that mothers who perceive high rates of conflict will perceive low levels of coparenting influencing family relationships and the developing and change in their coparenting relationship.

**Fathers as Coparents: Phase 2**

**Participants**

Fathers were recruited from the two areas described in chapter 2. A total of 28 fathers attempted to complete some part of the questionnaire. For further information regarding demographics, please see Table 5.7.121

121 0 is the number of missing values, unless otherwise indicated.
Table 5.7

*Fathers as Coparents’ Demographics for Completing the Coparenting Questionnaires*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number of Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed: White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in Paid Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-level(s)/AS-level(s)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree/diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently with PAFT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the breakdown of the questionnaire, fathers completed various parts of the questionnaire, ignoring parts or questions that they felt did not pertain to them. As can be
seen in Table 5.8, fathers varied on their completion rate of each questionnaire.

Table 5.8

Fathers' Completion Rate for Coparenting Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Section</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section C: Coparenting as a father</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section D: Coparenting and PAFT</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section E: Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin et al., 2001)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One noteworthy point is regarding the answers to the ‘are you a coparent?’ question. Fathers were slightly more likely to perceive that they were coparents than mothers. Table 5.9 illustrates the classification of fathers who saw themselves as coparents by parenting status. As can be seen, almost 25% of married or cohabitating fathers reported not being coparents.

Table 5.9

Fathers’ Answers to ‘Are You a Coparent?’ by Fathers’ Reported Parenting Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Status</th>
<th>Are you a coparent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Parent</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together but not married</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living apart and parenting together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting with another family member</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-Dimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)

Multi-dimensional scaling revealed several key regions influencing both coparenting as a father and PAFT.

‘Coparenting as a father’ questionnaire. On the ‘Coparenting as a father’ questionnaire, three primary regions were identifiable (see Figure 5.3). These three regions

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122 Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
had slightly high stress\textsuperscript{123} and suitable RSQ values with Stress = .15 and RSQ = .90. Each region is labelled and described in turn below. It is important to note that each region is according to fathers as coparents’ perspectives only.

\textbf{Societal and family perspectives shape fathers’ coparenting}

\textbf{Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement}

\textbf{Coparenting support provided in family relationships}

\textbf{Coparenting support provided in family relationships.} This region consisted of statements relating to coparenting in marital and parent-child relationships. The statements suggest that fathers perceive their relationship with their partners as connected to their relationships with their children. Q25 is slightly farther from the other statements but this may be less related as it could be factual for some parents and may not influence other

\textsuperscript{123} This is a slightly higher stress value that should ideally be used; however analysis at the three-dimensional space did not aid interpretability.
aspects of the family relationship as highly as the other statements. This indicates that the coparenting relationship is set within other family relationships for fathers.

Societal and family perspectives shape fathers’ coparenting. This facet combined statements about fathers’ perceptions of their partner and perceptions of societal expectations. It appears that fathers see many aspects of family and external life as exhibiting (or not) pressure on fathers with their families. Therefore external and internal factors affect fathers and should both be considered as potentially adding strain to fathers’ perceptions. In addition, the diagram appears to mix these together; in other words, families and society are combined within father as coparent perspectives. For example, one part of the diagram appears Q3-a partner question, Q23-partner question, Q33-societal; Q35-partner and societal gender roles. This illustrated that fathers do not appear to discern between types of external factors, instead lumping them together in their perceptions of coparenting.
Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement. This region encompasses some difficulties fathers perceive in being involved with their families. It allows for both societal and family perspectives; however these viewpoints are about specific perceived challenges that fathers face in being involved. While this region fits together due to the challenges, it appears that there may be three separate aspects of the facet: with Q1, Q9, Q24, and Q34 being together about fathers’ role in family involvement; Q12, Q20, Q22 and Q27 together are about demands on fathers’ time and how this influences their involvement; and Q13, Q18, and Q21 are about issues with the partners’ relationships relating to fathers’ involvement. Therefore combining these elements can be considered as the various challenges which fathers perceive as influencing their coparenting and involvement.
Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement:

- When your child is first born, you cannot do anything as a bloke (Q1)
- I do pretty much everything around the house (Q9)
- Community services should be centred around the mother (Q12)
- I am not as good at teaching our child as my partner is (Q13)
- The transition to parents was difficult for us as a couple (Q18)
- Everything is stacked up against couples, because so many people these days do not stay together (Q20)
- I do a lot of what I am told to do by my partner (Q21)
- If you arranged something for fathers in the community, I do not think they would turn up (Q22)
- When fathers try to take an active role with their children, it is seen as a competition between parents (Q24)
- I end up juggling everything, the relationship with my partner, the child, the house, work shopping (Q27)
- When we brought our child home from the hospital, we really did not know what we were doing (Q34)

‘Coparenting and PAFT’ questionnaire. On the ‘Coparenting as a father and PAFT’ questionnaire, two primary regions were identifiable (see Figure 5.4.) These regions had excellent stress and excellent RSQ values with Stress=.05 and RSQ=.99. Each region is labelled and described in turn below. It is important to note that each regions is according to fathers as coparents’ perspectives only.
**PAFT assists coparenting practices.** This facet’s statements included information on how PAFT assisted (or not) coparenting practices. Two statements, Q42 and Q51 were close to the division of the regions, however they relate to fathers indirect involvement with PAFT. They are also about how PAFT assists their partner, not specifically about PAFT information provided by PAFT. Nonetheless, by supporting their partners, the fathers perceive that PAFT assists their coparenting (or not).
PAFT assists coparenting practices:

- PAFT helps parents see this cute little bundle is interesting (Q41)
- My partner gives me good reports on PAFT (Q42)
- PAFT gives my partner support so she feels more relaxed (Q43)
- PAFT makes parents talk about parenting things when they read through the handouts (Q49)
- PAFT helps us know actually how to deal with issues our child is having (Q50)
- The project worker comes and gives my partner as nice warm feeling which gives me one (Q51)
- If only one parent can attend PAFT, the father or the mother, ultimately you are going to get something out of it (Q52)
- My partner and kids gained a lot from PAFT (Q53)

**Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT**. The statements in this region related to how fathers perceived PAFT involvement which these fathers reported as being through the mothers (or not). These statements were that fathers directly allowed (or did not) for their partners to be the primary PAFT participant and the fathers then learned from the mother. In looking at the region, it appears that Q44 and Q48 are more related to one another and Q46 and Q47 are more related to one another within the facet. Q44 and Q48 establish fathers' perceptions of the mother being the only provider of PAFT information to fathers. Q46 and Q47 indicate that PAFT assists fathers by providing them information through the mother, not simply given by the mother which suggests that fathers receive support from PAFT through varying avenues.

**Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT**:

- I am not going to read through the PAFT handout, my partner has to talk me through the visit (Q44)
- The project worker will have explained things to my partner and then she passes it on to me (Q46)
- PAFT is teaching my partner and I to be aware of what things the baby should be doing (Q47)
- My partner gives me just the important bits after a visit (Q48)

**Reliability Analysis**

To better understand the relationships between the regions, each region's statements were measured using Cronbach's Alpha to establish their reliability as a scale. The previously validated questionnaire scales (Coparenting Questionnaire) were also tested for reliability.
using Cronbach’s alpha to ensure its scales remained reliable with this sample. As can be seen in Table 5.10, all new scales were considered reliable with each new scale being .7 or above.

Table 5.10

Cronbach’s Alpha for Reliability of Newly-Found and PreviouslyValidated Questionnaire Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal and family perspectives shape fathers’ coparenting</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT assists coparenting practices</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation^</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation^</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict^</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ^The standardised questionnaire scales

After the regions were identified and re-coded as scales in their own right, skewness and kurtosis scores were calculated to ascertain which variables were parametric and non-parametric in order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis (Appendix F4).124 Most scales were parametric with the following scales being non-parametric: challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement; triangulation; and relationship satisfaction are all non-parametric.

Correlations

Parametric (Pearson’s) and non-parametric (Spearman’s) correlations were conducted to better understand the relationships between scales in the measures.

**Parametric (Pearson’s) correlations.** The parametric correlations show several important relationships between scales (see Appendix F4 for parametric correlation table).

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124 Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
Coparenting support provided in family relationships is significantly, positively related to coparenting cooperation, $r = .59$, $p < .005$ and parenting satisfaction, $r = .56$, $p < .005$. Thus if fathers perceive high levels of support in their coparenting relationship, they will also perceive high levels of cooperation in their coparenting and report high levels of parenting satisfaction.

Societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting is significantly positively related to PAFT assists coparenting practices, $r = .43$, $p < .05$ and fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT, $r = .48$, $p < .05$. Therefore if fathers see their coparenting practices as being shaped by societal and family perspectives, they are also likely to perceive that PAFT assists their coparenting and that they engage with PAFT through their partners. Perhaps if seeing outside factors as influencing coparenting, fathers were more likely to see PAFT as also having an effect.

Coparenting cooperation is significantly negatively related to conflict, $r = -.48$, $p < .05$ and PAFT assists coparenting practices, $r = .44$, $p < .05$. If fathers perceived they had high levels of cooperation in their coparenting relationship, they are likely to have low levels of conflict and perceive that PAFT assists their coparenting.

Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT is significantly, negatively related to parenting satisfaction, $r = -.40$, $p < .05$. This means that if fathers see their partners as having a rate of influence on their PAFT involvement, they are more likely to have low parenting satisfaction. This demonstrates a connection between potential gatekeeping of PAFT and fathers' negative perceptions of parenting.

**Non-parametric (Spearman's) correlations.** The non-parametric correlations show several important relationships between scales (see Appendix F4 for the non-parametric correlation chart).

Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement was significantly related to several scales. There was a positive significant correlation to fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT, $r = .51$, $p < .05$; societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting, $r = .72$, $p < .001$. 241
The challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement scale was significantly and negatively related to parenting satisfaction, $r = -.46, p < .05$. This means that fathers perceive a challenge in their coparenting relationship as the mothers being their connection to PAFT. Fathers also perceive that societal and family perspectives can represent challenges to coparenting. The final connection means that if fathers perceive a lot of challenges in their coparenting relationship, they are more likely to have low parenting satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction had a positive, significant relationship to coparenting cooperation, $r = .63, p < .005$ and coparenting support provided in family relationships, $r = .53, p < .01$. Relationship satisfaction also had a negative, significant relationship to conflict, $r = -.45, p < .05$ and triangulation, $r = -.46, p < .05$. Relationship satisfaction findings mean that if fathers perceive high levels of relationship satisfaction, they perceive having low levels of conflict and triangulation in their coparenting relationship. It also means that if fathers reported high relationship satisfaction, they perceived high levels of cooperation and support in their coparenting.

The Coparenting Questionnaire scales are significantly moderately related (conflict and cooperation above, in parametric tests). Coparenting triangulation is significantly and negatively related to coparenting cooperation, $r = -.45, p < .05$ and positively and significantly related to coparenting conflict, $r = .66, p < .001$. Therefore, as with mothers, if fathers perceive high levels of conflict, they are more likely to perceive triangulation with their children and low levels of conflict.

Summary
Phase 2 aimed to understand relationships between mothers' perceptions of coparenting and fathers' perceptions of coparenting. These findings supported and expanded phase 1 findings, and supported a complexity in coparenters' perspectives. Mothers' and fathers' views of coparenting had numerous similarities and differences, and many of these focused on the importance of family relationships. These findings further illustrate a framework for understanding coparenting, but first these findings need to be taken to coparents for validation through focus groups.
Phase 3: Focus groups

The focus group analysis aimed to validate and explore previous findings, while also considering any perceptions important to coparents’ experiences not previously found. As in phase 2, coparenting was discussed by gender division, with coparenting as mothers and coparenting as fathers being discussed in separate groups. During these focus groups, parents were able to openly discuss their partner without their hearing or being able to judge or comment on their opinions. Therefore both mothers and fathers gave candid responses to questions not seen previously. Support for the previous findings will first be briefly discussed, and then the new themes will be explored in more depth to provide additional information for interpreting the findings.

Participants\textsuperscript{125}

During the mother and father focus groups discussed in the previous chapters, parents were asked about their perspectives of coparenting. Ten mothers and five fathers participated in these focus groups. Two mothers (Susan and Roberta) participated in the coparents’ interviews and one father (Jeremy) participated in the coparents’ interview were also included here. The parents were asked to discuss whether the findings of the previous phases were related to their experiences of coparenting.

Mothers as Coparents: Phase 3

Phase 1 and 2 Findings Validated in Phase 3

After transcribing the mothers’ focus group verbatim, the transcripts were first analysed using thematic analysis to validate previous findings from phases 1 and 2. Five themes found in phases 1 and 2 were identified in this analysis as seen in Table 5.11 and will be briefly discussed in turn below.

\textsuperscript{125} See individual group chapters for more information, Chapter 3: Mothers and Chapter 4: Fathers.
Themes Identified from the Findings of Phases 1 and 2 Validated in the Mothers as Coparents’ Focus Group

| 1. Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children |
| 2. Various factors, such as family roles and domestic responsibilities, influenced the coparenting relationship |
| 3. Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged cooperation, conflict and obtaining support from their partner |
| 4. Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance |
| 5. PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support, but mothers were the primary participants |

1. Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children. The first theme that was validated from previous phases in the mothers on coparenting focus group was that mothers saw individual family relationships as developing over time between varying family members.

Roberta: ...I think [child1]'s more my kind of personality which means that [partner] naturally gets on better with her which is really not uh much of a big surprise that we clash as many of you have seen before now (chuckles) um and [child2] is calm and just kind of gets on with it...(480-484)

Roberta saw that her partner’s relationship with their daughter was positive due to the child’s personality. She indicated that these relationships changed over time and that each child encouraged different relationship styles from the parents, requiring the coparents to support one another in making changes (Davis, 2009).

Gwen described the developing family relationships after her second child was born:

Gwen: I think first time around I think I was I was happy doing kind of the majority of it and you know my husband certainly played his part he’s a great dad and everything but the majority of it was sort of my role but second time around it’s been so difficult with various problems that we’ve had and I’ve I’ve definitely felt that I’ve had to say ‘look I need you to help. Look I don’t know what to do’ you know, ‘I need this or or the other’ and he’s certainly been more than happy to you
Gwen suggested that the differences between her experiences with her first and second child’s birth required a change in her partner’s responsibilities which indicates that the fathers’ role depends on the mother. This further develops the previously described notion that mothers come first and the fathers are there as support, which is supported by societal norms (Wall and Arnold, 2007).

2. Various factors, such as family roles and domestic responsibilities, influenced the coparenting relationship. Mothers felt that various factors in the coparenting relationship including societal discourses, paid employment outside the home and domestic responsibilities, influenced the coparenting relationship:

Gwen: ...I don’t think my husband feels any sort of particular pressure and he’s kind of happy to go with the flow and whatever an-
Liz: Yeah and sort of nutrition I feel pressure. I put it on myself to um but you know I feel I sort of um must sort of feed them in a certain way and
Group: Yeah (murmurs agreement)
Liz: Nutritious food and like my husband doesn’t feel that at all he just feeds them toast and baked beans or whatever...and I know there’s nothing wrong with it everything in moderation or whatever (175-186)

Gwen and Liz discussed that their partners do not feel pressured in the same way they do, but that this influenced their understanding of coparenting, with mothers expecting more of themselves in regards to the household than they perceived their partners feeling. This could be related to mothers’ perceptions of societal pressure on mothering (chapter 3).

Other mothers felt that coparenting was inhibited by their partners’ work responsibilities. For example, Dana says:

Dana: ... we need to work on this [with child]...but of course my husband runs his own business he works an awful lot so it’s quite hard for him to actually take part he does try...he is interested it’s can be hard for him to do anything ‘cause he does work 14-16 hour days... (501-506)
Dana exemplified that fathers' work commitments hindered their involvement no matter the fathers' desire for parenting involvement. Fathers' commitments to paid employment left the parenting mostly to the mother and required the mother to engage with her partner on topics about their children, but this also supported previous research indicating that the division of labour is often based on time with the child (Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Ellison et al., 2009). Therefore, one factor that contributes to mothers acting as the gateway between parenting and fathers seems to develop simply from mothers having more time with the children.

3. Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged conflict and cooperation and obtaining support from their partner. In the above quotes by both Gwen and Roberta, it can be seen that mothers' positive perceptions of their partners encouraged their relationship in the family. These perceptions provided an underlying framework from which the coparenting relationship took place. Ellen perceived her husband as supportive of her:

Ellen: ...[partner] works from home so I'm really lucky he's there all the time I think you know he's probably I probably go to him you know what do you think we should do and you know I think he yeah he definitely he's got a really good bond with [child]. And you know if she's playing up or it's me who gets wound up, he's the one who's going to come in and take her away and he's nm he's really hands on and that seems to work. (487-494)

By perceiving her partner as accommodating of her, Ellen was able to access support for herself in parenting, which promoted her needs being met as a mother. As stated earlier simply having positive perceptions of their partner supports mothers, even if this is not really true in terms of the actual time each parent spends in child care (Cappuccini and Cochrane, 2000; Khazan et al., 2008). Thus Ellen may perceive her partner's support without it happening regularly, but the positive perception encouraged her positive coparenting practices.

4. Process of change in coparenting practices and perceptions was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance. The process of change mothers experienced in coparenting involved changing together as can be seen by some of
the mothers in the above quotes. It appeared largely based on developing the coparenting alliance together and taking influence from one another. Liz explained her development of the coparenting relationship with her partner:

Liz [with partner]... I put that on myself. I do everything on the occasions where I have taken a step back and said 'okay you do it your way' then it worked really well...I think that he's surprisingly insightful. I used to make the mistake of wanting him to do it my my way rather than let him parent his own way

Group: Yeah (murmurs agreement)

Liz: Parenting the way I want him to... don't let them do that, or don't let them but actually when I let him do it his way it works really, really well and I don't and it's about having the confidence to sit back and let him do it (440-461)

As with many other mothers, Liz described that her coparenting relationship developed over time, allowing her to see her partner as competent and able to parent appropriately with his own strategies. In consciously forcing herself to 'step back', she also encouraged his parenting, indicating a two-step process to fathers’ involvement. It also suggested that Liz’s high self-reflection abilities allowed her to support her partner and make changes to her perceptions and behaviours, much as self-reflection supports in changing mothers’ parenting practices (Kane et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2003). This is a very clear example of maternal gatekeeping from a mother’s perspective. Cowdery and Knudson-Martin (2005) suggested that when mothers are over-involved with their children their partners take a step back. However Liz suggested that by taking the step back she allowed herself, her children, and her partner options for working together. This indicates that another element may need to be added to Cowdery and Knudson-Martin’s framework, i.e. that mother’s should be encouraged to take the step back for fathers’ involvement.

5. PAFT information and project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support, but mothers were the primary participants. The PAFT information and project worker-family connection continued to provide an important avenue for the process of change in coparenting, as indicated by previous phases of the project. Mothers continued to suggest that PAFT encouraged coparenting participation with their partners through handouts and information, which provided a platform for developing the coparenting relationship:
Liz: Yeah it’s really a spring board... for you to discuss things with ‘cause sometimes you don’t talk to your spouse about parenting as much as you should
Roberta: No
Liz: You’re kind of involved in the day in day out bits of actually bringing up the children sometimes having the PAFT visit will be like a springboard for us that evening to say ‘oh what do you think about this or maybe we should actually do that’ and we actually talk in a calm and collected manner once the children have gone to bed about where we want to- where we want to go. (126-137)

Susan: And the handouts as well for the husbands. The handouts are useful rather than me telling him this is what... [PAFT] said that you’ve got to do, it’s like look at, read it. (111-115)

In these quotes mothers report that PAFT offered them the ability to discuss their coparenting with their partners. Kelly’s partner attended home visits and she suggested that this supported them:

Kelly: My husband was worried as to what [PAFT] would be like and how it would work and that sort of thing but as I say he absolutely loves it now so you know he waits for that ‘oh you know when’s’ the- rather than you know. He goes through what [child]’s doing and talk about any issues he’s got which he probably feels he can’t say to me ‘cause I’ll just tell him off or something... actually talk about it to someone else which is nice as well (761-769)

Kelly explained that while her partner began unsure of PAFT participation, over time he has grown to enjoy it greatly. One aspect Kelly perceived as important was that her partner could discuss his parenting with a third party which prevented coparenting conflict within the family framework.

New Themes Emerging from the Mothers as Coparents Focus Group
A further two themes were either expanded significantly from previous phases or were new having not been mentioned in either of the previous two phases. These can be found in Table 5.12 and will be discussed in turn below.
New Themes from the Mothers as Coparents’ Focus Group

1. Defining coparents: Mothers’ perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partners

Mothers were asked if the term ‘coparent’ was a good description of their partner. This resulted in a debate and division in the group between mothers who perceived their partner as a coparent and others who did not think that the term adequately defined their partners. The role of the father in the family is suggested above by Gwen (in individual relationships) and by Liz (in process of change). This suggested that mothers decided fathers’ involvement even in definition. Dana strongly argued that her partner was not a coparent:

Dana: No
Interviewer: What would you call him?
Dana: My husband. Dad. ‘Cause he works long hours. ‘Cause he’s not there. He doesn’t get [child] up, he doesn’t put him bed, he’s just there on the weekends, he’s just there at fun times, no discipline, he doesn’t parent... He thinks he is, if you asked him he would say he is but he’s not. (420-428)

Dana adamantly opposed the notion that her partner, her child’s father, should be considered a parent. She does not indicate that he is not valued for his role in the family as the breadwinner but she did not report valuing him as a coparent, or even a parent for that matter. However it appears that it may have to do with her own definition of a ‘parent’, as she seems to indicate that ‘parenting’ is doing the routine caretaking, and disciplining. Kelly on the other hand disagreed with Dana’s explanation, suggesting the division was necessary:

Kelly: Well people fall into roles don’t they. I mean even though we say they don’t, we do definitely have different roles that may ‘cause they’re not there all the time and and they can’t be if we want money. So they’re going to have have different roles to play and I think that’s that’s they can’t be coparents ‘cause they’re not there all the time (433-438)
Kelly suggested a give-and-take in parenting roles in the family much like is described by research in that the mother-father work-family divide is necessary for the family (Craig, 2006; Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Hatten et al., 2002; Lewis and Lamb, 2007). She argued that by having different roles due to time and financial necessity, fathers did not receive the opportunity to be coparents, but that this was necessary. In many ways Dana and Kelly, and Liz and Gwen above, are arguing the same outcome, i.e. that their partner is not a coparent. Instead it appears that the discussion should perhaps focus on whether this was a problem. Thus this seemed to be commonplace within these relationships, which could be due to a variety of different factors, including that only one of the mothers in the group was in paid employment.

2. Discussions, handouts, and individual circumstances: Specific details regarding how mothers perceived their role in deciding fathers’ involvement with children and PAFT. Above Gwen described that with her family, she decided the father’s involvement, but due to her needing assistance after the birth of the second child, she requested her partner’s involvement, which he contributed. Liz also suggested that she was attempting to make her partner parent how she thought appropriate; however by ending this practice she was able to support her partner and children’s relationship. In this theme, mothers described their detailed methods for encouraging their partners’ inclusion in the family, particularly through PAFT.

Molly explained that through PAFT she was able to engage in a dialogue with her partner about parenting, indicating that PAFT opened the lines of communication between mothers and their partners:

Molly: And there is a thing I think about when you have your session with your key worker and like somebody said earlier like it treats you like a conversation again and the communication again ‘cause you say ‘oh we you know oh we went through this’ and then conversation and it brings up other things so if you don’t have somebody coming in a sort of you know it’s quite easy to sort of you know let things lapse and its without a regular trigger... (393-400)

Molly suggested that coparenting is not something discussed without a catalyst for the communication. She further suggested that by having PAFT open the communication
between the partner and the mother, other coparenting items can be discussed, creating a feedback loop to coparenting development.

Beatrice stated her influence on her partner’s involvement with PAFT:

*Beatrice: My husband comes in and I say ‘here’s your homework’ and he reads them over his tea and we’ll talk about it later (541-542)*

Beatrice explained that the handouts are given to her husband for him to review, after which they conversed about the topic. By calling it ‘homework’ it obtained a school-like feel and placed her in the position of deciding her partner’s involvement. By discussing the handouts later, it allowed Beatrice and her partner to work together again, opening the lines of communication. That said it is important to note that Beatrice was the decider in terms of her partner’s receiving the handouts, making her the direct line between her partner and PAFT. Gwen also suggested that she was the connection between PAFT and her partner due to his needs as a learner:

*Gwen: ... [partner’s] very much not a book or you know I gave him the leaflets but he wouldn’t read them. He’d prefer me to tell him what happened in the visit... (532-534)*

Gwen stated that her partner wanted her to play a gateway role to the information. As he preferred to be spoken with, Gwen was placed in an information gatekeeper role, but it also opened the dialogues directly. This is most likely about the couple relationship, with couples who communicate positively and are satisfied with the current role divide in the family being able to obtain benefits if only the mother attends home visits. In addition, it seems that for Gwen and others mothers like her, if the fathers are willing to accept the information from the mother, this may be a useful strategy for encouraging an open dialogue about coparenting. As research indicates that an important aspect of relationships is men’s willingness to accept influence from their partner (Gottman and Silver, 1999; Gottman and Gottman, 2007), this may be successful for some couples, particularly those who have high levels of relationship satisfaction.

Roberta argued that the role of PAFT in their lives is about their participation rather than
her acting as a gatekeeper:

Roberta: ...[PAFT]'s worked two different ways 'cause you know when we first started doing it [partner] was working from home and we had particular challenges sort of hand in fist for the tape recorder run after [child2] was born huge sibling rivalry blah blah which is all absolutely fair enough...[partner] found it particularly helpful...I think coming to meetings and that was particularly when it was really good for [partner] and for me 'cause you know we can both go oooohhhhhhh [high pitched] and again fist both fists in mouth on that one. But now he's at work out of the home he's kind of he's quite happy for it to happen ...because we've past the crisis point ...he's just chilled, he's whatever, so that's cool. So it's not about me controlling it, it's about he can ask about it if he wants to and he's he's just happy for it to be happening (549-564)

Roberta explained that PAFT participation changed over time because of her partner’s employment. She was clear that she was not controlling programme participation, instead that he was happy that the programme was happening for them as a family. As can be seen, mothers’ perceptions of father involvement in the family and programme are complex. Mothers seem somewhat forced into the role of gatekeeper as they are the ones who participate, but mothers also perceived their participation as positive.

**Fathers as Coparents: Phase 3**

**Phase 1 and 2 Findings Validated in Phase 3**

After transcribing the fathers’ focus group verbatim, the transcripts were first analysed using thematic analysis to validate previous findings from phases 1 and 2. Five themes found in phases 1 and 2 were identified in this analysis as seen in Table 5.13 and will be briefly discussed in turn below.
Table 5.13

Themes Identified from the Findings of Phases 1 and 2 Validated in the Fathers as Coparents’ Focus Group

1. Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children
2. Various factors such as employment, family roles and domestic responsibilities influenced the coparenting relationship and fathers’ coparenting in practice
3. Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged conflict and cooperation and obtaining support within the coparenting relationship
4. Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance
5. PAFT information and project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support. However father’s involvement was typically promoted through the mother

1. Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children. Fathers reported that they felt that relationship within their family developed over time, particularly between coparents and children. They suggested that these relationships acted as support and mediators:

Jeremy: ...For various reasons I have gotten into a particular state with my child and what I see is you know we both do, you know you get into a feedback loop with your child, your child gets upset, you get upset and that just makes the whole thing worse. If you break that cycle, doesn’t always work but if you break that cycle very often that child will calm down uh but yeah it’s not, it’s not always I’m the one to come in and calm things down you know... And that is the second parent who is not in that situation who is very useful that (589-599)

Jeremy suggested that having a second parent to break a cycle between a child and a parent was important for calming down and moving forward. He also suggested that coparents together supported one another with children, meaning that it was the parent that was outside the particular situation who acted as support, not specifically mother or father.

In considering these relationships, Owen described that he often allowed his partner to handle issues with his child:
Owen suggested that within his coparent relationship he allowed his partner to deal with situations with their child because he felt less capable, but acknowledged it may not appear positively. Owen gave some further insight into the relationship between mothers, fathers and children due to his perception of his partner as being more capable and knowledgeable than him in caretaking their child as is often found in research (Kelly and Wolfe, 2004; McHale, Kazali, et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2005).

2. Various factors such as employment, family roles and domestic responsibilities influenced the coparenting relationship and fathers' coparenting in practice. Fathers suggested that factors influenced their coparenting practices, particularly paid employment. Mark primarily worked from home and found the work-family divide particularly difficult:

Mark: This is something I sometimes find quite hard to deal with and I wonder how my wife deals with me being at home because I work at home nearly all the time you know. We get up, we have breakfast together and then I have to go and get ready and I might come down again and then the phone goes and I’m just constantly going between work and home life. And I sometimes could be on the phone and [partner] goes like ‘oh come give us a hand’ and I’m like I’m on the phone.’ Because it might be somebody you know reasonably important and she just—she doesn’t forget that I’m working but because I’m around it’s almost like a lack of appreciation that I am sometimes working and it can be quite hard to feel like sometimes I can have a rest. Like I’ll go get a cup of tea and I’ll have my sort of ten minutes of screen rest as the officially call it in the office so away from away from the computer and you know she’s sort of struggling with the housework and I’m sitting there on my backside I should be working or I should be helping. (411-426)

Mark frequently moved between seeing his partner’s point of view and his own. It is almost as if the various influencing factors act as a seesaw in his mind, in which he can see both sides, although without some resolution to these difficulties he is unable to decide the best
way forward. Research indicates that employment can greatly influence fathering and coparenting (Barnet and Hyde, 2001; Hauri and Hollingsworth, 2009; Johns and Belsky, 2007). However in the home environment these factors may be exacerbated due to their existence in the same domain.

3. Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged conflict, cooperation and obtaining support within the coparenting relationship. The importance of underlying perceptions changing relationship patterns was seen across the phases. Douglas explained the connections between perceptions and behaviours for fathers:

Interviewer: ...fathers are more likely to change their parenting if they are satisfied in their relationships... Does that make sense to you?
Douglas: It would make logical sense certainly it's true in my experience...absolutely. I've been like as soon as you said that it just rang yeah...I can imagine that if it was something that my partner instigated I would be more likely to dig my heels in if I wasn't satisfied with her absolutely.

Jeremy: That doesn't have to make logical sense though, it just works that way I think (728-742)

Douglas and Jeremy suggested that their perceptions of their partners changed the way they parent. Various research evidence supports that the couple relationship affects the father involvement in the family (Cabrera et al., 2009; Elliston et al., 2008; Krishnakumar and Beulher, 2000). Of particular interest here though, it seemed that fathers were aware of the connection between the couple and coparenting relationships. Therefore it may be through this awareness, the coparenting relationship and couple relationship could be supported together, and that by improving one, the other would also improve.

4. Process of change in coparenting practices and perceptions was based on the mother-fathei relationship and the coparenting alliance. The process of change was influenced by the couple relationship and the coparenting alliance as Douglas and Jeremy suggested. Thus the underlying relationship is central to their changing parenting practices. Jack supported these points and other phases stating that change in coparenting is:

Jack: ... [partner] will sort of say 'this is how we're doing something' or you know 'this is this is yeah this is how it's done.' And I'll think well let's just see if we can
change that slightly and I think from a trial and error point of view that is possibly accurate with me. I think well let's mix it up a bit see if you know [child] reacts differently, see if it will benefit him you know...Well you know if it works then of course it was her idea and if it doesn't I'm an idiot [laughing]... (551-559)

Jack perceived that his partner decided his parenting practices and he was expected to do as told without discussion, which may be why he attempted to change things. He saw the parenting process as his partner’s decisions and his attempts to change parenting without her consent, but it was largely one person’s role. This also indicated that he does not feel valued as a parent by his partner, which may over time cause difficulties in their relationship (Lee and Hunsley, 2006).

5. PAFT information and project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support. However father’s involvement was typically promoted through the mother. Fathers felt that PAFT encouraged their participation, promoted shared coparenting practices and was inclusive of them. Owen stated:

Owen: ...I suppose, PAFT has given me more confidence I think because it’s made me understand the situation better, understand what’s going on but how things will pan out as he gets older and I have maybe slightly different opinions to [partner]...certainly PAFT has taught me things that I didn’t know which is good. (719-724)

Owen suggested that due to PAFT’s influence he gained a great deal of understanding, confidence and knowledge about his child and the father-child relationship, which is supported by research as being helpful, particularly for fathers (Cowan et al., 2006; Feinberg, 2002). However while he and his partner have different perspectives, by his having information he can develop his knowledge, which allowed him opinions on child development.

Fathers also felt that PAFT encouraged communication between fathers and mothers:

Jack: It’s always the milestone. Every month it’s like it it does jog it jog it into you know that conversation... (683-684)
Like mothers, Jack and the other fathers perceived that PAFT encouraged coparents’ conversation. By encouraging parents’ conversation, PAFT offers a particularly unique and important role for coparents, promoting coparents’ dialogue and joint decision-making in parenting.

As found in previous phases, fathers also perceived their partner as deciding their part in PAFT. For example:

Mark: ...[partner] did all the organising but in terms of the information she relays to me I would say it would be her that drives that. I only I only know what she tells me um you know I suppose I could go through every sheet in depth but if she’s not putting them under my nose I’m not I’m less likely with it to take the information myself. (643-647)

Mark explained that his PAFT involvement was through his partner as she decided what information he received, taking an active role in engaging him. This suggests that Mark feels his partner is essential to his involvement in PAFT.

New Themes Emerging from the Fathers as Coparents’ Focus Group

A further two themes were either expanded considerably from previous phases or were new, having not been mentioned in either of the previous two phases. These can be found in Table 5.14 and will be discussed in turn below.

Table 5.14

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<th>New Themes from the Fathers as Coparents’ Focus Group</th>
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<td>1. Defining coparents: Fathers’ perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partner</td>
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<td>2. Service adjustment: For fathers to be able to support mothers, service provision modifications were crucial</td>
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1. Defining coparents: Fathers’ perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partner. Due to the finding in phase 2 that some mothers and
fathers did not see their partner as a coparent, fathers were asked to state whether ‘coparent’ was a term to describe their role in the family. The fathers considered this in great depth, attempting to decide one way or the other. Some fathers felt that this would describe them. For instance, Mark says:

Mark: For me, I work from home most of the time, 80% of the time I’m at home so whilst I’m usually locked away in a room, there’s still sort of every 10, 15 minutes I can pop out the door or have lunch with the other two so yeah I’d say so whether she’d say the same thing or not I’m not sure (153-157)

Although Mark felt he was a coparent, he was less sure of his partner’s opinion. However he made an important point that the reason he can be defined as this was that his employment took place in the home with his family. As employment is a typical ecological influence of father involvement (Lewis and Lamb, 2007; Parke et al., 2005), by working from home, Mark has taken this determinant slightly outside many fathers’ experiences to promote himself as a coparent.

When it was explained to the fathers that some mothers said they were not coparents despite living with the father of their child, initially fathers seemed surprised, but then some saw mothers’ perspectives. Owen explained:

Owen: ... Coparent or bit-parent really. I am lucky that I um my hours aren’t too bad so I am home quite a lot in the evenings so I do get to spend time with my son when I get home um but I’m sure my wife would always argue I could do more. Group: (Chuckle and agree)

Owen: ... it's difficult sometimes because the woman I would see is there with the child 99% of the time and instead of coming in sometimes as the father it can be quite hard because they have a sort of bond that maybe your child and you don’t have quite the same...part parent but um sometimes it’s sad not to be a full parent I suppose but then that’s circumstances (175-196)

Owen used terms such as ‘bit-parent’ and ‘part-parent’ to describe his role with the opposite and his ideal as ‘full-parent’. These terms indicated that Owen is only able to be the ‘bit’ parent due to his work hours, therefore illustrating that the work-home balance is a major aspect of the definition for coparents for fathers. The literature provided further support for Owen’s point in stating that many fathers wish they were able to devote more time to their families (Craig, 2006; Ehrenberg et al., 2009; Salway et al., 2009), but that they are unable due
to their families’ employment needs (Hatten et al., 2002; Lewis and Lamb, 2007). Jeremy supported the new naming of fathers:

Jeremy: I’ve been slightly more lucky ‘cause I’ve been slightly more hands-on that or certainly I was at home a lot until uh a few months ago and even now I’m home reasonably early and um I’m around in the evening...I’m still the second parent so to speak as well but uh yeah I think uh I’m very much involved in their their learning process if you’d like (141-146)

Like Mark, Jeremy cited his personal situation of working from home as contributing to his perception of being coparents. However he also stated that he was part of his children’s ‘learning process’, meaning the term to use may depend on fathers’ perceptions as to how a coparent is defined.

In considering these perspectives, the issues of how a father defines ‘fathering’ or ‘coparenting’ may be central to unravelling the perspectives of fathers. In these examples in defining ‘coparenting’, fathers provide rationales for their perceptions. It appears that Mark’s definition includes being home participating in daily tasks, Owen’s definition involves both employment and parent-child bond, and Jeremy focuses on being involved in his children’s learning; in their worlds, they are based on fathers’ perceptions of what constitutes a coparent. Therefore defining oneself as a coparent involves defining what one believes a coparent as a father is, which is an incredibly complex perspective, particularly considering recent societal shifts or ‘new fatherhood’ (Paquette, Bolte, Turcotte, Dubeau, and Bouchard, 2000; Henwood and Procter, 2003).

2. Service adjustment: For fathers to be able to support mothers, service provision modifications were crucial. One theme that was developed in the focus group context is that services must adjust to enable fathers to support mothers. Of particular importance to this theme was Owen’s story. The fathers supported Owen’s ideas, and actively encouraged him to tell his story:

Owen: ...if there is ever in the future some sort of guide to how fathers should deal with uh a mother that has postnatal depression that would be very helpful. My wife suffered from that for eight, nine months and uh it made it very hard ‘cause I had no idea how to deal with it... there are people coming in my house trying to doctors and
God knows what else and it wasn't handled very well...I had absolutely no advice, help from anywhere at all. The only thing I was involved in was a doctor coming in to say 'we're going to take your baby away' and believe me that did not go down too well...obviously it never happened but it was their silly reaction to circumstances at the time so it is pretty scary. There is nothing out there for fathers, service wise.

In this quote, Owen explained that his partner had postnatal depression for several months and he was powerless in supporting her. In research, Goodman et al. (2008) found that when mothers were experiencing postpartum depression, fathers were also experiencing depression and parenting stress, as Owen expands:

Owen: ...I couldn’t cope with trying to work and knowing she was not happy at home and then knowing there were people coming in and out it turned our lives upside down—only having the child... I’d come home and there would be three, four people you know in the house you know talking to her and I’m sat at work thinking I shouldn’t be here, I should be at home and it was really, really quite hard, really very hard.

Due to the need for Owen to remain employed, he was unable to provide support to his partner. He had difficulty concentrating on his work, and thus his mental health suffered. He further explained about the strain this caused to his couple relationship:

Owen: ...[partner] went through a stage of not actually wanting [child]. I went through a stage of I absolutely adore him but I can’t be there because I have go to work ‘cause I only had a couple weeks off and then it was back to work. And it was it was just so tough it really ripped our relationship to bits and I don’t know how don’t know how we’ve got through ‘til now really but um it was really tough and if there is anything out there that could be done to help fathers it would be a massive help even if it’s just pre-advice to having a child that there’s a possibility that this could happen to anybody um it would really really help. I think it would definitely be of value... ‘cause it’s pretty devastating.

Owen described the impact his partner’s postnatal depression had on the family relationships. Feldman (2007) found that father involvement at the transition to parenthood reduced mother emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, stress and marital decline and increased family cohesion. Therefore fathers can play a particularly vital role to family health, especially when mothers are experiencing distress. However, due to Owen feeling so strained and unsupported, it seems likely that benefits did not emerge, instead he suggests numerous negative outcomes from the experience, particularly to his couple relationship. His
story illustrates a necessity for services to adapt to support fathers.

Summary
Mothers and fathers as coparents validated numerous findings from phases 1 and 2, and contributed several new points that encouraged an in depth understanding of coparenting. Mothers and fathers provided further details for themes previously found and allowed for the development of a number of connections between the themes (found below).

Discussion
The findings offered a complex version of mothers’ and fathers’ perspectives on coparenting and PAFT. Numerous viewpoints were explained and addressed by coparents, and are summarised below. In considering the findings across phases, Figures 5.5 and 5.6 provide a schematic representation of the connections between the concepts emerging here. At the end of each concept description, boxes detail the specific findings from the research phases that informed the development of the concept.

Family Relationships Develop Over Time (Box 5.1)
The current research found that coparents perceived mothers as deciding father involvement in the family, although somewhat more so for the fathers’ perspectives than those of the mothers. As mentioned previously, one important aspect of coparenting concerns each parent’s involvement and the best ways to encourage both parents’ inclusion in the family (Burck and Daniel, 1995; Cowdery and Knudson-Martin, 2005; McHale, 2007), with many researchers concluding that mothers drive the development of the coparenting relationship (Burck and Daniel, 1995; Hoffman and Moon, 1999; McBride et al., 2005). As suggested by many other studies, the current research found some support for the notion that mothers decided fathers’ roles and activities with their children (McBride et al., 2005; Mockford and Barlow, 2004). For instance, mothers reported that they asked their partners specifically for help with different aspects of parenting rather than the father taking his own initiative to be involved, and assigned tasks such as bath time to fathers. However it should be noted that this sample included many parents of children who were younger than five years old and at
home with their mother all day. Therefore it may be that mothers have more time with their children, and this determines father involvement rather than father choice or mothers' requirements.

One aspect of family relationships that was considered in some depth was the concept of being a ‘coparent.’ It appeared that the father was the ‘coparent’ and the mother was the ‘parent.’ Research supports that fathers are more likely to have a ‘we’ identity in parenting than mothers (Pleck and Stueve, 2004). As mothers decided fathers’ roles in the families, it appears that even if mothers and fathers both participate in parenting, mothers do more, and this influences the definition. Because this definition was piloted on parents and they reported understanding it, these results were surprising. However, considering this in relation to the focus group feedback, where mothers and fathers both reported the ‘coparent’ term might not fully describe their relationship, a new term may need to be developed that fits parents’ perceptions more precisely.

In terms of connections between the marital and coparenting relationships, the current research found numerous associations between the relationships, supporting previous research (Cowan and Cowan, 2003; Favez et al., 2006; Rogers and White, 1998; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). It appears that both mothers and fathers were influenced by the marital relationship, albeit in different ways, which is in contrast to previous studies that suggest that the marital relationship influences fathers more (Lewis et al., 1996; Van Egeren, 2004). It seems that mothers were influenced by their underlying perceptions of their partner, so viewing him more positively or negatively. Fathers frequently mentioned the connection between marriage and coparenting as able to cause difficulties, particularly in the questionnaires and focus group, but they seem to separate out their relationship with their child to a large extent. This may be due to defining ‘new fatherhood’. Fathers may have determined that a main aspect of this identity will be their relationship with their children, thus encouraging their relationship with their child separate from the mothers.
Box 5.1. Family relationships develop over time: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dyadic relationships between the mother, father, and child differed and could complement one another</td>
<td>Mothers Coparenting influences family relationships</td>
<td>Fathers Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</td>
<td>Mothers Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coparents’ Perceptions of their Partner Influences Coparenting Practices (Box 5.2)

Another finding central to this research was based on how parents viewed their partners. If they saw their partners as being their coparent and contributing to the family, they reported more positive perceptions. The underlying perceptions parents have of one another and of the relationship are vital to understanding family dynamics; particularly as this concept appears central to coparenting, it could be considered as crucial to programme involvement.

During phase 1 of the current research, when fathers reported they were not as good a parent as the mother, the mother might disagree, which promoted the father as a parent. Being positive and admiring their coparents’ ability led parents to more positive perceptions and involvement. This may be due to parents’ perceived competence and self-esteem.

Lindsey et al. (2005) found that if coparents had high self-esteem they were more likely to demonstrate positive parenting and support their parenting partner. Therefore, if programmes such as PAFT promote both parents’ perceptions of abilities, they are likely to create positive perceptions that support coparenting practices.

Negative attributions about partners have been linked to higher marital conflict (Davey, Fincham, Beach, and Brody, 2001) and low relationship satisfaction (Waldinger and Schulz, 2006). In addition, perceptions of one’s partner are also important because they influence communication patterns, and thus if people had positive perceptions of their partners, they are more likely to have positive interaction patterns (Sanford, 2006). The current research
supports this, indicating that couples with low relationship satisfaction report other negative perceptions of their coparenting, which may lead to further issues. Therefore programmes that address these negative perceptions will assist partners by modifying their negative attributions, in which some parents indicated PAFT assisted.

In considering coparents’ perceptions of one another it is important to note that it is not actually what each parent does, it is the perception of the partners’ involvement that matters to parents’ satisfaction (Feinberg, 2002; Khazan et al., 2008). Cappuccini and Cochrane (2000) found that when measuring parents’ participation, the most important thing to mothers was that they perceived their partner as supportive and involved even if the partner did not actually do this. Similarly, Bonney, Kelley, and Levant (1999) found that perceptions of one another mattered more than actual time in activities, so if mothers saw fathers as competent, fathers were more likely to be involved. This led also to fathers’ involvement and the process of change.

| Box 5.2. Coparents’ perceptions of their partner influences coparenting practices: Findings from each phase |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Phase 1 Underlying perceptions of the other parent influenced coparenting practices and cognitions, and includes the transition from single to couple to parents | Mothers Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles | Fathers Coparenting support provided in family relationships |
| Phase 2 Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement | Mothers Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged cooperation, conflict and obtaining support from their partner | Fathers Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged cooperation and obtaining support within the coparenting relationship |
| Phase 3 Defining coparents: Mothers’ perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partners | Mothers Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged cooperation, conflict and obtaining support from their partner | Fathers Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged cooperation and obtaining support within the coparenting relationship |

**Process of Change in Coparenting Practices including Developing the Coparenting Alliance (Box 5.3)**

The process of change in coparenting was inherently connected to partners’ perceptions for
both parents, however in slightly different ways. Fathers were mainly influenced by their relationship with their partner and these underlying perceptions. Alternatively mothers had a number of factors that influenced their process of change, including their perceptions of their partner, family relationships, and other outside influences.

The process of change to coparenthood influenced parents in different ways such as time spent with child. Numerous parents reported that the transition lead to mothers having more interactions with their children based on time and perceived skill base. One way to promote a more positive process of change would be to encourage father knowledge (Feinberg, 2002). If fathers had a more complete understanding of child caretaking, they would be on more level ground in the coparenting relationship. Research also supported this by recommending that practitioners working with families at the transition to parenthood assist families in considering fathers’ practical contributions to caring for their child (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). As with previous research (Cowan et al., 2006; Hawkins et al., 2008) the current research indicated that early infancy was the ideal point to engage and promote father involvement. This time point is advocated because fathers who are involved earlier are more likely to be involved over time (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2009; Shannon, Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, and Lamb, 2009).

One important aspect for process of change and perceptions of each person in the couple is 'turning towards'. Research indicates that couples seek emotional connection in small and big ways in their daily lives, and if partners receive and meet this need, they are more likely to achieve positive communication patterns (Driver and Gottman, 2004; Gottman and Gottman, 2007). Furthermore couples who perceive themselves as well-functioning before they have children are likely to exhibit cooperation after they child is born (Talbot, Baker, and McHale, 2009). Therefore programmes like PAFT that promote parents to coparent together from early in the child’s life within their environment are likely to have parents engaging with their partner, which in turn supports a positive coparenting alliance.

The current research also provided insight into the coparenting alliance. It seems that parents perceive this alliance as developing over time. A great deal of research indicates that
developing the parental alliance is central to coparenting practices that support the child (Caldera and Lindsey, 2006), and this begins to develop prenatally (Carneiro et al., 2006; McHale, Kazali, et al., 2004; von Klitzing and Burgin, 2005). Research also suggests that interventions need to support the creation of the parental alliance (Caldera and Lindsey, 2006), which PAFT appears to do by promoting coparents’ discussion and offering support from early in the child’s life. However, it was also important to note that parents saw this as developing within their couple framework and it changed over time, suggesting a process orientation to parenting which will likely support coparenting together.

**Box 5.3. Process of change in coparenting practices including developing the coparenting alliance: Findings from each phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process of change in coparenting practices</strong> was based on the developing family relationships, leading to the coparenting alliance</td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong> The coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time</td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong> Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong> Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong> Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Fathers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong></td>
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**Various Internal and External Factors Inform Coparenting (Box 5.4)**

- **Fathers**: Societal expectations and family responsibilities influenced fathers’ coparenting practices. Some of these factors include services that need to be developed for fathers to be able to support mothers.

- **Mothers**: Family roles, societal expectations, and domestic responsibilities, influenced coparenting.

Throughout all three phases of the research, one finding was that both mothers and fathers had numerous competing components that affected their coparenting. However, it appeared that this differed based largely on gender, with differences for mothers and fathers. Mothers as coparents perceived domestic roles, responsibilities, and societal pressure as placed on them impacted their coparenting. Conversely, fathers saw societal expectations, such as paid employment combined with pressure from family relationships, as influencing their...
coparenting. Therefore while different components appeared to make up each of these elements, they both expressed that these impacted their framework for coparenting practices.

This indicates that couples trying to negotiate a number of elements can affect their coparenting. In attempting to understand these from a bottom-up perspective as has been done here, examining one of these influences without the others creates a range of difficulties in interpreting and assisting coparenting. This is supported by research by McHale (2007) and Caldera and Lindsey (2006), who suggest that in order to understand coparenting, it must be done in context. Therefore these findings should be viewed as part of a framework of complexity that affects coparenting practices.

As a part of this concept, fathers expressed a desire for further support to assist mothers. As seen in Owen’s portrayal of experiencing his partner’s postpartum depression, it can be considered very important that fathers existing within their context need further support to assist their partners. In addition, many fathers reported having little knowledge of child development, and therefore supporting fathers is a key way forward to supporting the family.

Some research indicates that gender role ideology strongly influenced coparenting practices and fathers’ involvement in the family. Cowdery, Knudson-Martin, and Mahoney (2009) suggest that the belief in some families that mothers are the best carers for their children creates a cyclical process that forces women to be the primary carer for children. They suggest that the underlying beliefs of mothers as the best carer for their children creates an undue burden on the mother in child care and family work. In addition, fathers do not involve themselves in these tasks. The authors suggest that these underlying perceptions need to be considered for relationship satisfaction. The current research found support for gender roles influencing both mothers’ and fathers’ perspectives. The current research found support for Silverstein’s (1996) argument that mothers are obligated to caretake their children, while fathers have a choice. Gender role attitudes are also important in child care tasks (Jansen and Lieb, 2006; Matta and Knudson-Martin, 2006), but choices in the family are not as influenced by these and are more likely to be done by negotiating within the
couple. Nentwich (2008) suggests that, because employment has different meanings to men and women, identity is a key aspect in promoting involvement, and thus society needs to change to promote equality in parenting. Therefore gender roles continue to exert influence, and these need to be addressed in programmes and society to enable the factors that exert influence on both mothers and fathers to be reduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 5.4. Various internal and external factors inform coparenting: Findings from each phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic responsibilities and paid employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors impacted coparents’ relationships, which required parents to negotiate with one another</td>
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Mothers Act as the Gateway to PAFT (Box 5.5)

One central finding of this research is that mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers’ participation. As seen clearly in phases 2 and 3, both parents perceived this as part of the mothers’ role as the primary PAFT participation. The current research supports Mockford and Barlow’s (2004) findings that mothers act as gatekeepers to programme information. However, a noteworthy point not considered previously in the literature is that mothers felt forced into the role of ‘information gatekeeper’ by their families, community
services, and wider society. In further developing services, communities should consider how best to ensure that mothers are not forced into gatekeeper or expert roles due to service provision.

### Box 5.5. Mothers act as the gateway to PAFT: Findings from phases 2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers</td>
<td>Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT</td>
<td>Discussions, handouts, and individual circumstances: Specific details regarding how mothers perceived their role in deciding fathers' involvement with children and PAFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### PAFT Programme Elements and Project Worker-Family Connection Influenced Coparenting Practices (Box 5.6)

Another main finding of the research was that PAFT influenced coparenting practices. While the current research found that mothers were the gatekeeper (or gate-opener) to participation, numerous benefits were reported for families by both mothers and fathers as coparents. The project worker plays different roles to mothers and fathers as coparents. This connection is important to parents' participation and involvement but not nearly as important as the project worker was to individual mothers and fathers.

An important point considered in the current research is the direct and indirect involvement of fathers. By the project workers actively attempting to engage with fathers during home visits, and PAFT information being designed for both mothers and fathers, if fathers were home, they could be involved. However, it is critical that indirect involvement not be underestimated. The current research found that PAFT promoted mothers to include fathers. By project workers asking about fathers if they were unable to attend home visits and providing mothers with information, PAFT promoted the fathers' inclusion. Furthermore PAFT encouraged the mother to include the father to create a shared parenting platform. All of that said, it remains imperative that programmes like PAFT continue to engage and include fathers directly, particularly those in less than ideal coparenting
partnerships, to ensure positive outcomes for children.

PAFT supported parents through the information they provided. By offering parents handouts, parents could change their coparenting practices together as they both had access to the information on child development and parenting. The PAFT information encourages parents to better understand their children and develop their skills in their relationships with their children. Furthermore, PAFT created the opportunity for a parenting dialogue between coparents. In many cases coparents reported feeling that by participating in PAFT, they were provided with information that could be used to discuss parenting. It acts as a reminder to parents to consider their parenting and the information on their children together.

### Box 5.6. PAFT programme elements and project worker-family connection influenced coparenting practices: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAFT information and the project worker-family connection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fathers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents</strong></td>
<td><strong>PAFT information and the project worker-family connection</strong></td>
<td><strong>PAFT assists coparenting practices</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conceptual Models of Mothering and Fathering as Coparents and Programme Participation

In order to understand how these findings fit together, Figure 5.5 and 5.6 provide schematic illustrations based on mothers as coparents' and fathers as coparents' findings.

An important difference between mothers and fathers as coparents is in how to influence process of change. As illustrated in the model, fathers are particularly influenced by family relationships, particularly the coparenting relationship and coparents' perceptions of their
partner. Fathers’ perceptions of their partners related strongly to fathers’ process of change, and more directly than mothers. That said, process of change for mothers as coparents seems to be influenced by a large number of factors, thus less direct than fathers.

Conclusions

This chapter reported and interpreted the analysis from three phases of the research for coparents. Numerous findings indicate a range of important points for development, particularly in relation to family relationships. The current research also provides evidence toward considering the family within context; it is not simply the mother-child relationship that influences a child’s development, but also the fathers’ and the coparents’ relationship (Barrows, 2003; Emanuel, 2006). The current research further suggests ways to include fathers, even in cases where they are unable to attend home visits.

Self-Reflexivity

One thing that particularly struck me about the coparents was that during the interviews, they all interacted so differently. In some cases mothers and fathers spoke together, appeared to enjoy one another’s company and had a shared pleasure in telling their story. One particular couple, Carrie and Dale not only had a shared story but included their daughter in the telling. So while telling me about their experiences, their daughter was smiling and laughing along with the conversation even though she seemed unaware of what we were talking about. But every time she laughed with us during the interview, they would engage her. Because Carrie and Dale validated one another so much, they also validated their daughter. This particular interview struck me due to the amount of time the two parents spent expressing their appreciation for one another. This led me not only to the literature but also back through the interviews, and I found a number of similarities and differences between the couples indicating that perhaps these small day to day statements of appreciation are far more important than many other aspects of the coparenting and couple relationship.
Proposed Conceptual Model: Mothers as Coparents

For PAFT to influence coparenting, mothers must engage with fathers.

If mother's role is perceived as the caregiver with more domestic tasks, it can influence coparents' participation in PAFT.

If family roles can be considered flexibly, process of change is likely to improve the coparenting alliance.

Family roles, societal expectations, and domestic responsibilities influenced coparenting.

Parents with positive coparenting perceptions are more likely to have positive process of change in coparenting practices.

Mothers are more likely to have positive perceptions of their coparents if their expectations of family roles are met.

Coparents' perceptions of their partners influence coparenting practices.

Family relationships and process of change influence one another in coparenting practices.

Process of change in coparenting practices can be influenced by PAFT.

Process of change in coparenting practices, including developing the coparenting alliance.

Family relationships develop over time.

PAFT programme elements and project worker-family connection influenced coparenting practices.

PAFT influences coparenting practices through family relationships.

Family relationships can be influenced by coparenting perceptions of partners such that positive coparenting perceptions can encourage family relationships.

Figure 5.5: The hypothetical relationships between concepts based on mothers as coparents' findings from the three phases.
Proposed Conceptual Model: Fathers as Coparents

Family relationships develop within the framework of coparenting perceptions.

Family relationships develop over time.

Coparenting relationship and father involvement develops within family relationships.

Family relationships develop over time within societal expectations and family responsibilities that influence coparenting practices.

Societal expectations and family responsibilities influenced fathers' coparenting practices.

Societal expectations and family responsibilities creates a need for services to assist fathers in supporting mothers.

Services for fathers to support mothers.

Coparenting relationship connected to father involvement.

Societal expectations and family responsibilities influence perceptions of family roles with mothers acting as fathers' connection to PAFT.

PAFT assist coparenting practices with mother as PAFT deliverer to fathers.

PAFT programme elements and project worker–family connection influenced coparenting practices.

Process of change is based on coparenting perceptions and the coparenting relationship.

Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT due to the process of change in coparenting practices.

If fathers consider themselves PAFT participants they see it as assisting coparenting.

Mothers act as the gateway to PAFT.

Process of change in coparenting practices including developing the coparenting alliance.

Partner perceptions influence the coparenting relationship that links to father involvement.

Coparents’ perceptions of their partners influences coparenting practices.

Legend:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT IN BOXES</th>
<th>POSTULATED CONCEPTS (FOR DESCRIPTION SEE DISCUSSION).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINES</td>
<td>POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONCEPTS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALICIZED TEXT</td>
<td>RESEARCH FINDINGS USED TO THEORETICALLY CONNECT CONCEPTS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Results

Project Workers: ‘It is my job to see the good in people’s parenting’ (Julie, 114)

Introduction

This chapter looks specifically at project workers in more detail.\textsuperscript{128} As mentioned in chapter 1, project workers’ perspectives are particularly important to understand because their involvement is central to parent programme engagement and participation. This chapter will discuss the findings of the project workers in each phase of the research. Although this chapter struggles to some degree with generalisability due to the small number of participants across phases, it has some important initial findings that should not be overlooked. These concepts pave the way to a more complete understanding of the role project workers play in programmes for research, policy, and practice.

Phase I: Interviews

Participants

Project workers’ interviews were conducted with three\textsuperscript{274} project workers in one area of the UK. They were all women who had been project workers between ten months and seven years. They were all currently married, mothers of more than one child, with the children ranging from middle childhood to adulthood, and had come to PAFT from another vocation. For further details, see Table 6.1.

\textsuperscript{128} Two important points to the project worker experience will go unaddressed in this research as they were not relevant to project workers’ expressed experience: training and supervision. It is important to note that the PAFT programme mandates that all practitioners attend a six-day training course and are further required to have regular supervisory contact. For more information on supervision and/or training see: Brocklehurst et al., 2004; Gilkerson, 2004; Larrieu and Dickinson, 2009; Mann, Boss, and Randolph, 2007; Osofsky, 2009; Weatherston, Kaplan-Estrin, and Goldberg, 2009.

\textsuperscript{274} While the project worker numbers are low compared to the other groups and what is often considered ideal in IPA, this was necessary for several reasons, particularly a limited potential participant pool and organisational constraints placed on the research. However numerous project workers, including the heads of the organisation, saw the parts of the findings from the project workers’ analysis and agreed that these mirrored their understandings and experiences.
### Table 6.1

**Descriptions of Project Workers Interviewed about their Experiences during Phase 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project workers reported reasons for joining PAFT</th>
<th>Number of current families&lt;sup&gt;128&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Years with PAFT&lt;sup&gt;129&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Received PAFT as a mother and eager to become involved due to this experience.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10 (months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Trained in a helping profession and did supply work in school her children attended and was recruited by head teacher to become a project worker.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina Was a school employee moving to the area and required to be part of PAFT due to employment mandate.</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;130&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Information reported was stated by project workers during the interviews.

### Analysis<sup>131</sup>

Using IPA (described in chapter 2), the analysis yielded six superordinate themes and are listed in Table 6.2.<sup>132</sup> These themes provided a platform for understanding these project workers’ experiences regarding their PAFT involvement, and each will be discussed in turn.

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<sup>128</sup> Number of families when the interviews took place.

<sup>129</sup> Years with PAFT, at the time the interviews took place.

<sup>130</sup> The PAFT organisation requires that each current project worker provide at least five families with home visits in a year. If this number is not achieved in one year, the project worker must attend training again.

<sup>131</sup> Samples of this analysis are available upon request.

<sup>132</sup> The chart of the full breakdown for each theme, from quotes to subordinate to superordinate themes, is available upon request.
Table 6.2

Superordinate Theme Table from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Project Workers' Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Family-project worker connection was vital for engaging, maintaining and promoting change in families: Developing the relationship with the family was a central aspect for promoting involvement in PAFT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Project workers valued community resources and outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Integrating previous roles and experiences influenced development as a project worker and in practice with families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Societal influences on parenting: Parenting in society changes and project workers reported that services must adapt to meet families' needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between project workers and families is key to promoting change in families according to numerous studies (Green 2006; Kazdin et al., 2005; Stolk et al., 2008). One reason that the practitioner-family relationship is so important is that often the underlying theory of change in programmes infers that the practitioner-parent relationship is going to influence the parent-child relationship (Emde et al., 2004; Korfmarcher et al., 2007). In fact, some programmes see the relationship between the parent and practitioner as the first goal that must be achieved before the programme can be fully delivered (Law et al., 2009; Zeanah et al., 2006).
1a) The relationships between project workers and families were central and critical to family engagement, change and overall programme success. Project workers viewed creating a relationship with the family as central to supporting families:

...you're sort of out building up relationships and I think that's important...  
(Gina, 190-191)

Gina described the importance of building relationships and is supported by Zeanah et al. (2006), who suggested that practitioners, seeing the importance of this relationship, create the basis for the programme. Robyn further developed this point stating:

... being the open ear and being a friendly person and I think if I can establish that relationship with the family once I’ve got that relationship I can give them some information that I know that I know they’re going to take in about the PAFT program and that’s how I do it. I you know to me you can’t go in there and hammer this information and do dut dut dut dut du you know you’ve got to build up this relationship with the family...I think if I have that relationship I can then get that information across and I know that mum is going to take it on board (Robyn, 602-610)

As illustrated in this quote, Robyn believed that if she has the relationship with the family, she was able to provide the information, but without the relationship she cannot provide the information, making a crucial connection between the project worker and programme information. Thus the project workers are the path to the information that promotes parents’ change. Several studies support Robyn’s perspective by suggesting that parents only accept information once the relationship is established (Barlow et al., 2003; Cooke, 2006; Manby, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006), and thus Robyn was able to collaborate better by having this relationship. She also mentioned that building this relationship was based on some core characteristics of the project worker, such as being a warm, open listener.

1b) Processes for engaging and promoting change in families: Project workers use varying methods in engaging families, particularly through a relational approach and project workers demonstrating understanding and dedication to families and PAFT. Project workers perceived that the relationship and information work together.

133 Project workers’ characteristics are discussed in Theme 5 below.
Robyn explained the above point in more depth, stating that this linked fully to meeting each family’s unique needs:

...I do it so differently you know because families are different and that is so it's just pitching it at their level... (Robyn, 363-365)

Robyn explained that she delivered PAFT based on the individual families’ needs and as can be seen in the literature, by programmes allowing for flexibility, families’ needs can be met more easily (McCurdy and Daro, 2001; Stewart, Law, Russell, and Hanna, 2004; Wall et al., 2005). Other research indicates that only through strong relationships between families and practitioners can families’ needs be met (Law et al., 2009; Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, and Poston, 2005). The relationships that project workers create and develop with families encourage positive changes to be made.

An additional point made by Robyn is that to engage families, project workers must demonstrate their dedication to them. By individualising the families, Robyn was indicating an inherent understanding of support for each family, which further connects her, the programme, and the family. Gina discussed this as well:

...reading the books together... if [parents] are hanging back a bit I'll say 'could you just...' you know so you kind of pull them in so they usually I mean you can do the activities with the child yourself um and maybe you model the activity, but it's good to pull the parent in... (Gina, 245-250)

Gina suggested that activities and modelling engaged parents, which research supports (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Svanberg and Barlow, 2009). In particular, modelling has resulted in a great deal of success in working with parents and many programmes suggest it as a primary mechanism for change (Moran and Ghate, 2004; Scott and Dadds, 2009). By doing the activities with the children, Gina took some focus off the parent and encouraged parent participation. A point that Julie made was:

...We're not supposed to be anecdotal... but actually families appreciate the -- you're not just saying you know how they feel but that you understand. As long as they know that the information you're giving to them is research based evidence not just that Julie thought this would be a really good thing to talk about... 'Cause I think it's important that you know when you're building a relationship with a
Despite organisational recommendations, Julie suggested that families appreciated it when she told them stories about her own trials of motherhood which built a relationship and broke down barriers, prompting collaboration with the family (Barlow et al., 2003). Furthermore, she indicated the dynamic nature of these relationships (Korfmacher et al., 2007; Zeanah et al., 2006) by stating that project workers cannot fix families and it is the family’s responsibility to realise that the programme can support, not fix their issues.

While therapeutic alliance is a particularly important concept in therapy, parenting programmes are not typically set up to act as therapists, and do not receive training in therapy per se. However, those in home visiting programmes often play this role (Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004). Therefore, it should be more fully explained, as this research provides some evidence of the importance of this concept from project workers’ perspectives.

**Theme 2: Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships**

- 2a) Empowerment-based aspect of PAFT was helpful due to project workers building on the families’ strengths
- 2b) PAFT encourages parents’ knowledge, self-realisation and positive parenting practices through information, support, modelling and resources
- 2c) Feedback Model: Parenting learned from PAFT about child development made parents more aware in seeing the child develop, which then encouraged them to keep promoting their children’s positive development
- 2d) Combination of group and home meetings was important to programme usefulness

Numerous reviews suggest important programme elements that promote change in parents (e.g., MacLeod and Nelson, 2000; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Zeanah et al., 2005). The project workers also suggested several programme elements were supportive of families. They saw these as a combination of factors that assisted each family differently due to how they fit together for individual family participants.
2a) Empowerment-based aspect of PAFT was helpful due to project workers building on the families' strengths. One of the most important programme components involves using empowerment-based approaches. Empowerment- or strength-based approaches have been demonstrated to support families more fully than services that assessed for family deficits (MacLeod and Nelson, 2000). Finding families’ strengths and building on these promotes the process of change in parenting practices through empowering positive parenting:

... there's lots of things that could have the potential to go wrong as well within the families, but there are little embers that I can see that they've obviously taken on board and things that I have looked to see that were positive and I told them, 'that's really good, you're doing that very well, this is the impact it's having' and I think they've carried on doing [PAFT] because after we've said 'actually you're doing a good job...this is what you're giving to the child', and having fun... (Julie, 270-278)

Julie provides support for empowerment-based models contrasting them with deficit-based models often seen in services. McAllister and Thomas (2007) suggest that using a teamwork approach with families, including using a strengths-based model, promotes families in developing their skills. Julie clearly did this and by going into families’ environments and finding positive practices, supported the parents and assisted in maintaining their participation.

2b) PAFT encourages parents' knowledge, self realisation and positive parenting practices through information, support, modelling and resources. Gina suggested that several elements of the programme support families, particularly families who are not interested in their child's development:

... other families who perhaps are not interested... if you can get to those families and help them in a supportive way not a [points and wags finger] way...telling them what they must do but if you can lead them in the way and show them and model it... (Gina, 632-638)

Gina indicated that through being supportive, collaborative and modelling strategies for families, parents were more likely to adopt programme and project worker suggestions. By considering the best way to communicate in order not to alienate parents Gina was provided
with an explanation for parenting behaviour that allowed her to use her empathy in practice. Research suggests that using mind-mindedness in work with families assists practitioners (Law et al., 2009; Whitehead and Douglas, 2005; Zeanah et al., 2006).

Another way that project workers perceived PAFT as supporting families was by providing parents with knowledge and support of their child’s behaviour:

...just the understanding you know because when your child is having a temper tantrum you know it’s very stressful. But if you can understand why it just maybe helps that parent to think or realise what they’re going through now I’ve just got to let him do it and deal with as best I can you know? He’s gonna go through it but we’re gonna get through this at the other side... (Robyn, 312-317)

Robyn explained that if she helped parents by creating an understanding or mind-mindedness of their children’s behaviour, parents were more likely to be able to get through difficult situations. Research demonstrates the importance of parents taking their child’s perspective (Balbernie, 2003; Kochanska et al., 2004; Rosenblum et al., 2008) and Robyn saw the need as well. By getting through difficult moments in parenting, Robyn perceived change in parenting perspectives and thus behaviours through PAFT support.

Julie suggested that providing parents with information was not only her role, but promoted positive parenting:

... share information of PAFT, to help families, to make parents more knowledgeable that’s what I see as my role. To support families in their parenting and to enable them to have fun with their children, to enjoy their children, to be a positive parent in whatever style they feel is is for them, it’s not my job to tell them what to do or, but it is my job to see the good in their parenting and build on whatever you know skills they have and using the information I’ve learned from Parents as First Teachers (Julie, 109-116)

By supporting families with information and providing encouragement, Julie took the perspective that parents were better able to engage with their children in an appropriate manner. Julie also mentioned a particularly important point of the positives of parenting. She saw information as promoting enjoyment of children, making parents more child-centred by a more in-depth understanding.
2c) Feedback Model: Parenting learned from PAFT about child development made parents more aware in seeing the child develop, which then encouraged them to keep promoting their children's positive development. Julie stated that the information given to parents supported their parenting to provide them with more positive relationships with their children in a feedback loop:

...show the family all the development that we see and all the happiness that you can make, the parents can make, it makes them more aware about this, so they'll say: 'guess what, we talked about this last time. [Children] weren't doing it and now they are' and they've been looking for it, and just for us to go and share that with the parents and see their children gaining from it...its watching the children grow and sharing that with the parent and being able to highlight how they've made an impacted on them...its 'you said this was going to happen and look' ...making parents better watchers of the children (Julie, 545-562)

Julie appreciated that PAFT information assisted parents' awareness for their children. She saw this as a loop: parents have awareness, see the development has happened, and are encouraged to continue through children's development. Parents were rewarded when their children reach a milestone and felt pleased with their parenting, and then parents wanted to stay involved with their children and PAFT to be aware of the next stage of development. By parents witnessing the changes due to PAFT creating awareness, they felt more capable in their parenting.

2d) Combination of group and home meetings was important to programme usefulness. A final element of PAFT that project workers saw as promoting parents' engagement and change was the combination of the home and group visits. Project workers perceived the relationship of these two delivery formats as providing support to families as Robyn detailed:

...by going in sort of monthly to do that visits they got that continuity...Give them a chance to work on something and then the next month be able to talk about how it's gone, any problems they've had, any successes... then the group meetings they've got support from others who are going through it at the same time (Robyn, 277-290)
Robyn described that by giving the two formats for meetings (home and group), families were better supported. As described previously, isolation of parents can be exceedingly difficult for parents (Bost et al., 2002; Guerrero, 2009; Zubrick et al., 2005), and therefore by having the group, PAFT supported families who would like to increase social networks, while the home visits meant that individual families' needs can be met (Wall et al., 2005; Whitehead and Douglas, 2005).

An important conclusion throughout this theme was that guidance is a key principle. By guiding families, project workers participate in a collaborative approach and use a number of possible avenues for supporting families. Throughout these points the underlying framework was collaborating with families, not using an ‘expert-model’, which has been shown to alienate families (Barlow et al., 2003; Davis, 2009).

**Theme 3: Project workers valued community resources and outreach**

3a) PAFT had relationships with various community organisations and used these resources to support families in the community, including through outreach

3b) Project workers considered it vital to avoid stigma for programme success and community acceptance

One key aspect of the PAFT programme elements that support families is their connections to the community. Project workers value and use their community relationships in working with families. As mentioned in chapter 2, this is a mandated aspect of the programme that is currently implemented.

3a) **PAFT had relationships with various community organisations and used these resources to support families in the community, including through outreach.**

PAFT reported professional relationships with health visitors, area schools and social services which assisted families in gaining the help they needed. Gina described this as:

> *I know Julie does her um postnatal groups...we've got really good relationships with health...we've started to work with a little library up the road and things... we can do sort of spread out perhaps do the group meetings in other villages as well...* (Gina, 661-671)

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In this example Gina suggested that PAFT had connections to various aspects of community and that they were further developing their outreach opportunities by taking group meetings to others parts of the community. Research suggests that by having a programme fully integrated within a community, the programme is more likely to support the community members (Mann et al., 2007; McKay, Shannon, Vater, and Dworkin, 2006; Melhuish et al., 2007), and these project workers saw this as a real opportunity for them.

Engaging in outreach was another important aspect of PAFT project workers. Pearson and Thurston (2006) suggest that by developing relationships with community members, practitioners can engage them. Julie supported this stating that:

...I think as for our community involvement as a whole, we have a reasonable background, but I'm aware that not everybody – if you don't have a small child, you don't need to know about us, so I think maybe with the Children's Centre... that's where I see the Children Centre and us working together to extend the programme...

(Julie, 522-530)

Julie indicated that PAFT worked closely with the developing Children’s Centres to engage more fully with the community, thus supporting more families who required services. Research supports Julie in this by specifying that having a wide range of supportive community services encourages practitioners and the community to engage with developing the knowledge and skills necessary for an infant mental health framework (Chazan-Cohen et al., 2007).

3b) Project workers considered it vital to avoid stigma for programme success and community acceptance. One issue often considered in the research is that programmes aim to avoid stigma (Barlow and Stewart-Brown, 2004; Sanders et al., 2003). Although PAFT is a universal programme, project workers were still aware of issues relating to stigma:

...it's just 'cause [families] don't know about it they've kind of heard of it [PAFT]
I think that's it I think that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing you know they're starting to hear about PAFT they don't fully know what it is and that's because you can't operate to so many people because it is quite, you know quite...
Robyn relayed that simply hearing about a programme does not assist with preventing stigma. Robyn supported the view in the literature (Melhuish et al., 2007; Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Rinaldis, Firman, and Baig, 2007) that by offering a programme to everyone in a setting, stigma can be alleviated, although due to current community and societal constraints this is not possible.

The project workers appreciated the community services they had access to. Using these resources they engaged in outreach and attempted to educate the wider community regarding the PAFT services. The project workers saw the new Children’s Centres as supporting the relationships between services and families.

A great deal of research suggests that only by understanding a family’s unique relationships and circumstances can they be helped. Several reasons exist for delivering programmes in families’ context, including promoting family engagement and competency (Gilkerson, 2004); allowing practitioners the opportunity to understand the families’ unique needs (Law et al., 2009); and it puts families’ needs as central to the change process (Emde et al., 2004).

4a) Project workers saw the family as a whole due to valuing the family relationships and circumstances. Understanding context was a particularly emphasised aspect of PAFT project workers. They saw themselves as meeting families’ needs by valuing the context within which the family lived, which made participants more likely to engage and use information in practice. Robyn stated:
...you might have all this information to provide but you don't have to provide it you know if you can get one or two points across to a family that is struggling you know to get any information if you get one or two points across then you're doing something aren't you? I suppose if you do suppose to be effective just bombard them and not get anything done... (Robyn, 623-628)

Robyn suggested that PAFT put the family's circumstances first by valuing them and that anything that could assist the family was more important than ensuring all the PAFT information was stated. Therefore Robyn advocated placing value in the family circumstances, and as its own entity that PAFT linked into, rather than attempting to control the environment.

4b) PAFT model 'fit' families by meeting them where they were. Gina and Julie explained that they adapted their practices based on the best way to support families:

...we have a range but that's why it works I think because people can use how it fits in with their lives, however chaotic or organised or you know, intellectual or what as they are, that's why I think it works (Julie, 304-307)

I think you meet the needs of the moment and I think the things they're you know they're concerned about then you try to you know reassure them or talk to them about it or signpost them to somewhere else... (Gina, 485-488)

Julie explained here that no matter what is going on in families' lives, PAFT is suitable to meeting their needs, which is a key aspect of its support to families. Gina supported Julie by explaining that PAFT met the needs of that moment for that family. Gina and Julie illustrate previous research that indicates practitioners are better able to adapt their services to meet families' specific needs if they consider families as individual entities (Emde et al., 2004; Law et al., 2009; McAllister and Thomas, 2007; Stewart et al., 2004). Whitehead and Douglas (2005) suggest that if practitioners can shift the focus toward understanding a family's story rather than solving a problem, they are then better able to assist the family in context, which is what the project workers suggest they do in everyday practice. Having a range of support, project workers and community links, families were able to make PAFT fit in with everything else that was going on in their contexts.
4c) Project workers attempted to engage partners in work with families.

Another aspect of PAFT for project workers is that they intended to engage partners (fathers) in the home visiting sessions. Robyn described in more detail about how she perceived father involvement:

... I kind of pitch it if the dad's there mum and really taken an active part then I will obviously talk to both of them and I will deliver the information to both of them and I will maybe ask the dad things that I would not just ask the mum if it was just the mum if the dad is in the room and just kind of hanging around again not he's just there but not really involved in the session. I still like I will talk mainly to the mum I suppose but if the dad comes in I'll just you know make eye contact every now and then yeah mum and then if he said something then I'd kind of obviously try and draw him into a bit then again I just kind of play it by ear (Robyn, 408-416)

Robyn described the complexity of encouraging fathers to get involved during visits. She suggested this was an active process that required her reading the situation and deciding how best to encourage fathers' involvement. Perhaps the most important point was that Robyn suggested that she was meeting the family where it was, so not attempting to force father involvement, while also encouraging if it was feasible, and welcoming it if the father was interested. She expressed a value that supports the family as a whole through her continued attempts for father involvement.

Julie described that in some cases mothers discussed fathers with project workers:

...if dad's aren't about [project workers] do talk about them. Sometimes [mothers] might be negative about how dads participating, saying, well you know 'maybe they're feeling a little bit um isolated because they are new in town, maybe they feel that you're the one with all the knowledge, maybe they're insecure in their parenting because they're not doing it so much and though even you may not be doing it, they may feel that you may be looking down at their skills as being less than yours', so I try to have a realistic idea about how the partners' feeling. You get different things from different parents. So we always ask about it, there are lots of families that say will you know, 'dad has asked about this or you know, we wanted to know about this', and then feed it back to dad. Sometimes I have two different bandouts, one for mum and one for dad, 'cause that's the way they like it... generally the feedback is that they share it with their partners and its they take it on board and most families seem to be receptive to Parents as First Teachers and what they do, I mean, these are Parents as First Teachers not Mothers as First Teachers, yes the mum might be the one we see more often (Julie, 476-504)
In this quote Julie explained the fathers’ role in PAFT, stating that fathers were included, although sometimes indirectly. She indicated that she challenged mothers' negative perceptions of their partners in order to be realistic and supportive through PAFT, which has been shown to support parents (Sanford, 2006). Research suggests that it is important that those working in infant mental health recognise that relationships are embedded in other relationships and thus they must be considered together (Emde et al., 2004). This demonstrated one way in which parenting programmes such as PAFT can support families through direct and indirect involvement.

Project workers saw themselves as engaging in family circumstances to support and meet families’ needs. By valuing the family context, the programme was able to assist individual needs using some flexibility in programme delivery. In addition, by understanding families within their own environment project workers were better able to access the family as a whole.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 5: Integrating previous roles and experiences influenced development as a project worker and in practice with families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5a) Experiences, self-reflection and personality integrated to influence project workers in practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>5b) Project workers juggled numerous roles both professionally and personally</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The project workers came from a variety of experiences and employment positions before becoming project workers. These walks of life influenced their current worldview and their interactions in a professional sense. As opposed to many professions, the project workers felt that both personal (e.g. being a mother) and professional (e.g. training in a helping profession) experiences assisted in their roles as project workers in work with families.

5a) Experiences, self-reflection and personality integrated to influence project workers in practice. The project workers described previous experiences as influencing

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134 They remain flexible but are committed to programme fidelity guidelines. This balance is further considered in the discussion section below.
...there will be a subtle change when I get more confident with it now and I can get that information across to parents in a more subtle way rather than me saying 'now this is the information I've got to get across to you' I'm just going to kind of blend that in with my own personality in dealing with a family... (Robyn, 48-52)

Robyn described that over time the programme becomes part of her personality, and she used that in providing information to families. Personal characteristics are currently being considered in research that indicates that in order to create a positive relationship with parents, practitioners should have a range of personal qualities, including being genuine, non-judgemental and empathetic (Davis, 2009; Zeanah et al., 2006). In addition, she suggested that she considered the process for building relationships, which indicated that Robyn was reflective and thus able to consider how to meet individual family needs more fully. Reflective practice is often cited as a particularly important aspect of supporting parents (Cooke, 2006; Gilkerson, 2004; Weatherston and Osofsky, 2009). Similarly Gina reflected on her experiences in various roles and suggested that PAFT has the capability to support families:

I didn’t know anything about it [PAFT] before I started and now I feel that there are an awful lot of benefits now that I’m with it. And I wish there had been something like then when I was you know at that stage with my family um so I suppose I’d just like to see the message spread really and to have more opportunities for other people um I think it can be a very lonely time in your life when you’re at home with very small children because especially if you’ve been you know sort of very active um sort of career before that’s quite a massive change... (Gina, 596-604)

Gina suggested that gaining knowledge in PAFT allowed her to understand the importance of the programme to families and the community. By being reflective and able to consider her life experiences, such as being a mother herself, she was able to better understand the opportunities offered through PAFT to families, which is supported in the literature (Paris et al., 2009; Weatherston et al., 2009). Furthermore Robyn and Gina will be able to use these previous experiences for making clinical judgements as research supports that practitioners are often required to use their clinical judgement in meeting families’ needs (Barlow et al., 2003).
5b) Project workers juggled numerous roles both professionally and personally. The project workers discussed how they juggle their other roles and prior knowledge with their current PAFT involvement. Gina suggested that her position in the school influenced her interactions with families:

...if they don’t know they they know that I work at the school so I’ve had people say ‘oh do you work full-time at the school’ or something like that so I just say ‘yes’ but I don’t want to sort of scare people off... I try to you know leave that persona away and I try to I wear something like this because you you know you’re on the floor or it doesn’t matter if you get dirt on you or something so the difficulty is that I’ve got several functions in a day I might bring several changes of clothes (Gina, 418-426)

Through Gina’s connection to the school she perceived that she may be seen by some as an ‘authority’ figure, therefore she developed coping mechanisms that supported her goal of being able to work with families. By changing clothes, Gina felt more comfortable and able to collaborate with parents through PAFT, in a way she may not do in what she wears during school. This also provided evidence of Gina carefully considering the different roles she played. By playing such different roles, she demonstrated flexibility in herself as a person and her positions. Through this flexibility she was able to interact in the various scenarios facing her on a typical day.

Julie described that her knowledge of child development has changed and this encouraged her development professionally and personally:

...working with families that have small children is something that I enjoy doing. So just just you know job satisfaction, I get a lot of that, it does have its uh times when it can be very stressful, my [previous] background helps me I think with that because obviously I’ve seen stressful things doing my [previous employment]. Educationally, it’s made me uh more aware about child development... it’s challenging me, not just as a professional but as a person so um it’s something that I look forward to doing most of the time... This is what I would be passionate about. I can see myself still doing this in ten years time maybe, maybe in a slightly modified role depending on what happens with the training and with PAFT UK. But it’s something that I would hope to still be doing in 10 years... (Julie, 171-183)
By having so much satisfaction in the role, Julie was able to describe that, even though being a project worker can be difficult, she finds it a positive experience, which is supported by research (Whitehead and Douglas, 2005). In addition, this enthusiasm for the programme will likely at least partially support project worker turnover due to Julie being a trainer and project worker, which is a significant problem in the field (Gomby et al., 1999).

This theme encouraged creating an integration of project workers' roles, responsibilities and experiences in developing their current understanding of programme processes. By promoting this integration, project workers used their own personal traits in tandem with the programme model to support families and develop the helping relationship, which is considered positive by research (Davis, 2009; Korfmacher et al., 2007; Mann et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2003).

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<tr>
<th>Theme 6: Societal influences on parenting: Parenting in society changes and project workers reported that services must adapt to meet families' needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6a) Fathers received little support from services, as they were not set up to support fathers, meaning that the role of the father in parent programmes needs to adapt due to societal changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b) Children's Centres were being developed to meet societal needs, and PAFT was attempting to adapt to sufficiently assist with changing needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c) External factors such as employment influenced programme participants</td>
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</table>

Project workers suggested that they saw numerous societal changes occurring within the programme context and thus, felt that services need to ensure that they adapted programmes to meet the goals of the participating families. Some research indicates that by operating with the community context and attempting to support families in these communities requires the community to be assessed (Barlow, Parsons, et al., 2005; Davis, 2009; Sanders et al., 2003).

6a) Fathers received little support from services, as they were not set up to support fathers, meaning that the role of the father in parent programmes needs to adapt due to societal changes. The project workers had numerous ideas about societal notions influencing families, with Gina providing one example of fathers and services:
In this quote, Gina described a difficulty fathers face in accessing services: instead of feeling supported by finding other parents with similar experiences, Gina suggested that fathers feel unsupported due to the lack of men in support services. In some cases reports recommend that male support workers are positive in encouraging father participation, although this remains to be evidenced fully (Lloyd et al., 2003; McAllister et al., 2004; Page et al., 2008). In addition, Gina spoke in a wider sense indicating that she saw more male inclusive services as important, which many studies support (Lewis and Lamb, 2003; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, et al., 2004).

6b) Children’s Centres were being developed to meet societal needs, and PAFT was attempting to adapt to sufficiently assist with changing needs. At the time of the interviews, the area Children’s Centres were in the planning stages and some of the project workers suggested that they wanted to ensure that services were developed to meet families’ needs in the community:

...would it come out that people want other things from it as well so you’ve got you know the PAFT pattern if you like of what you must follow but then thinking about it in a slightly wider role with the Children’s Centre... Will it show up that there could be other other directions we could be going in (Gina, 161-166)

...to be able to look at the work we’ve already done, recognise the strengths and to be able to uh throw up any areas that are weaker which we may have already thought that might be...but actually to be able to say ‘this is this is where we are, these are the things that have been highlighted area of need’, so that they can be part of our action plan to go on... (Julie, 159-164)

Julie and Gina explained that with the Children’s Centres development, PAFT needed to consider what would work best for community members. The project workers stated that PAFT should develop a strategy that would provide direction to PAFT based on families stated needs in the community, which will assist the families more fully.
The project workers implied that the development of the Children’s Centre in the area provides them with the opportunity to develop and more fully support the families in the area. By using strengths-based view, as Julie has done, project workers feel that developing the services in regard to community needs they will be more supportive of families.

6c) External factors such as employment influenced programme participants.
External factors are another important aspect of societal influences on parenting. These factors can include employment, caretaking and other domestic responsibilities that influenced parenting from the project workers’ perspectives. Gina said:

...it's difficult because everyone seems to work so hard these days... (Gina, 372-373)

...some families where dad will be a part of it for parts of the session some are present through the whole of the session, which is very good there are a lot of my families where dad is working (Julie, 470-473)

Gina and Julie suggested that one of the difficulties with programmes was that people’s employment has changed, meaning that people were less able to devote time to services and their families. Julie explained that some fathers attended and stayed for whole sessions, whereas other fathers were at employment when the visit occurred. As mentioned previously many programmes are set up in a way that only mothers are able to participate, which is considered standard (Costigton and Cox, 2001; Feinberg, 2002; Manby, 2005; McBride and Lutz, 2004; Scott and Dadds, 2009). This is one of the largest issues for parenting programmes, including PAFI.

Through these examples, it was seen that families and PAFI are influenced by societal factors and that in order to address these influences; societal expectations need to be considered on an individual and community level.

Summary
The project workers provided numerous perspectives regarding their relationships with families, the community, and wider society influences. They indicate value in understanding and supporting families through a variety of perspectives, and recommend ways to promote
inclusion to meet families’ unique needs. By obtaining a wider understanding, project
workers feel that they can support families in ways needed by families and they can also
expand their services to reach more families. These initial findings provide important
insights into project workers’ perspectives on which to build the research in the next phase:
questionnaires.

Phase 2: Questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed using quotes based on specific themes from the phase 1
analysis. The project workers’ questionnaire was developed with statements from the
following project worker phase 1 themes:

- **Family-project worker connection was vital for engaging, maintaining and promoting change in families.** Developing the relationship with the family was a central aspect for promoting involvement in PAFT. Due to the importance of this relationship in project workers’ perspectives in phase 1 and previous research (Green, 2006; Kazdin et al., 2005; Stolk et al., 2008), this theme was included in the questionnaire.

- **Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships.** Project workers saw numerous components of the PAFT programme as aiding families in their process of change and to understand programme elements from project workers, this theme was included in phase 2.

- **Project workers valued community resources and outreach.** Due to project workers perceiving the community services as important resources and PAFT existing within the community environment, this theme was included in the questionnaire.

- **The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers.** Valuing the context of the family was crucial from project workers’ perspectives of engaging and supporting families, and therefore it was included in phase 2.

- **Integrating previous roles and experiences influenced development as a project worker and in practice with families.** Project workers developed over time and expressed a number of roles in which they participated, and thus this theme was included in phase 2.
One theme was excluded from phase 2:

- Societal influences on parenting: Parenting in society changes and project workers reported that services must adapt to meet families' needs. This was based on wider perspectives of parenting and services, not specific to PAFT or project workers, and thus was excluded in phase 2.

Participants

A total of 25 project workers completed the questionnaire. Due to the breakdown of the questionnaire, project workers were encouraged to complete various parts of the questionnaire, ignoring parts that they felt did not pertain to them. However, all project workers completed all four sections of the questionnaires. Only women completed the questionnaire. The demographic information is slightly skewed toward the less experienced project workers as area 1 had only been operating throughout the county for around 2 years. For further information regarding demographics, please see Table 6.3.\(^\text{135}\)

\(^{135}\) 0 is the number of missing values, unless otherwise indicated.
Table 6.3

*Project Workers' Demographics for Completing the Questionnaires*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number of Project Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you a parent?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did you have an occupation before becoming a project worker?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed: White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-level(s)/AS-level(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree/diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long have you been working as a project worker with PAFT?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+ years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many families do you currently provide with PAFT home visits?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or less</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In your entire time as a project worker, how many families have you provided with at least one home visit?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or less</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In cases of two parent households, have you ever had both parents attend a PAFT home visit together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-Dimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)

Multi-dimensional scaling revealed several regions based on project workers' perspectives.

'PAFT and the Community' Section. On the 'PAFT and Community' section (A), two regions were identifiable (see Figure 6.1). This analysis had good stress and excellent RSQ values with Stress=.09 and RSQ=.10.
Supporting families in the community. This region related to PAFT in the community settings. This region included how PAFT saw themselves supporting families in community settings particularly through additional project workers, signposting, and being satisfied (or dissatisfied) with PAFT’s reputation.

Supporting families in the community:
- To offer PAFT to more families, we need more project workers (4)
- If families are concerned about their child, project workers signpost them to somewhere in the community that might be able to help (5)
- I want to keep the reputation that PAFT has in the community (7)

Developing community connections and expanding PAFT. This region encompassed statements related to PAFT’s connections in the community and their desire (or lack thereof) for developing their services. Therefore the statements together indicate that creating relationships between themselves and families supports the families in the
community. In addition, the statements suggest that current perceptions (1, 3) and future perceptions (8, 9) for goals of community connections are related.

**Developing community connections and expanding PAFT:**
- We work closely alongside other community officials (e.g., health visitors, schools) (1)
- Group meetings help parents realise that they are not on their own (3)
- In an ideal world it would be great to offer PAFT to every single family in the community (8)
- I would like to see the PAFT message spread (9)

**‘PAFT, Project Workers and Family Relationships’ Section.** On the ‘PAFT, Project Workers and Family Relationships’ section (B), three regions were identifiable (see Figure 6.2). This analysis showed slightly high stress and suitable RSQ values with Stress=.16 and RSQ=.90.

![Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the ‘PAFT, Project Workers and Family Relationships’ section](image)

*Note.* Five questions were excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the regions as these outliers caused the model to be compressed: My difficulty is that I see a smaller number of families than other project workers (11); It is not the project workers’ job to tell parents what to do in terms of parenting (23); Trying to book home visits can be difficult because of all the other things I have to do (29); We can support families with their issues, but we cannot fix them (30); I try to blend the PAFT information with my own personality in presenting it to a family (31).
PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs. This region is based on perceptions of the way in which both PAFT programme elements and project workers assist families’ needs. In specific questions, 6 appears slightly farther from the centre than the other questions, although this may be due to not defining successes as related to PAFT related. In addition, if looking at the points nearest it, 16 and 25, these are also positive framing of families and based on empowerment, and therefore this question must have been slightly different in project workers’ perceptions. Questions 14 and 27 also appear slightly farther away from the centre and close together. However these questions focus on the direct interaction with between project workers and parents, and loneliness may be considered a problem that some parents have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All families are different, so project workers must pitch the information at their levels (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is very important that project workers talk to families about their successes (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If a family is going through a rough time, I like to support them (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes parents I work with are going through difficulties with their children (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As a project worker I try to meet families’ needs of the moment (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I always ask the parents if they have any particular problems (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to highlight to parents how they have made an impact on their child is an important part of PAFT (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I support families in their parent to enable them to have fun with their children (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One of the most important parts of PAFT is empowering parents to parent more confidently (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If parents can understand why their child is having an issue, it helps that parent realise that they are going to get through it (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes parents are lonely and PAFT gives them a chance to talk to somebody (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes project workers have to adapt the programme to meet an individual family’s needs (28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change. This region contains statements that indicate project workers’ perceptions of the ways that PAFT assists families as a programme. They indicate using (or not using) strengths-based approaches, providing families information, flexibility in visits, awareness of child development and the project worker-family relationship. Statements 1
and 9 almost overlap, indicating a great deal of similarity. These relate to skills and relationships, therefore supporting the notion reported previously that the relationship between project workers and families is central to other aspects of the PAFT programme, such as providing information and teaching skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I help parents build on whatever skills they have (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT raises ideas that parents may not have thought about (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Families can use PAFT to fit in with their lives (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT tries to help parents have realistic expectations for their child's development (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT makes parents better observers of their children (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If I have a relationship with a family, it can help getting the information across (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT makes parents more aware of their child's development so they can look for it (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each visit I do I build up more of a relationship that family, then it is easier to share the information (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement.
This region includes statements that rely on project workers' perspectives for reasons that families join and stay involved with PAFT over time. These statements involve specific strategies that project workers and PAFT use to sustain programme involvement. Statement 18 appears slightly farther from the other statements in the region because it relates to specific interactions between the family and project worker, which is similar to the nearest point (24).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Certain families that I work with seem to be very interested in their children's development (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I think families carry on because project workers have said that they are doing a good job (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It does not matter what parents' learning style is, PAFT provides parents with information in various ways (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You can see the difference PAFT makes in the parents and children (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I feel that if I can work alongside a family, they will learn new parenting skills (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If I can model things for parents, they can build their skills (24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'PAFT Inclusion of the Entire Family' Section. On the 'PAFT Inclusion of the Entire Family' section (C), two regions were identifiable (see Figure 6.3). This analysis had excellent stress and RSQ values with Stress=.06 and RSQ=.98.

**Figure 6.3.** Multi-dimensional scaling analysis of the 'PAFT Inclusion of the Entire Family' section

*Note. Three questions were excluded from this analysis to provide clarity to the regions as these outliers caused the model to be compressed: One reason it might be difficult for fathers to go groups in the community is because a lot of things are mainly women (3): I do not ask about partners on visits (4); There are a lot of families where dad is working so he cannot attend the home visits (5).*

**Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT.** This region consisted of statements that related to encouraging (or discouraging) PAFT participation for both parents. It relayed information about project workers’ perspectives on whether fathers should be engaged in PAFT and the best strategies for engaging full families. This appears to be practical applications of project workers’ perspectives for including entire families, within the families’ current contextual environment.
Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT:

- If mums are negative about dads' involvement in the household, I try to help the mum understand some possible reason (6)
- It is always good to have fathers on board with PAFT (7)
- I pitch the information to both parents if they are both there (9)
- If you are looking at family dynamics it is important to know what the fathers' role is (10)
- PAFT should leave handouts/activities for parents who are not at the visit (11)

Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually. This region encompassed statements based on project workers' cognitions of joint family involvement. Therefore the statements indicate that on a conceptual level, project workers believe family involvement as important (or not) and this conceptual level does not provide practical solutions but instead indicates the underlying value structure of the project workers on full family involvement.

Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually:

- Project workers have to build the relationship with the whole family (1)
- I try to have a realistic idea about partners' feelings on parenting (even if unable to attend the home visit) (2)
- I think parents share PAFT information with their partners (8)

Reliability Analysis

To better understand the relationships between the regions, each region's statements were measured using Cronbach's Alpha to establish their reliability as a scale. As can be seen in Table 6.4, all new scales were considered reliable being above the recommended .7 level with one exception (Supporting families in the community).137

137 * denotes lower alpha level. This is slightly lower than the typical .7 considered best, however due to the placement on the MDS analysis, and inter-item correlations (.3 or above), it was able to remain as its own scales in this analysis. The strength of the correlations below should be considered with this information.
Table 6.4

Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability of Newly-Found and Previously Validated Questionnaire Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting families in the community</td>
<td>= .64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing community connections and expanding PAFT</td>
<td>= .77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs</td>
<td>= .92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
<td>= .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</td>
<td>= .80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT</td>
<td>= .84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually</td>
<td>= .71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the scales were identified and re-coded as categories in their own right, skewness and kurtosis scores were calculated to ascertain which variables were parametric and non-parametric in order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis (Appendix F5). Most scales were parametric with the following scale being non-parametric: the importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT.

Correlations

Parametric (Pearson's) and non-parametric (Spearman's) correlations were conducted to better understand the relationships between scales in the measures.

Parametric (Pearson's correlations). The parametric correlations show several important relationships between scales (see Appendix F5 for parametric correlation table).

Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement is positively and significantly related to a number of scales: Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually, \( r = .48, p < .05 \); Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change, \( r = .76, p < .01 \); PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs, \( r = .63, p < .01 \); Supporting

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138 Those z-scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
families in the community, \( r = .52, p < .01 \). Therefore if a project worker perceives that PAFT engages and maintains programme involvement, they are likely to also see value in including the family and that the programme assists families in their change. Furthermore if the project worker perceives PAFT as engaging and maintaining family involvement, they are likely to perceive that PAFT meets families' needs and supports families in the community, including through creating community connections.

Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change is significantly and positively related to several scales: Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually, \( r = .43, p < .05 \); PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs, \( r = .50, p < .05 \); Supporting families in the community, \( r = .40, p < .05 \). This signifies that if a project worker sees programme elements assisting families in change they are likely to also see that PAFT includes whole families conceptually, PAFT meets individual family needs and supports families in the community.

Developing community connections and expanding PAFT is significantly and positively related to several scales: Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually, \( r = .55, p < .01 \); Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement, \( r = .44, p < .05 \); Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change, \( r = .48, p < .05 \); Supporting families in the community, \( r = .42, p < .05 \). Thus if project workers perceive developing the community and PAFT, they are also likely to see that PAFT includes families conceptually, and that PAFT engages and maintains families. Furthermore if project workers see PAFT as developing in the community, they are likely to see that PAFT assists families in change and supports families in the community setting.

Non-parametric (Spearman's correlations). The non-parametric correlations show several important relationships (see Appendix F5 for the non-parametric correlation chart).
Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT is significantly and positively related to a number of scales: Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually, \( r = .47, p < .05 \); Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement, \( r = .50, p < .05 \); Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change, \( r = .58, p < .01 \); PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs, \( r = .53, p < .01 \); and Supporting families in the community, \( r = .42, p < .05 \). This means that if a project worker perceives it as important to include both parents in PAFT, they are likely to also see PAFT as including the whole family conceptually and PAFT engages and maintains family involvement. Additionally, if a project worker perceives it as important to include both parents in PAFT, they are likely to perceive that PAFT assists families in promoting change, meets individual family needs and supports families in the community.

Summary
The project workers perceived several relationships between community settings, the PAFT programme and entire family inclusion. The relationship between these elements varied, however the project workers perceived them as similar to one another. Of particular importance, two themes from phase 1 were integrated with other themes. The first, the project worker-family relationship carried across components and seemed to influence the overall perceptions of PAFT. The other, project worker characteristics and experiences became a part of other scales indicating this may not be of the same importance as other aspects of the PAFT programme. These findings create a larger platform from which to understand project workers' perspectives, but first they need to be validated in the focus group.

Phase 3: Focus groups
The focus group analysis aimed to validate and expand previous findings while also considering any perceptions not previously found that are important to project workers' experiences. Support for the previous findings will first be briefly discussed, and then the new themes will be explored in more depth to provide additional information for interpreting the findings.
**Participants**

Ten project workers attended the focus group, although three did not contribute to the dialogue other than agreement. Two project workers (Julie and Robyn) had participated in the project workers' interviews and questionnaires. Four project workers (Diane, Mia, Linda, Zoe) had completed questionnaires. One project worker (Daphne) had participated in none of the previous phases.

**Phase 1 and 2 Findings Validated in Phase 3**

After transcribing the project workers' focus group verbatim, the transcript was first analysed using thematic analysis to validate previous findings from phases 1 and 2. Four themes found in phases 1 and 2 were identified in this analysis (in Table 6.5) and will be discussed in turn below.

**Table 6.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Identified from the Findings of Phases 1 and 2 Validated in the Project Workers’ Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Project workers’ perceptions of engaging with families in the community and relationships to community services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Process of change in parents was related to various programme elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and project worker-family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PAFT and project workers meeting families needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Project workers’ perceptions of engaging with families in the community and relationships to community services.** As with previous phases, project workers continued to reference the importance of community resources and family relationships:

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139 Names and identifying details have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality  
140 While the ideal number according to literature is six to eight people in a focus group, due to the nature of fieldwork and evaluation research, it is important that those who would like to contribute are able to do so. Thus all ten were allowed to participate, but only 7 contributed to the dialogue (those listed above).  
141 Samples of this analysis are available upon request.
Diane: I think it's about the friendly approach too. I think it's we have got to go in as a friend and um you know work alongside, be with them you know.

Julie: Because you're looking for the positives where other statutory services will look to see what you're not doing or what your child isn't achieving. (858-863)

In this dialogue, the project workers discussed that PAFT was not about checking up on families, instead it was about working with parents in a collaborative nature that has been demonstrated to assist families in previous research (Barlow et al., 2003; Davis, 2009). They also made clear what they were not:

Mia: And about passing on their information I always tell them that as well you know and health issues 'if you've got any health issues go speak to your health visitor'  
Julie: But you're signposting and giving them the confidence to go back and do these things so supporting them in that you know in that service as well because they may have had a bad experience with their health visitor or are not you haven't got that confidence to go ask that question (881-888)

Mia and Julie conversed about their role in encouraging families to access services within the community when this was required. They provided a support role that assisted families and is one of the main goals of PAFT. By creating such clear boundaries with families, project workers can recommend other resources families should access.

2. Process of change in parents was related to various programme elements.  
As mentioned earlier the process of change that parents experienced was related to a number of programme elements, such as information. One issue that Mia and Diane discussed was strengths-based approaches that empowered parents:

Mia: Well we want to empower parents so that is what our job is about empowering parents to be the best that they can  
Diane: And you're giving them confidence and then that is empowering because they feel that they have had success and as you just said if there's just that snippet of something that they have done right you can ignore the rest that's not because that's a building block and it will then gradually increase and increase and you know it's about their self-esteem and their doubt and belief and image and everything that they haven't had mm there are too many people out there who have really have come to parenting believing that they're going to fail because they've failed at everything else so they think they will fail at this. And if we're in and we pick up on these tiny little bits then that actually bolsters them up and moves them forward and then they know that 'oh I could do the next thing' and and it's its fragile it's got to be that
By providing families with positive support, project workers indicated that changes occur. Furthermore as other literature indicates, the strengths-based approach is a particularly important avenue to supporting families (MacLeod and Nelson, 2006; McAllister and Thomas, 2007). By building on previous skills that families demonstrated, the project workers were able to provide support and confidence for parents in their parenting, while also encouraging positive parenting practices through skill development.

3. Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and the project worker- family relationships. To create change, PAFT project workers must first engage families in the programme and then keep them in the programme. One issue brought up was how PAFT was framed to families and what tangible benefits could be provided:

*Mia: And that's how you sell it. It's about how you sell PAFT as well 'cause I think if you stand and there and say to parents 'it's a parenting prog-they're gonna go ehh, no way' and-
*Group: Yeah, hmm (murmur agreement)
*Mia: I'm not going on a parenting thing, who areyaV You know? But if you go in and go 'oh you know I can come around and play you know show you things to do with things that are in your cupboard you know you don't got to go buy expensive toys and- ' but you know you talk about their development and you sort of break it down... into little bits and then you get through the door you can build that relationship... (348-360)

Mia explained that in engaging families PAFT should not be called a formal parenting programme, but instead the benefits should be made evident to the parents. She suggested that by using programme aspects such as making toys for children out of household items, she provided parents with the tangible benefits and the child-development information without being concerned about what the engagement was called. She also stated that, by entering the families’ domains, project workers developed the relationship to the family which was mentioned throughout the focus group as vital.
As mentioned before the family-project worker relationship is one of the most important issues discussed in the literature and throughout this research (Kazdin et al., 2005; Kazdin et al., 2006; Korfmacher et al., 1997; Korfmacher et al., 2007). Project workers in the focus group supported this notion:

_Diane:_ ...if you didn’t show sincerity that’s the thing and if that’s not there they see straight through you ’cause they see so many people that have let them down. And they’ve got to see that you’re actually not going to let them down and that you know you’re actually going to work with them, alongside them and it’s a journey together and I think that’s the other thing we need to make it clear that you know we’ll work on this together. Even though we’re the experts and they’re not, you know you’ve got to be alongside... (477-482)

In this particular quote, Diane suggested that demonstrating commitment and collaborating with parents, parents were more likely to engage with project workers. As suggested previously, through developing a partnership and bringing positive personality characteristics, project workers were better able to engage and maintain families in services.

4. PAFT and project workers meeting families needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole. One element that was particularly important across previous phases remained important during the focus groups, i.e. that project workers meet entire families’ individual needs in the context in which the family exists. One way this was accomplished was through assessing a diverse range of families’ capabilities of taking PAFT concepts into their lives:

_Diane:_ ...it’s working with different families and understanding how they work and how they’re capable they are of taking on something now you know in their muddled lives

_Julie:_ With some families the big success is for you to come through that door and then for them to invite you back again. There might be so much other chaos going on in their lives... they’ve let you come back again and continue that relationship (683-692)

As stated in the interviews and further developed here, the project workers perceived that each individual family had needs and it is only in understanding these needs that the programme assisted each family’s unique circumstances. Research supports this stating that
only through understanding families can they be assisted (Barlow et al., 2004; Gomby et al., 1999; Law et al., 2009).

Project workers also suggested that they supported the family as a whole, including partners who were unable to attend visits:

*Daphne:* ...one family that I have the mum can't read so that’s a really good way for them sharing information is that I leave the handouts for dad and then they go over them together so yeah it's really good. Really useful for them

*Julie:* And also sometimes especially if there’s a conflict going on about parenting styles from between mum and dad um if you’re taking they’ll know it’s research based information so you’re taking that information along and because it’s written down they can read it and it’s not mum telling them what to do... sometimes they’ve been able to meet somewhere in the middle where before they were pulled apart and so you know that information just being written down and being there not she’s told me this or you you gotta do that...has helped for them to to resolve some conflicts they were having about their parenting styles

*Robyn:* And even just to have a bit of discussion about it...you know to create some discussion about it between mum and dad (116-138)

Daphne, Robyn and Julie suggested that PAFT played a role in resolving parenting conflict, as the coparents suggested, through information, and that it can break down barriers through communication between parents rather than causing conflict as some literature indicates (Lee and Hunsley, 2006; Mockford and Barlow, 2004).

**New Themes Emerging from the Project Workers’ Focus Groups**

A further three themes were either expanded significantly from previous phases or were new having not been mentioned in either of the previous two phases. These can be found in Table 6.6 and will be discussed in turn below.
Table 6.6

New Themes from the Project Workers’ Focus Group

1. Integrating PAFT project worker and family support worker roles
2. The process of developing worker-family relationship was central to all other elements of project workers’ roles
3. Engaging children played an important role in providing a port of entry for support workers into families

1. Integrating PAFT project worker and family support worker roles. One important finding of the focus group analysis was that the project workers wanted it to be known that they were not exclusively PAFT project workers, instead they were made up of the larger category of family support workers. Therefore they delivered PAFT as part of their parenting programme mandate but had numerous other requirements in their day to day existence143.

Mia: I think what you’ve gotta remember is we’re just not PAFT, you know we are family support workers and we have lots of other um strings to our bows as well so obviously you know I think that PAFT is a good way to sometimes get to families that you can’t get to you know to engage with but sometimes PAFT is actually the last thing that family is interested in ‘cause they’ve got so many other issues so we have to bear that in mind that we are not totally um uh PAFT. We are family support workers we run stay and play sessions you know and we’ve got PAFT leaflets we talk about PAFT with parents as sort we feel that they benefit from it but um you know it’s quite wide... (200-211)

There were several explanations for this. The particular group of women in the focus groups were all women from one area of the UK that had adopted PAFT as their required parent support programme. However this adoption was done slightly after the initial interviews took place. Thus organisational and governmental differences occurred that required this integration. That said they explained how PAFT impacted their work as family support workers:

Diane: The information and the equipment and everything then there is a danger and you have to be very very very careful about that that next time next visit they may say ‘oh she’s not coming through that door again? Who does she think she is?’

143 Although the term changed for the official title of the group members due to their employment title, the term ‘project worker’ continues to be used for clarity.
Even when it doesn’t matter how you actually try to get it over um it could be that way and that’s why we have to be very very flexible and sensitive um-

Mia: I think that’s where the activities come in like. You can go with uh uh I don’t know pot of dried beans you’re scooping out of the bowl and you know that when you walk in there that family is not going to be interested in what you’ve got written on a bit of paper but you can get that activity out-

Group: Yes (murmurs agreement)

Mia: And give it to their two year old and their parents’ the engaged. ‘Oh I never thought of doing that’ and you know so you’ve got them on that way and then you can say ‘do you know why I’m doing that with him or her? And you know it’s going to help with their this or that’ (253-270)

This illustrated the attempt project workers made to integrate PAFT into their role as a family support worker. In some ways this proved easy, in that they had the similar goal of engaging families. As they stated, the requirements of multiple roles and the need to meet families’ individualised needs requires flexibility, including in offering a formal approach. However the group reported using PAFT skills and activities to engage with families, which is the first step as mentioned previously.

This theme places the research into a slightly different framework in that PAFT is one part of their many roles, and that they therefore are attempting to meet the needs of families through different lenses, but the goal remains to meet those needs.

2. The process of developing worker-family relationships was central to all other elements of project workers’ roles. Within this new framework of PAFT project workers as one part that must fit into other roles, the project workers were clear that no matter whether considering PAFT or their other responsibilities for this family support worker job, families acceptance of their engagement was at the forefront of their mind:

Mia: ...how you approach ‘em I suppose you have to go in with a different hat on with every family you go into

Group: Yeah (murmurs agreement)

Mia: You know you do go in at their level if ya like there’s no use walking through the door...if I’d walked in there with all the formal you know there’s no way. But the other families like the formality...They like you to walk in there and be a bit more official... (370-388)
In this example Mia received support and agreement from the other project workers for her suggestion that each family needs something different, and in figuring that out, families can receive the support they need. Mia and Diane suggested that without the relationship the information will not be considered:

Mia: Building that relationship sometimes
Diane: ...If you haven’t got that relationship initially then you can’t actually go into any more formalised sort of programme
Mia: And that is it. It’s formal so you go in with your bag and your leaflets and they go <snort> you know I won’t say what language they can possibly use (233-239)

Diane and Mia pointed out that the relationship goes hand in hand with family engagement. This is very similar to the above interviews where the project workers find PAFT difficult to run without family acceptance as previous research indicates (Cooke, 2006; Law et al., 2009; Park and Turnbull, 2003; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). In considering the centrality of the project worker-family relationships, the project workers shared the information on how to develop this relationship’s closeness:

Zoe: I think that’s what’s nice on the PAFT form because at the back it’s got reminders and...I put a little bit, oh it’s such and such birthday or they’re starting school so then you can go back the following month and say ‘oh how did that go’ or you know it’s just a nice little thing
Mia: Yeah and it’s personal to them. You know it’s a bit like you know they see this amount of families but to them, they’re only seeing one project worker...
Zoe: And it’s not just PAFT then, you’re taking an interest in them
Group: Yeah, (murmurs agreement)
Robyn: And I’d agree with Zoe ‘cause I use that bit on the back of the form
Mia: Yeah I do too
Robyn: You know to me that’s more important that I write down you know it was Joe’s birthday to ask next month rather than some developmental check that I want to make you know. That’s how I personally use it. So you know ‘cause you might not remember might you? So if you’ve got it written down ‘cause that’s the only way I remember (462-487)

Zoe, Mia and Robyn discussed that remembering information on families created a better relationship with families, thus demonstrating an interest in the family as people, not just as programme participants. This illustrated that this relationship was seen as the focal point of
project workers. Therefore perhaps future studies need to focus more fully on this as a central aspect of being able to offer programmes to families.

3. Engaging children played an important role in providing a port of entry for support workers into families. One noteworthy point was that support workers saw engaging children as a positive mechanism for engaging the parent, making the child a ‘port of entry’ for families:

Interviewer: So the activities are sort of an entry way?
Diane: Yeah I think so ’cause I always start with the activities ’cause they’re the first thing that you can open up and do, then you’ve got the child engaged
Interviewer: Is it easier to engage with the parents then?
Group: Yeah (murmurs agreement)
Mia: ’Cause to parents that child is the most important person in the whole wide world but if they can see someone who is taking time for that child they’ll they’ll engage a lot better whereas if you leave the child and chat to the parent you can’t
Linda: You can’t do it anyway (289-299)

The group discussed that by using activities to engage the child, parents were more able and willing to engage with the project worker. It seemed to have a variety of levels in that it was not only that the activities acted as a distraction or an interest to the child, which in turn relaxed the parent, but also that by engaging the child in an activity, the project worker was showing respect to the family by valuing the child. Research supports this indicating that in understanding a family, various family relationships should be considered (Philipp et al., 2008). The group continued by stating that:

Diane: Yeah I think playing with them first is a much easier in-road
Mia: Parents catch on much quick- you know they want to be involved with you quicker don’t they?
Diane: Yeah and they come and help...therefore you’re not being judgemental are you? ’Cause you are down on their level with that child doing this simple activity. They then come onboard with you and its fine and its nb and they don’t see you as any person that is coming officially, the relationship’s there. (302-313)

The group suggested that ‘playing’ with the child assisted the project worker in engaging parents and obtaining access to the family environment. Mia and Diane described this method as having multiple purposes in that parents can engage with their children through the project workers’ modelling and it can break down barriers by the project worker being
non-judgemental through engaging the child. As mentioned previously, children are typically a safe issue for families, when other issues are the actual problem in a family. Therefore the project workers were supporting this notion through this theme.

Summary
The project worker focus group validated previous phase findings, particularly the role of the project worker-family relationship in order to deliver PAFT and meet families’ unique needs. These project workers also developed ideas around the role of the term being used for collaborating with families. The project workers reported that they needed to engage families as their primary and often exclusive goal, and maybe through a variety of different methods, including the children, but that their title was largely irrelevant.

Discussion
The findings provided a complex and intricate view of project workers’ perspectives, with numerous factors exhibiting influence on their perceptions and behaviours. Project workers provided a great deal of information on developing the relationship and suggesting differences between themselves and programme elements. In considering the findings across phases, Figure 6.4 provides a schematic representation of the connections between the concepts emerging here. At the end of each concept description, boxes detail the specific findings from the research phases that informed the development of the concept.

All findings in this chapter must be considered within the framework of a small number of project worker participants. Furthermore they must be considered in context such as, varying delivery in communities, the semi- rural to rural environments, and other professional responsibilities. A lack of council and governmental support created a chronic stressful context in which they work with families, with both groups having had experiences of almost being shut down due to limited resources. That said, these initial considerations provide a great deal of information and much depth to the field.
Various Strategies for Engaging and Maintaining Families through Programme Elements

The current research found that project workers perceived using numerous strategies for engaging and maintaining families in PAFT. Without the initial engagement with a family, no change can be made to parenting nor can other services be provided to families. Therefore, project workers kept engaging and maintaining families at the forefront of their minds. Research indicates that simply by considering strategies for engagement, PAFT is going to have higher levels of family involvement (Moran et al., 2004). The underlying framework for these strategies is that the project workers engaged and maintained families through PAFT’s empowerment-based model. Project workers perceived that building on families’ current strengths was the foundation for supporting families.

A key strategy that project workers employed was collaborating with families. The current research supported previous studies (Barlow et al., 2003; Beckwith, 2005; Brocklehurst et al., 2004; Davis, 2009) by providing additional evidence that collaborative relationships between families and practitioners are essential to obtaining the therapeutic alliance. This collaborative relationship needs to be non-judgemental and fit appropriately with participants’ unique needs. Project workers value families, thus they are able to collaborate, moving away from the less helpful ‘expert model’ relationship (Barlow et al., 2004; Zeanah et al., 2006). The current research contributed to the literature uniquely by understanding collaboration from project workers’ perspectives.

An additional strategy is that the project workers would engage the children. By engaging the children, parents were more able and willing to participate in the programme with the project workers. Project workers engaging the children provides an additional component in that the child can create the initial alliance, which some research indicates is separate from parent alliance (Green, 2006; Kazdin et al., 2005; Kazdin et al., 2006). This will promote engagement by both children and parents in PAFT.

141 The project worker-family relationship is an important engagement strategy but will be discussed as its own concept below.
Another factor that project workers felt as vital to families' participation was flexibility in services. Some research indicates flexibility is positive and helpful to families (Stewart et al., 2004; Wall et al., 2005; Zeanah et al., 2006) and other research suggests this negatively affects programme effectiveness due to fidelity within programme models (Gomby et al., 1999). Barlow, Kirkpatrick, et al. (2005) found that hard-to-reach women felt that flexibility was central to their participation. Finding the balance between these factors is key to understanding and promoting best practice with engaging and maintaining families.

Aiming to reduce stigma is another way that PAFT supports families. By using a universal model and involving the community, PAFT normalises programme involvement, which supports parent participation (Moran et al., 2004). Delivering the programme to the entire community enables PAFT to impede stigmatisation (Barlow et al., 2003).

### Box 6.1. Various strategies for engaging and maintaining families through programme elements: Findings from each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships</td>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
<td>Process of change in parents was related to various programme elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</td>
<td>Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and project worker-family relationships</td>
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</tbody>
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### Project Worker-Family Relationship (Box 6.2)

The current research provided support for previous research on the importance of the project worker-family relationship; however it did so through the project workers' perspective rather than parents' perspectives, therefore adding a new dimension to previously understood concepts of the alliance. Previous research indicates the importance of this relationship, however the underlying components that promote it are largely unidentified (Barlow, Parsons, et al., 2005; Korfmacher et al., 2007). The current research provides important information, particularly that the project workers must see value in this...
relationship and actively promote it to engage families.

Prior to this research, the project worker-family relationship was considered important to the PAFT programme engagement. However the current research indicates that without the relationship, PAFT will not fully be participated in by families. This is particularly important for programmes like PAFT when choosing people for training. Only people who are able to understand and develop within a relational framework are going to have the ability to engage, maintain, and promote change in families.

While in phase 2 it appeared that this relationship may be considered simply as one element of the programme that supports the family, in phase 3 it became more apparent that the project workers saw this as an all-important component without which the programme could not be delivered. Furthermore it seems that without this relationship, change will not occur in parenting and child development. The project workers here suggested that engaging in the first place and then collaborating as part of the family-project worker relationship is vital to programme participation initially and over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6.2. Project worker-family relationship: Findings from each phase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-project worker connection was vital for engaging, maintaining and promoting change in families: Developing the relationship with the family was a central aspect for promoting involvement in PAFT</td>
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**Meeting Families’ Unique Needs (Box 6.3)**

The current research found that project workers believe it is vital to meet families’ needs and perceive themselves as doing this through a variety of avenues. The research also supports previous studies that suggest developing relationships with families are more likely to meet families’ unique needs (Pearson and Thurston, 2006).
One finding is that in order to meet families' needs, the environment in which the family exists must be addressed. This research further developed the notion that delivering programmes to families in context encourages practitioners to better understand and promote change in families, thus meeting the families' needs (Wall et al., 2005). It also supports the notion mentioned by many that witnessing families in their immediate and wider community and societal contexts promotes support from services (Law et al., 2009; McAllister and Thomas, 2007; Zeanah et al., 2006). Additionally, being willing to understand participants' needs from their perspectives is a particularly important notion for services to be aware of (Barlow, Parsons, et al., 2005), and PAFT suggests it is aware of this issue and attempts to address it in family environments. A final point is that the context of the family is also the relationships that make up the family (Emde et al., 2004). This research has illustrated several ways that PAFT project workers support family relationships.

In considering individual needs, fidelity becomes an important issue. Most programmes, like PAFT, require that project workers stick largely to the programme curriculum. However PAFT and many other programmes allow for project workers to deviate from the materials in case of an immediate crisis (Gomby et al., 1999), however it is important for programmes to largely maintain fidelity. PAFT attempts to moderate this through careful session notes; however it should be ensured that the project workers are typically sticking to the recommended curriculum. In this evaluation it appeared that project workers were attending to this. However when project workers deliver aspects of PAFT without the direct curriculum, these sessions should not be considered 'PAFT' as this will affect programme outcomes.
Box 6.3. Meeting families’ unique needs: Findings from each phase

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers</td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs</td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meeting families needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal influences on parenting: Parenting in society changes and project workers reported that services must adapt to meet families’ needs</td>
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Inclusion of Various Family Members (Box 6.4)

One finding of the current research was the project workers’ perceived importance and attempted to engage various family members in PAFT through direct and indirect methods. Research argues that it is important to engage various family members as it is within these relationships that the programme is delivered (Feinberg, 2002; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, et al., 2004).

Because programmes like PAFT interact in the family environment, they also interact within family relationships. McAllister and Thomas (2007) suggest that using empathetic understanding of both the parent and child and the parent-child relationship, practitioners are better able to assist families in which they work. Therefore practitioners must understand individuals and the family together to best support them. The PAFT project workers indicate that they consider the varying influences on parents, particularly within the family. Stright and Bales (2004) recommend that practitioners working with families by viewing marital, parenting and coparenting aspects of the family system, practitioners may be better able to access a more complete understanding of what the families’ needs are, and thus can tailor the intervention to meet these needs.

Several studies have indicated the importance of family-centeredness for services. Kontos and Diamond (2002) surveyed stakeholders of early intervention services and found that parents’ perceptions of the quality of services were directly related to how family centered the
services were. Thus if programmes are based on the family as a whole, families are more likely to engage and stay involved in services, meaning programmes like PAFT, where project workers’ indicate the importance, are more likely to support the families.

In considering practitioners’ views, project workers would like to directly include numerous members of families; however due to various limitations, they are not always able to do this. This illustrates the differences between idealistic viewpoints and realistic viewpoints. While project workers would like to include whole families, they are unable to and therefore must have a practical view of directly including those who are able to attend and indirectly with those who are unable to attend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6.4. Inclusion of various family members: Findings from each phase</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers</td>
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**Project Worker Roles and Development as a Project Worker (Box 6.5)**

The current research found that the project worker had both personal and professional roles. A combination of these influenced their abilities and opportunities to promote families’ participation in PAFT. Furthermore project workers indicated that they developed within a wider framework of society and community networks. Therefore they were not simply a PAFT project worker, but also a family support worker, a mother, a romantic partner, and/or a school worker all integrated into one. Thus their role as a project worker does not exist in isolation.

With the development of the Children’s Centres throughout England, future studies inquiring further into how the programme fits into project worker viewpoints would greatly assist programmes, families, and project workers to better understand role integration.
McCurdy and Daro's (2001) discuss the importance of low case loads in order for practitioners to offer assistance to families. This may be negatively influencing some of the project workers, as they indicated they had high case loads, particularly those in the focus group. Because this group seemed to suggest that they had little time to promote PAFT specifically, it may have influenced other aspects of their perceived community-support roles.

This research also supports some research suggesting that practitioner characteristics and experiences encourage practitioners in creating the therapeutic alliance (Zeanah et al., 2006) and thus being able to support families. Only practitioners with specific personal characteristics, including the ability to develop relationships, should be selected for the role. It is important to find out whether or not practitioners developed their perceptions of the importance of the project worker-family relationships through training, their own experiences, and/or their work with families to ensure that all practitioners share this perspective.

Some have proposed that parenting programmes should be delivered more often at night. However as almost all of these project workers studied here are mothers, many with school age children, if the visits were to occur in the evening, most likely many of these women would be unable to provide visits. Therefore a balance must be struck to ensure stakeholders’ needs are met in the best way possible.

| Box 6.5. Project worker roles and development as a project worker: Findings from each phase |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Phase 1** | **Phase 2** | **Phase 3** |
| Integrating previous roles and experiences influenced development as a project worker and in practice with families | Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs | Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and project worker-family relationships Integrating PAFT project worker and family support worker roles |
Community Involvement and Support (Box 6.6)

Community support remained a particularly important aspect of project worker experience across all three phases. The community provided project workers important opportunities for engaging with families. The project workers engaged in numerous forms of outreach in their community, encouraged families with services, assisted other services, and overall provided a connection between families and the community. The current research supports previous studies indicating the integrated services as vital to programme participants (Barlow et al., 2003; Davis, 2009; McKay et al., 2006).

The importance of the community is a frequently considered aspect of parenting programmes. Because programmes exist within a community framework, they must work within certain constraints and structures already in place. By aiming to have strong connections to the community as some of PAFT project workers reported, programmes are able to support families more fully (Park and Turnbull, 2003; Pirkis, Herrman, Schweitzer, Yung, Grigg, and Burgess, 2001). The project workers acknowledge and support the community and work within the current community framework to support their families and create networks.

| Box 6.6. Community involvement and support: Findings from each phase |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Phase 1**     | **Phase 2**     | **Phase 3**     |
| Project workers valued community resources and outreach | Supporting families in the community | Project workers’ perceptions of engaging with families in the community and relationships to community services |
| Supporting families in the community | Developing community connections and expanding PAFT |

Conceptual Model of Project Workers

To understand how these findings fit together, Figure 6.4 provides a schematic illustration based on the project workers’ findings. This model indicates varying levels of project workers’ perspectives to support families and that the concepts affect one another in different ways.
Of note is that in considering project workers' perceptions, it appears that two elements are necessary for the others to be accessed or important: Strategies for engaging and maintaining families through varying programme elements and the project worker-family relationship. Without these two the other main themes can have little influence. Project workers perceived that programme content to engage and maintain families can only be considered in conjunction with the project worker-family relationship.

The project worker-family relationship and the programme content combine to meet families' unique needs, together with the inclusion of the entire family. Meeting families' needs was inherently related to inclusion of various family members theme. In order to most successfully alter parenting practices, relationships in the family must be considered. Therefore to promote inclusion and understanding of the family, practitioners reported the necessity of being aware of family dynamics and promoting positive relationships within those families. The project worker characteristics are exceedingly important to developing the relationships and the strategies used by a particular project worker. In addition, the wider community is the framework in which PAFT operates, although as part of the community they are also able to access resources for their families should they require this. They can be looked at as indirectly influencing the other concepts in the model.

Conclusions
This chapter explored project workers' perspectives. As previously explained, project workers' perspectives often go overlooked in programme evaluation and their views are typically seen as not as important as outcomes. The current research provides important considerations regarding project workers' perspectives on the helping relationship, which can offer other practitioners and programmes the opportunity to develop their services. In addition, it can assist researchers with isolating aspects of the complex relationships that support parents in their particular contexts. The current research suggests that it is not simply about providing information and modelling skills, instead project workers perceive that their involvement with families has complex dimensions in aspects of engagement strategies, family relationships, and community connections.
Self-Reflexivity
When I began the research, I thought the project workers would be the easiest to recruit. My initial contact with the area 1 project workers supported my initial notion and as the research went on, this set from area 1 proved time and time again easy to work with. However problems often occurred when I attempted to organise and/or recruit project workers from other areas. The project workers that I knew well, from area 1 and one from area 2 proved invaluable to assisting me with the research. They routinely pursued other project workers and provided continued support throughout the process. But I have come back numerous times in trying to understand what occurred. When I asked the one project worker from area 2 she replied that it was not a dislike or disagreement over the research, but rather it was internal issues, such as, low morale, low salary, few working hours all spent with the families, which caused this. I found this particularly surprising but it did illustrate to me the difficulties and pressures a lot of these people experienced, which of course was further described to me in the focus group.
Proposed Conceptual Model: Project Workers

![Diagram of proposed conceptual model for project workers, including strategies for engaging and maintaining families through programme elements, adapting and considering best ways to meet families' needs, potential relationships between concepts, and research findings to theoretically connect concepts.]

Figure 6.4: The hypothetical relationships between concepts based on project workers’ findings from the three phases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend</th>
<th>Text in Boxes</th>
<th>Postulated Concepts (for description see discussion).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lines</td>
<td>Potential relationships between concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italicized Text</td>
<td>Research findings used to theoretically connect concepts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Comparisons

Similarities and Differences between Stakeholders across Research Phases

Introduction
This chapter explores findings from all stakeholders, providing an in-depth analysis of similarities and differences between the groups. Due to the amount of data, not all comparisons will be discussed. The themes presented here were selected based on a combination of the research aims, the findings in each phase, potential connections provided in the discussion sections of the stakeholder results' chapters, and the conceptual models describing the relationships between findings for each group. Because the chapter aims to compare findings between groups, a finding must be mentioned by at least two separate groups in at least one phase to be included in this chapter.

As mentioned in chapter 1, rarely are stakeholder groups considered together (Grimshaw and McGuire, 1998; Law et al., 2009; Osofsky et al., 2007). Hypothetically comparing the findings by group to ascertain an understanding of contrasting viewpoints on parenting programmes will enable stakeholders' needs to be met. Kontos and Diamond (2002) suggested that it is important to consider stakeholders' groups, as groups view services through diverse lenses. They found that both parents and service providers can be used as separate indicators in understanding if and how services meet families' needs. Stewart et al. (2004) established that service providers select and modify their services in order to ensure they meet families' needs.

Chapter 7 is organised by phases of the research, beginning by exploring themes stated in one phase by at least two stakeholder groups; then themes exhibited in two phases by at least two stakeholder groups; and finally themes represented in all three phases by at least two stakeholder groups. Themes asserted by at least two stakeholder groups in at least one phase are stated in Box 7.1 and will be discussed in turn below.
Box 7.1. Conceptual themes stated by at least two stakeholder groups in at least one research phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual theme in one phase</th>
<th>Conceptual theme in two phases</th>
<th>Conceptual themes in three phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Definitions in Families and Society</td>
<td>Community and Service Support</td>
<td>Family Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External Factors and Internalised Concepts of Parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Process of Change in Parenting Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PAFT Information and Programme Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Project Worker-Family Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme Stated in One Phase of the Research

One theme was stated in one phase of the research by two groups. This theme can be seen in Box 7.2, which will be examined below.

Box 7.2. Theme exhibited in one phase of the research

- Role Definitions in Families and Society

Role Definitions in Families and Society

(See Table 7.1 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

Of particular importance in the focus groups was that each group attempted to ensure that their role was clearly defined, which was new in phase 3, having not been previously defined. However mothers did not define their role. As mentioned in chapter 3, mothers felt that they had an internal concept of mothering (based on a variety of influences). In addition, the 'mother' is a defined category in the family, with a number of assumptions attached to this role (Goodrich, 1991; Hrdy, 1999; Philpot et al., 2009), and thus a combination of these considerations meant mothers did not re-define themselves in these contexts. However the other groups appeared to feel that they lacked definition in their role and thus attempted to provide information regarding their perceived function.

Fathers compared their roles to their perceptions of mothering. Role definitions were illustrated with fathers. Fathers compared themselves to mothers.
throughout the research, but most specifically in the focus groups. Fathers use three methods for defining their role: societal expectations, comparing their parenting abilities directly to mothers, and using gender norms. Using these three definitions for fathers’ roles implies that fathering as its own concept lacks a coherent meaning to fathers, and thus they attempt to assess themselves through various lenses, such as in comparison to mothers. In addition, by applying these gender based role definitions, fathers are able to be less capable without having it affect their sense of self or identities negatively (Featherstone, 2009; Silverstein, 1996). Furthermore by relying on gender roles fathers do not cognitively consider their responsibility in constructing these definitions. These definitions promote perpetuating that mothers are the parent and fathers must fit within this perception of the family. Because mothers are defined by society to be the nurturer (Philpot et al., 2009), fathers compare their understanding of nurturing to then definition of mothering. Due to the changing nature of society and fathers’ perceptions of themselves, an identity must be reached where they feel that fathering is not about being compared to mothering but instead about being a caretaker or coparent.144

Coparents’ roles and definitions were often defined by mothers. The coparents’ definitions of being a coparent, where mothers were able to define roles in that they were the ‘parent’ which was agreed upon by fathers, while fathers seemed to perceive themselves as the ‘coparent’. In considering this it is important to note that again, this perpetuates mothers centrality to families (Goodrich, 2003; Utting and Pugh, 2004), as the mothers seemed to define whether their partners were ‘coparents’ or not. However in considering this role definition within the context of fatherhood, it seems that fathers may be pleased to be in the second parent role. As the mother role was previously defined by mothers and/or society (Goodrich, 1991; Hrdy, 1999; Philpot et al., 2009), fathers are able to play the second parent role more easily than if the father role was defined. Therefore, previous gender roles of women as mothers, and men as providers, are upheld, rather than encouraging more equality, which research supports (Philpot et al., 2009).

144 Gender across stakeholder groups will be discussed in more depth below, under External Factors and Internalised Concepts of Parenting.
The definition or lack thereof may have issues related to gender relationship constructs. Parents expressed attempting to live a gender equal life. Philpot et al. (2009) suggest that gender is ‘a process of evolution’ (p. 150) in modern couples. Thus what can be observed here is that while couples may be attempting to be equal, they have no model of what this should resemble, creating gender related problems in some couples. Supporting this notion, Gerson (2002) argues that previous generations’ inflexible gender categories do not work for current day relationships, creating the need for a new framework for understanding how gender influences the family. With numerous societal changes, such as women going back to paid employment after becoming a mother, and some fathers being provided with the opportunity to stay home, the gender revolution has caused a need to redefine traditional boundaries. While parents regularly relied on gender as explanations for behaviour in the current research and previous studies (Nentwich, 2008; Philpot et al., 2009), parents also indicated that they attempted to use their own definitions as people within a couple. The partnership some parents indicated having may have assisted parents in their perceptions and gendered ideas.

Project worker played various roles to families with the primary aim of engaging families. Practitioners indicated a variety of roles they fit into and these influenced their programme delivery. One way to conceptualise project workers’ need for role definition was that they work with families in a variety of environments, and by defining their role they were setting the background for their work with families. They saw PAFT as only part of their mandate to communities, but also perceived a great deal of importance to their role with families. By defining their role more fully they were able to specifically state that within the societal context they saw their primary goal as supporting families, no matter whether through PAFT or other services. It is important to ensure that while PAFT is a mandated parenting programme, it is vital that project workers in any function ensure that they are attuned to parents’ and infants’ needs. It is also vital that practitioners are able to know when the parents and infants need more help than they are able to provide (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009). Brophy-Herb, Horodynski, Dupuis, Bocknek, Schiffman, Onaga, et al. (2009) support the current research that project workers often play numerous roles to families, and that practitioners should receive training in order to meet this need.
### Table 7.1

'Role Definitions in Families and Society' from Stakeholder Perspectives in One Phase (Phase 3: Focus Groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3 (Focus Groups)</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers suggested that they felt societal expectations based on roles but these were different to mothers' societal pressures</td>
<td>Mothers: Defining coparents: Mothers perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partners</td>
<td>Fathers: Defining coparents: Fathers perceptions of if and how they were coparents with their cohabitating partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations for fathering skills and abilities: These were connected to fathers' time with their children, gender role perceptions (e.g. 'natural' ideas of parenthood), and placed in comparison to mothering skills and abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrating PAFT project worker and family support worker roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme Stated in Two Phases of the Research

One theme was stated by at least two stakeholder groups across two phases of the research. This theme can be seen in Box 7.3, which will be examined below.

Box 7.3. Theme exhibited in two phases of the research
- Community and Service Support

Community and Service Support

(See Table 7.2 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

Stakeholders perceive that the community was a particularly important aspect of their lives, and thus it re-surfaced in phase 3 with a somewhat different focus from phase 1. Connections between parents and community services were heightened through PAFT involvement. PAFT's relationship to these other services provides parents with the confidence to participate in other services in the community.

Partnerships between parents and services promoted engagement. As mentioned previously, creating a partnership between parents and services is particularly important to service engagement. This research supports previous studies (Davis, 2009; Law et al., 2009) that found that a partnership between services, such as PAFT, and parents, particularly mothers, is central to programme participation and engagement in other services. However the current research expands on previous studies by finding that fathers' perceptions of this partnership are often indirect.

Coparents suggested that services did not exist for fathers and they wished they had more community support services dedicated to them. Coparents saw a societal shift toward including fathers in families, yet felt this was not illustrated through service provision.146 Both mothers and fathers expressed irritation at the lack of services for fathers and

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145 These were mentioned across all three phases by project workers but only two phases by the other groups. Therefore the project worker findings from the two phases will be discussed here, because as mentioned above, only if a theme is considered by at least two groups of stakeholders will it be included in this chapter.
146 This may be the case because many of the coparents who participated perceived the fathers' positively.
coparents together. Various parents reported barriers to fathers' inclusion (e.g. fathers being in paid employment during the day, not being interested in attending by themselves, etc). This created an additional issue in that mothers were forced into the role as a mediator between services and fathers, which caused strain on mothers. Therefore mothers were required to act as a gatekeeper (or opener) for the fathers' inclusion. As a result, parents indicated that they would like more services in the future that included fathers.

**Project workers and mothers valued community support.** Community support remained important to project workers across phases, most likely due to it being the framework they were required to exist within and a necessity of PAFT programme objectives. Mothers valued the connection between PAFT and community resources, not simply community resources in and of themselves. If mothers had PAFT support, mothers were able to be referred and access a variety of services they otherwise suggested they would not have. In addition, mothers and project workers expressed an importance for outreach by PAFT in supporting the community. Research supports their perspectives, by stating that integration of services is key and making services as easily accessible to parents as possible is encouraged by engaging in outreach within the community (McKay et al., 2006; Wall et al., 2005). Both groups saw PAFT as being able to provide a variety of assistance and support in the community contexts.
Table 7.2

'Community and Service Support' from Stakeholder Perspectives in Two Phases (Phases 1: Interviews; and 3: Focus Groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Mothers valued connections between PAFT, community resources and the overall community network</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coparents felt unsatisfied with services with both parents feeling that fathers were excluded and mothers being forced to act as a gatekeeper to service information</td>
<td>Project workers valued community resources and outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Interviews)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Community support for mothering was important for mothers’ experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers: Service adjustment: For fathers to be able to support mothers, service provision modifications were crucial</td>
<td>Project workers perceptions of engaging with families in the community and relationships to community services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus Groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes Stated in Three Phases of the Research

Five themes were stated by at least two stakeholder groups across all phases of the research. The themes are stated in Box 7.4, and each will be examined in turn below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 7.4. Themes exhibited in all three phases of the research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Family Relationships Change and Develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External Factors and Internalised Concepts of Parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Process of Change in Parenting Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAFT Information and Programme Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project Worker-Family Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Relationships Change and Develop

(See Table 7.3 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

Family relationships were highly important to all stakeholder groups across all phases. All groups have slightly different perceptions of the influence of family relationships on parenting practices. It is important to remember that family relationships operate within several subsystems such as the marital, coparenting, mother-child and father-child relationship. Morrill et al. (2010) found that in some cases parents were parenting well as individuals but not as coparents. They suggest that this is due to marital functioning, which in turn decreases overall family functioning, suggesting an important connection to coparenting.

Mothers and fathers were influenced differently by children. Mothers valued the relationships between individual dyads and the family as a whole. In considering mothers’ perceptions of these relationships, it was seen that mothers’ attributions about their children were found to be associated with a variety of aspects of parenting, which is supported by previous research (Okagaki and Bingham, 2005; Raviv, Sharvit, Raviv, and Rosenblat-Stein, 2009). Mothers did not suggest any connection between children and mothering involvement.

In contrast, fathers highly valued their relationship with their child and viewed it as
promoting change in fathering. Perhaps due to fathers' initial feeling of helplessness at parenting (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Diamond, 2007; Fagerskiold, 2008), fathers reported being more amazed by and interested in their children than the other stakeholders. Furthermore, fathers perceived that their relationship with their child was an important element for promoting change in fathering. Therefore children played a role in promoting positive parenting practices for fathers. Research supports this, with McBride, Schoppe, and Rane (2002) finding that father's perceptions of his children influenced father involvement.

Coparents, mothers, and fathers have differing relationships within the family. Coparents reported that the differing relationships within their family enabled parents to complement one another's unique strengths, which is supported by literature (Kraemer, 1995). When investigating coparenting, both mothers and fathers saw family relationships as influencing parenting, which is supported in the literature. For example, Lindsey et al. (2005) found that fathers were more supportive of mothers' parenting practices than mothers were of fathers, and Kolak and Volling (2007) suggest that fathers who express positive emotions protect the couple from negative coparenting patterns.

In the current research mothers saw coparenting as influencing their perspectives of their partner and the coparenting relationship. They suggest that the underlying perceptions of their relationship influenced their coparenting practices. Mothers reported that their perceptions of coparenting can either create a deeper connection between the parents or push them apart. Similarly fathers suggested numerous challenges and supportive aspects in their coparenting relationships.

Parenting satisfaction varied in mothering, fathering, and coparenting perspectives. Parenting satisfaction was not related to fathering, but was related to various aspects of mothering but not mothering as a coparent. A relationship appears between fathering as a coparent and parenting satisfaction. A particularly important issue is that the current research, and some evidence from past research, indicates that fathers are less able to

147 Discussed in more depth below in 'Process of Change in Parenting Practices'.
separate their feelings about their partner from their child than mothers (Featherstone, 2009; Lindahl and Malik, 1999; Parke et al., 2005). It also goes in the other direction, that those fathers who participate in child-driven tasks have more positive marriages. Kalmijn (1999) found that fathers have more stable marriages if they are involved with children, due to mothers feeling more satisfied in their couple relationships. The current research indicates that when mothers saw fathers as participating in parenting, they were more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction. Thus if both parents participate in caretaking, parents have higher rates of satisfaction.

**Project workers** perceive assisting parents within family relationships. Project workers perceived family relationships to be of the utmost importance as they only saw the family within its relationships. Furthermore by entering parents’ home environment, PAFT took place in the situational context that the parent existed. Project workers were particularly aware that they needed to exist within the family relationships, and thus understanding this was central to offering families individual and practical levels of support.

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148 For continuity and clarity project workers in context will be discussed below under Process of Change.
### Table 7.3

*Family Relationships Change and Develop* from Stakeholder Perspectives in All Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 (Interviews)</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother Findings</strong></td>
<td>Family as a whole: Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems which were valued by PAFT</td>
<td>Father-child relationships were changing and highly valued, with fathers viewing their children as an active participant in the relationship</td>
<td>Individual mother, father and child relationships differed and could complement one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coparent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2 (Questionnaire)</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers’ perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</strong></td>
<td>Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship</td>
<td>Mothers: Coparenting influences family relationships</td>
<td>Fathers: Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
<td>Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coparent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3 (Focus Groups)</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers’ perceived behaviours and cognitions influenced the entire family</strong></td>
<td>The father-child relationship was highly regarded by fathers, and fathers expressed desire for and involvement with their children</td>
<td>Mothers: Individual family relationships developed over time between coparents and parents and children</td>
<td>Fathers: Individual family relationships developed over time between parents and children</td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meeting families needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coparent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
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</table>

Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged conflict, cooperation and obtaining support from their coparent

Underlying perceptions toward partner encouraged conflict, cooperation and obtaining support from their coparent

PAFT and project workers meeting families needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole

Engaging children played an important role in providing a port of entry for support workers into families
External Factors (e.g. work-life balance, societal expectations etc.) and Internalised Concepts of Parenting

(See Table 7.4 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

Across all three phases, stakeholders discussed parents’ perceived internal and external issues that influenced their parenting. These ranged from domestic responsibilities, to societal expectations, to internalised concepts of parenting responsibilities. This particular theme presents a varying and complex dynamic within which the stakeholders perceived parenting as existing in two domains that the stakeholders must negotiate.

**Fathers, coparents, and project workers were largely affected by external factors.** External influences affected fathers, coparents and project workers, but were not mentioned by mothers. However mothers’ perceptions of these external influences gained importance within the coparenting relationship. This indicates that mothers feel the pressure of external factors within the coparenting environments, but express this less when considering themselves as exclusively mothers. The coparenting relationship was affected by a number of external factors, such as stress, employment, caretaking, and various domestic tasks. Numerous studies indicate mothers take on more responsibility in the household and in childcare than fathers (Craig, 2006; Hochschild and Machung, 1997). Therefore it appears that mothers as coparents are expressing a need for assistance from their partner, while fathers as coparents have other difficulties influencing their perceptions of parenting, such as paid employment.

**Internalised concepts and external pressures were exerted on fathers and mothers.** Fathers appeared to be affected by their employment in all aspects of the family and programme participation. The internal and external factors influence fathers on both ends of the spectrum. More than the other groups, fathers appeared influenced by the strain between the external and internal influences on parenting (e.g. work expectations versus personal desires/choices) across all three phases. This was supported by fathers discussing the need for employment, even though they would prefer to be at home with their children.
More than other groups, mothers indicated a causal understanding between their internal worlds and perceptions of external experiences. Mothers suggested that they had an internalised idea of what a mother was and attempted to fit within this perception. They also reported that they felt an external stress from society about being a mother, and thus their internal stress seemed based on their understanding of societal expectations. They perceived that this conceptual understanding influenced their mothering practices.

**Project worker supported families’ perceptions of internal and external influences.** Project workers suggested that in order to understand parents, they must be able to meet the families’ needs, including assisting them if they perceived pressure from internalised concepts and external factors regarding parenting. Project workers also considered these external factors only within the context of the family; thus if the family discussed these factors, they were explored, however if families did not discuss them, they were not examined. Therefore project workers believed they held the unique opportunity to support the parents’ perceptions if and when internalised or external factors were affecting them. Some research indicates that when project workers invest in assisting mothers with numerous issues, the mothers are more likely to engage in positive parenting (Beckwith, 2005). Therefore by assisting mothers as coparents with these factors, the project workers are more likely to support mothers.

**Stakeholders’ perspectives had contrasting views of social support.** All stakeholders groups mentioned the social network, including families of origins, and the effect these can have on parenting practices. In particular project workers saw social networks as typically positive and actively encouraged social support between mothers through group meetings. In contrast to previous research (Bornstein et al., 2006; Zubrick et al., 2006), mothers did not perceive having a social network as always positive. While mothers indicated they felt that some social support was positive, they also explained that social networks could be negative, particularly other mothers that made mothering competitive. Some coparents suggested that they could overcome the negative feelings mothers had through the fathers’ support. If fathers assisted mothers by addressing their concerns from other parents, mothers felt less apprehensive. Therefore fathers acted as a
mediator between mothers’ concerns and social networks. Fathers expressed less dichotomy in their perspectives than mothers, but this may be due to feeling less pressured by mothers in their parenting. Fathers primarily saw other people as supportive, including their families of origin and social networks.

Gender perceptions influenced parents’ worldviews of internalised concepts and external factors. Across each of the phases and in the above explanations, gender is an undercurrent that organises much of the parents’ thinking. Gender persisted in parents’ perceptions, maintaining an importance to parents, however possibly more so with fathers. Fathers discussed and considered themselves in relation to the mother of their child far more than the other groups. Gender roles in parenting can be taken for granted, with fathers taking the breadwinner role, and mothers taking the role of caretaking and housework (Nentwich, 2008). It is imperative that parents consider possibilities and make cognitive choices rather than relying on societal set standards for long term parenting and relationship satisfaction. As long as society considers mothers the parent upon which children’s health is dependent, parents will continue to be denied the opportunity regarding choices in their responsibility for children. In considering the current research, families often remain based on stereotypically family roles, and it should be noted a combination of factors played a role in this such as the work-family balance and perceived societal expectations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 (Interviews)</th>
<th><strong>Mother Findings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Father Findings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coparent Findings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Project Worker Findings</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-other interaction: Mothers perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them</td>
<td>Fathers juggled various aspects of their lives particularly the work-life balance Social support and generational influences affected fathering</td>
<td>Domestic responsibilities and paid employment: External factors impacted on coparents relationships which required parents to negotiate together The role of other people in influencing the coparenting relationship and individual parents</td>
<td>The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers Societal influences on parenting: Parenting in society changes and project workers reported that services must adapt to meet families’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 (Questionnaires)</td>
<td>Conceptual understanding of mothering Perceived societal pressure and other people’s influence on mothering</td>
<td>Internal and external factors that shape fathers’ involvement with their children</td>
<td><strong>Mothers:</strong> Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family <strong>Fathers:</strong> Societal and family perspectives shape fathers’ coparenting</td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families’ individual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 (Focus Groups)</td>
<td>Mothers internalised societal discourses about mothering</td>
<td>Fathers needed to juggle various elements in their lives, including the work-life balance Learning and support from others was an important aspect to fathering</td>
<td><strong>Mothers:</strong> Various factors such as family roles and domestic responsibilities influenced the coparenting relationship</td>
<td><strong>Fathers:</strong> Various factors such as employment, family roles and domestic responsibilities influenced the coparenting relationship and fathers’ coparenting in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meeting families’ needs was related to valuing their context including the family as a whole</td>
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</table>
Process of Change in Parenting Practices

(See Figure 7.5 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

Numerous factors shaped process of change in parenting and coparenting practices. By understanding specific stakeholder perspectives, the research was able to extract factors that contributed to the process of change in parenting for stakeholder groups. This was an exceedingly complex dimension with different ‘active ingredients’ (Dallos and Vetere, 2005) promoting the process of change for each group. Process of change was strongly related to a number of other concepts and themes described throughout the current research, making it a particularly multifaceted aspect of stakeholders’ perspectives.

**Context is vital to promoting change in parents.** Context is seen across phases as important to stakeholders. It is a crucial underlying framework for process of change for all stakeholders’ groups, particularly in relation to family relationships and external and internal factors that influence parenting (both discussed above). Only through understanding specific factors in parents’ contexts can change be encouraged in parenting practices. Stakeholders saw PAFT as identifying the families’ unique needs and then promoting change specifically with that family. Research supports this finding. For instance, Law et al. (2009) found that only by understanding the context within which the family exists can services provide support.

The coparenting relationship also required support from PAFT. Project workers intended, and often accomplished, supporting the coparenting relationship although they reported that this was difficult in some cases. Research indicates the importance of practitioners supporting this relationship (Feinberg et al., 2009; McHale, 2007). Barrows (2003; 2009) argues that an intervention can only be effective if both parents are involved. He suggests that parents often play into one another’s difficulties, meaning that they become unable to resolve issues together. Therefore PAFT offering concrete support assists parents in working together.

**Fathers indicated several contributors to change in fathering practices.** Fathers had various opinions on promoting their change in parenting practices. A central aspect of
fathers' process of change is set within a specific context of family relationships, while other issues such as time allocated to fathering, increasing knowledge and confidence further contributed to this process. Fathers also reported that they needed trial and error in caretaking their children to promote change. Fathers saw their relationship with their children as central to their change in parenting practices. The other issue that fathers saw contributing was their transition to fatherhood, which in many cases appeared to be about time. But as mentioned previously, this may be due to becoming a father through mothers and having to invent new identities of fatherhood, while mothers already had these detailed through societal expectations and internalised concepts. The current research suggests that flexibility in perceptions is central to fathering and adjusting after the transition to fatherhood.

Mothers and fathers integrated their sense of self in parenting. The process of change toward integration of the sense of self in becoming mothers and fathers is another key difference in their perceptions. Mothers discussed the change being internal, through realisation and integrating their internalised concept of mothering with their mothering in a more practical sense. Fathers reported needing to address their own sense of self through adapting their personality to fit the role. Perhaps because fathers continued to engage in the workplace or have a more public life than mothers (Diamond, 2007; Featherstone, 2009; Silverstein, 1996), fathers described a different process for changing their parenting practices that relied more heavily on personal characteristics. Therefore programmes that can consider differences such as these are more likely to support positive parenting for both parents.

Process of change in coparents involved two people and the developing coparenting alliance. Coparents were slightly different from the other stakeholders in that their process of change took place as a couple rather than as oneself. They suggested that the change was based on working together, which is important to various aspects of the couple relationship (Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Parke et al., 2005). In the current research mothers as coparents perceived change in parenting practices to occur primarily out of their adapting coparenting relationship. However, fathers saw this as more broad-ranging, seeing

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149 Discussed in more depth above in 'Family Relationships'.

345
their change primarily occurring due to family relationships more generally. The current research and previous studies indicate that by having a strong connection within the couple, they will adapt and support one another in developing the coparenting alliance (Diamond, 2007; Gottman and Gottman, 2007). Furthermore it seems likely that if a positive coparenting alliance exists, fathers will be more likely to participate in the family and PAFT.

**Programme elements influenced project workers’ and mothers’ perceptions of change.** Project workers’ perceptions of process of change relied more heavily on programme elements than the other groups. They felt that the programme played a key role in parents’ process of change over time, through empowerment, collaboration, including the whole family and flexibility. Furthermore in contrast to the parent stakeholders, project workers focussed on engaging and maintaining families in their programme as a positive strategy for promoting change. In addition, the project worker-family relationship is vital to process of change in parenting practices, in which mothers agreed. Mothers emphasised the role of PAFT as being a core aspect of their change in parenting practices. As they were the primary participants in the programme it seems that mothers attributed a great deal more of their change in parenting practices to PAFT than fathers or coparents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project Worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Interviews)</td>
<td>Process of change in mothering: Mothers perceived various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours, overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses</td>
<td>Process of change in fathering practices included masculine discourses and the integration of being a father with the sense of self</td>
<td>Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the developing family relationships leading to the coparenting alliance</td>
<td>Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship</td>
<td>Mothers: The coparents’ relationship develops and changes over time</td>
<td>The context of the family as a whole in understanding and thus, helping families was appreciated by project workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Questionnaires)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Men's assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours</td>
<td>Fathers: Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Various factors contributed to mothers' process of change including mothers' internal concept of mothering and experiences with PAFT</td>
<td>Process of change in fathering practices was based on various components such as family relationships, paternal discourses, and the fathers' sense of self as a parent</td>
<td>Mothers: Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance</td>
<td>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus Groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers: Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the mother-father relationship and the coparenting alliance</td>
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</table>

Process of change in parenting practices' from stakeholder perspectives in all phases.
PAFT Information and Programme Elements

(See Table 7.6 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)

All groups perceived PAFT components as beneficial, offering them a number of positive opportunities, such as seeing the good in their parenting (often mothering), building a social support network, and signposting to additional support services when necessary.

Stakeholders differed in that they saw different aspects of PAFT contributing to parenting which was, particularly dependent on whether or not they attended home visits.

**PAFT assists parents in family relationships.** Each group felt that PAFT assisted parents in their family relationships, even though the processes may be different for each group of stakeholders. Mothers perceived PAFT as assisting their relationships with their child, project workers saw PAFT as supporting the parents’ relationship with one another and their children. Fathers reported that PAFT assisted their relationship with their partner and their child. Coparents saw PAFT supporting the coparenting relationship which they perceived as supporting the parent-child relationship.

**Mothers are the gateway to both parents’ PAFT participation.** All stakeholders reported, particularly the coparents, that mothers are the gateway to fathers’ participation. This research indicated that mothers decided father involvement. However different mechanisms for this are proposed, such as mothers pushed into the role of gatekeeper due to service design, time with their children and their children being active participants. This may be more of a construct that is forced onto mothers by society and services than a deliberate intention by mothers for fathers’ exclusion. The mother must provide the information to the father for PAFT to influence parent perspectives. Therefore PAFT becomes a symptom of the problems that parents are having when mothers do not provide information to the fathers. Research has found that the family system is underpinned by gender roles but Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) argue that fathers with more equalitarian perspectives are more likely to be involved. Therefore interventions can promote father involvement by suggesting more equal caregiving options and equalitarian gender ideologies. PAFT project workers also indicated that they attempted to assist both parents but knew in some cases this would not be strategically advantageous and that including one parent is
better than being denied access to the family. The current research supports in various ways that the family as a whole is an important concept to understand and for services to operate, particularly as project workers’ main aim was to engage with the family.

Mothers and project workers positively perceived programme elements. PAFT information and programme elements were important, particularly for mothers’ and project workers’ perspectives. They both saw various programme components as supporting families. Mothers particularly felt that the information- and empowerment-based models supported their parenting. Project workers saw that several elements combined particularly to engage and maintain families to meet their specific needs. Project workers discussed children as a port of entry to family relationships, unlike other groups, although mothers mentioned briefly that their children’s enjoyment continued to engage them. This is supported by previous research that indicates parents are more likely to feel comfortable engaging through their children (Guedeney and Lebovici, 1997; Karamat-Ali, 2010). Considering the inclusiveness of the mother and project workers, it is important to be reminded that PAFT involves promoting inclusiveness and intends to lack stigma, which assists families in participation.

Fathers and coparents saw PAFT programme elements as supportive. Both fathers and coparents felt that various programme elements supported them in their parenting. They particularly appreciated the handouts, conversation with the mother about parenting, and the project worker-mother/child relationships. Numerous studies indicate the importance of including fathers and coparents in programmes. One compelling case indicates that when comparing mothers and fathers, mothers are more likely to neglect their children, and fathers (or substitute fathers) are more likely to physically abuse children (Guterman et al., 2009). Therefore comparing their perspectives can better encourage positive parenting practices through programme participation. Through PAFT’s attempts to include both parents, the transition to parenting and family relationships can be assisted through encouraging couplehood by promoting coparenting practices.
Mothers and fathers indicated that PAFT increased their knowledge, confidence, abilities, and action in parenting. Through PAFT programme participation, parents felt they had more knowledge, confidence, abilities, and positive actions in their parenting practices. By increasing these parenting perspectives, PAFT supports parents, making them more skilled in their parenting practices, which enables parents to support their children. The current research and previous studies suggests that by increasing fathers' skill-base, mothers could be supported by fathers (Feldman, 2007; Parke et al., 2005) and both parents can parent more positively (Caldera and Lindsey, 2006; Gottman and Gottman, 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 (Interviews)</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project worker Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as, information and the empowerment-based model</td>
<td>PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation</td>
<td>PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents</td>
<td>Various programme elements aided families in the process of change in parenting practices and family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 (Questionnaires)</td>
<td>PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</td>
<td>Increased knowledge, confidence, abilities and action</td>
<td>Increased knowledge, confidence, abilities and action</td>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers: PAFT influences coparenting and the family</td>
<td>Fathers: PAFT assists coparenting practices</td>
<td>Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers</td>
<td>Supporting families in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers saw PAFT as being inclusive of all parents who need advice and/or support</td>
<td>Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 (Focus Groups)</td>
<td>Numerous PAFT programme elements promoted positive mothering practices including increasing mothers' knowledge, ability, confidence, and action</td>
<td>PAFT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability and action</td>
<td>Mothers: PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support but mothers were the primary participants</td>
<td>Process of change in parents was related to various programme elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers felt a sense of loss when PAFT stopped due to the support PAFT provided</td>
<td>Discussions, handouts, and individual circumstances: Specific details regarding how mothers perceived their role in deciding fathers' involvement with children and PAFT</td>
<td>Fathers: PAFT information and project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support. However father's involvement was typically promoted through the mother</td>
<td>Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and project worker-family relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project Worker-Family Relationships
(See Table 7.7 for findings from stakeholder chapters by each phase)
Each stakeholder group perceived the relationship between the family and project worker as crucial to programme involvement and process of change. Furthermore, all groups used PAFT and project worker as synonymous. Due to the value each group placed on the relationship between the project worker and the family, the project worker was a representative of the programme. Therefore stakeholder groups indicate that a complex association operated between the project worker as the programme and PAFT as the programme. In this research, both the parents and project workers saw their relationship as central to the programme. It could be proposed that without a positive relationship between family and project worker programme, elements become unimportant.

Mothers and project workers had positive perceptions of their relationship.
The project worker-family relationship was central to both mothers' and project workers' perspectives. They both saw this relationship as vital to programme engagement, participation, and change over time, which is supported by literature (Pharis and Levin, 1991; Stolk et al., 2008). Brophy-Herb et al. (2009) found that project workers spent a great deal of time building up this relationship in order to address issues with mothers.

Fathers' perceptions of the project worker-family relationship depended on their direct involvement. This theme was particularly influenced by fathers' direct participation in home visits with project workers or indirect involvement through mothers. If fathers were unable to attend visits, they appreciated the project worker-mother and child relationship through the mothers' perceptions of the project worker. By regarding this relationship as positive, fathers felt that the project worker-mother relationship encouraged their involvement in the programme, such that by hearing positive reports, they were more likely to attempt to attend a visit (if at all possible) and consider the resources offered. If the fathers were able to attend home visits, they felt positive that the project worker treated them with respect and inclusiveness by talking to the parents together, which promoted the project worker-father relationship.
Coparents perceived the project worker-family relationship as similar to programme elements. Coparents’ perceptions of the project worker-family relationships were important in that the project worker was perceived as an aspect of programme. Coparents perceived the relationship as equally important with other programme elements, rather than separate from one another. Possibly due to the varying means by which coparents received PAFT (directly or indirectly), this relationship was important in considering engagement and change for coparenting practices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 (Interviews)</th>
<th>Mother Findings</th>
<th>Father Findings</th>
<th>Coparent Findings</th>
<th>Project worker Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement over time and mothers' perceived success</td>
<td>PAFT encouraged fathering practices and participation</td>
<td>PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents</td>
<td>Family-project worker connection was vital for engaging, maintaining and promoting change in families: Developing the relationship with the family was a central aspect for promoting involvement in PAFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 (Questionnaires)</td>
<td>Family support, including the project worker-family relationship provides encouragement to mothers</td>
<td>Project worker relationship with families and fathers</td>
<td>Mothers: PAFT influences coparenting and the family</td>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 (Focus Groups)</td>
<td>Family-project worker/PAFT connections were vital to mothers' participation in the programme</td>
<td>PAFT encouraged and supported father involvement in the family and programme through specific factors, and increasing knowledge, confidence, ability and action</td>
<td>Mothers:</td>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fathers: PAFT assists coparenting practices</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fathers:</td>
<td>Various aspects of PAFT as a programme promoted engaging and maintaining families particularly the project worker characteristics and project worker-family relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers: PAFT information and project worker-family connection promoted coparenting through inclusion, information and support. However father's involvement was typically promoted through the mother</td>
<td>The process of developing worker-family relationship was central to all other elements of project workers' roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

In considering the comparisons between themes from each of the three phases of the research by each stakeholder group above, two underlying concepts are seen throughout their perceptions: context and gender roles. These findings indicate that only through considering the families’ contextual circumstances can they be supported and an ecological understanding of the findings be contemplated. Gender played a central role in parents’ explanations and perceptions of families. To promote father involvement in the family and parenting programmes, a shift in society could helpfully occur toward offering new fathers opportunities and having expectations of father inclusion. While some research indicates that working with families is the best way to make these societal changes (Goodrich, 1991; Parke et al., 2005), the current research argues that at societal, community, and family levels these changes need to be considered. Rather than comparing fathering to mothering, a unified approach to what parenting could be considered. Overall these comparisons illuminate a number of important points from within families to the community and wider society levels that need to be considered in further research and implementation of parenting programmes.

Self-Reflexivity

Numerous comparisons occurred throughout the research and I often found myself making them. The comparisons and consideration for the other parent happened frequently in my discussions with parents. One example of this was illustrated in the individual mother and father questionnaires. In all but one of the mother interviews, I had to specifically ask about fathers, whereas fathers mentioned mothers almost immediately when we started to chat. Perhaps this is due to fathers becoming parents through mothers, which was a framework for their understanding, but by doing this, parents illustrated to me that the mother was the primary caregiver to their children, and the father was secondary.
Chapter 8: Discussion
Implications, Critique, and the Way Forward

Introduction
The current research investigated stakeholders' perspectives on family relationships and the influence of parenting support programmes on parenting practices using a bottom-up evaluation. One main message of the findings is that by understanding the relationship between the stakeholders and parenting programmes, programmes can empower parents and develop family relationships. Additionally, examining the stakeholders' experiences with programmes can assist future research, policy, and parent support programmes by allowing Children's Centres to choose strategies that encourage positive parenting.

This final chapter is a general discussion of the overall evaluation, placing the findings and overall research into context. It begins by briefly stating the findings in relation to the research questions mentioned in chapter 1. The chapter then describes the implications for policy, practice, and training perspectives. A critique of the methods follows, examining both the research's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the discussion ends by exploring the way forward and drawing some final conclusions.

Summary of Findings Related to the Research Questions
In chapter 1, five research questions were identified based on previous research, the theoretical framework, and the political context in which parenting programmes are being delivered. The findings were explored in the individual stakeholder chapters (mothers, fathers, coparents, project workers) and the comparison chapter. The relationship

150 Please see chapter 3, Mothers, for a more in-depth discussion of each finding.
151 Please see chapter 4, Fathers, for a more in-depth discussion of each finding.
152 Please see chapter 5, Coparents, for a more in-depth discussion of each finding.
153 Please see chapter 6, Project Workers, for a more in-depth discussion of each finding.
154 Please see chapter 7, Comparisons, for a more in-depth discussion of each finding's connection to other groups' findings.
between these findings and each of the research questions will be briefly summarised in turn below. Each of these was considered from stakeholders’ perspectives.

Research Question 1: How do parents’ perspectives on parenting influence their involvement in, and understanding of, parent support programmes?

This question was addressed in a number of ways across the various groups and phases. Findings indicated that parents’ perspectives on their own parenting and their role as a parent influences their participation in parenting programmes. One key way that this was illustrated was through parents’ internalised concepts of parenting and how external factors (e.g. work-family balance, perceived societal expectations) influenced both their perceptions of parenting and thus, their involvement with parenting programmes. The current research found support for previous arguments indicating that without understanding parents’ perspectives on parenting, it becomes impossible to understand parent programme involvement (Kane et al., 2007; Lloyd, 1999; Sanders et al., 2010). Furthermore by understanding perceptions of parenting, more can be ascertained about promoting and sustaining change in parenting practices (Roth and Fonagy, 2005). In other words by understanding parents’ perspectives of parenting, programmes are more able and likely to engage parents. Furthermore, by assisting parents with their internalised perceptions, programmes can encourage more positive perspectives of children and parenting which supports the process of change.

Research Question 2: What factors are involved in the process of change in parenting practices and coparenting practices?

The current research found support for previous arguments indicating that it is important to know how change occurred in parenting practices, not simply that it did (Cowen, 2001; Weiss, 1998). It was found that different groups needed different support to promote changes in parenting practices. Therefore each stakeholder might be influenced to varying degrees by particular programme elements. For example, addressing societal pressure may be crucial to some parents but less so to other parents. Stakeholders declared that a variety of elements promoted the process of change for parents. These included PAFT, family relationships, a shared platform for parenting, and social networks. In specifically
considering PAFT, stakeholders reported that several programme components contributed to changes toward positive parenting, such as understanding the family as individuals within a whole, and creating connections between the project worker and the family. However it remains essential that these are considered within two elements: context and individual differences. The various influences mentioned by stakeholders must be considered within the context in which they exist, such that different elements of parenting are considered within their environment. Stakeholders perceived that PAFT was meeting the families’ needs by identifying the family’s unique needs and then promoting the necessary elements for change within that family. Thus process of change is about providing specific support, within flexible programmes, to parents based on their needs within their context.

Research Question 3: What influence do parenting programmes have on family roles (e.g. role of mother, father, etc)?

The current research found that parenting programmes, such as PAFT, attempt to assist families with their role development. By providing information and support, PAFT is able to encourage parents to maintain multiple roles within their environment. Some research indicates that multiple roles in the family are beneficial for family health (for summary see Barnett and Hyde, 2001). Therefore when parents are able to take on a variety of roles, the family will function more positively, particularly through parents’ capability in a caretaking role. In addition, the current research supported previous research that when parents felt capable in their roles in the family, more positive relating took place (Lindsey et al., 2005; McHale, Kazali, et al., 2004). It did not appear that PAFT was intending to uphold gender roles by visiting with only mothers, in cases where this occurred. Instead, due to current service provision, mothers were primarily the ones who received visits. That said, by providing fathers with information, even if through mothers, fathers could become more involved in caretaking. Mothers appeared to parent more than fathers, but this may have been due to a knowledge gap and/or time available as mentioned in other studies (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Fagerskiold, 2008; Featherstone, 2009). PAFT, however, provided knowledge, which in turn supported fathers and thus, mothers. Roles may still be in the process of negotiation, with many parents expressing a mother-father divide. As found in other studies (Fraenkel, 2003; Haddock et al., 2003; Walker, 1999), gender roles were
sometimes 'traditional' after the transition to parenthood, but parents did not always perceive this negatively. Many mothers reported that they did not see themselves as inferior to their partners and they reported having a partnership. Perhaps this meant that roles were defined more fully by the couple and less by societal expectations of family roles.

Research Question 4: What influence do parenting programmes have on family relationships (e.g. quality of relating in marital/coparents/parent-child relationships)?
Throughout this research all groups indicated the importance of the family relationships as a whole at either the theoretical or practical level, and perceived PAFT as supporting their relationships. Mothers were regarded as central to family dynamics, as previously mentioned (Goodrich, 2003; Utting and Pugh, 2004), fathers were influenced by their family relationships regarding involvement, coparents were influenced by one another and their family relationships, and project workers reported being aware of the need to operate within family relationships. While the importance of the family as a whole is not disputed here, it remains crucial to understand stakeholder groups. Due to the differences expressed by various stakeholder groups, it is essential that programmes attempt to understand individual family members in the context of their own experiences and perspectives. For instance, if fathers' change in parenting practices is affected by their relationship with their children as indicated in this research, programmes, such as PAFT, are likely to support fathers by giving them the skills to engage fully with their children.

Research Question 5: What are the connections between parents and community services?
The current research found several connections between parents and the community. The primary two connections were: stakeholders valued the collaborative relationships between themselves and services (1) and stakeholders expressed an appreciation for the integration of services in the community (2). Parents and project workers valued their connections with the community, especially with regard to PAFT involvement. Parents were likely to access and accept the help of various community services due to PAFT's positive connection to other services, which enabled families' needs to be met. This supported previous research that
creating partnerships between the families and the community makes parents more likely to access services and have their needs met (Barlow et al., 2003; Manby, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). This suggests that PAFT and project workers should ensure that they maintain positive associations with the community and services. However, stakeholders felt that more service provision with inclusion for fathers and coparents would improve parents’ parenting together. The current research also supported previous research regarding service integration (McKay et al., 2006; Park and Turnbull, 2003) and services’ appreciation for the community context (Law et al., 2009; Sanders, Prinz, and Shapiro, 2009; Wall et al., 2005). Parents were assisted in the community, due to the service integration and services, like PAFT, grasping the community context.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Training

Interaction between stakeholders’ perspectives and parenting programmes is complex and multi-dimensional. Engaging with and considering stakeholder perspectives were essential aspects of this evaluation. Perceptions were vital to understanding stakeholder experiences. By understanding how stakeholders perceived their relationships within families and PAFT, a more in-depth understanding was obtained. Home visiting as an entity is known as being difficult to measure (Gomby, 1999; Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004), but by aiming to understand stakeholder perspectives, a well-rounded picture of the support can be achieved (see Figure 8.1 for a conceptual representation of the way the implications fit together in the framework of the current research). These findings have numerous implications (see Box 8.1), five of which are described below in three categories:

- **Practice.** The practice section addresses specific findings that should be executed in direct work with families. It details a number of ways in which programmes can more fully support families within a practical application of the findings.

- **Policy.** Policy agendas typically focus on general concepts that Children’s Centres should aim to achieve, such as promoting resilience in families, engaging fathers, supporting parents, and suggesting goals. However, these are typically ill-defined objectives with very little information stating how to implement the agendas in
context. The relationship between the findings and current government agendas is considered in the policy section below.

- Training. The training section below describes how the findings can be used to prepare practitioners in parenting programmes to support families more fully. It will concentrate specifically on issues of which services and practitioners should be aware.

Box 8.1. Implications for practice, policy, and training explored in depth below

Implication 1: Parenting is complex and influenced by various factors including dynamic interactions between parents' internal perceptions and societal expectations, that can strain positive parenting practices
Implication 2: Supporting families in their context is the best way for programmes to meet families' needs as programmes operate within and influence family relationships, the community, and wider societal frameworks
Implication 3: Programmes should aim to meet families' needs through flexibility and variety in their programme elements, particularly in the individualised support of families
Implication 4: Family roles and relationships influence parenting programme engagement and participation
Implication 5: Project worker-family relationship is vital to engaging and promoting change in parenting practices and families' relationships
Parenting is complex and influenced by various factors including dynamic interactions between parents' internal perceptions and societal expectations, that can strain positive parenting practices.

Supporting families in their context is the best way for programmes to meet families' needs, as programmes operate within and influence family relationships, the community, and wider societal frameworks.

Programmes should aim to meet families' needs through flexibility and variety in their programme elements, particularly in the individualised support of families.

Figure 8.1: Hypothetical connections between systemic levels of implications from the findings.

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<th>LEGEND</th>
<th>LARGE ELLIPSE</th>
<th>THE CONTEXT AT THE SOCIETAL LEVEL WITHIN WHICH PROGRAMMES EXIST.</th>
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<td>MEDIUM ELLIPSES</td>
<td>THE COMMUNITY AND GENERAL FAMILY CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH PROGRAMMES EXIST.</td>
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Implication 1: Parenting is complex and influenced by various factors including dynamic interactions between parents’ internal perceptions and societal expectations, that can strain positive parenting practices.

Society is experiencing a great number of changes, with varying family structure, increased globalisation, moving farther from family support systems, and fathers taking a more involved role in the family. Within these changing times, parenting has become more complex, with fathers attempting new identities, coparents struggling to negotiate their relationships with few positive examples, and mother-blame continuing within society. This creates an important wide-ranging, societal framework for parenting and parenting programmes.

**PRACTICE.** Due to the complex nature of parenting and numerous influences, practice in parenting programmes should be about promoting awareness and supportive relationships for parents.

**Stress and parenting.** The numerous adjustments influencing parents in their family relationships, communities and wider societal perceptions can put stress on families. Parents expressed that the stress included a number of influencing factors, such as internal perceptions of being a parent, particularly mothers, the work-life balance and social support changing. Research supports that parents have various internal assumptions (Walsh, 2006) and external factors affecting them (Heath, 2004; Kotchick, Shaffer, Dorsey, and Forehand, 2004; Luster and Okagaki, 2005), and these factors can exert a great deal of stress on parents, particularly at transitions (Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery, 1999). Therefore these influences need to be addressed and examined in practice.

**Consider families’ needs in developing and offering services.** Programmes should consider that parenting is complex, and thus the same engagement, participation, and support strategies should not be applied to all families, or even all members within the same family. Taking into account the underlying issues for individual parents (both internally driven and perceptions from society) will help encourage positive parenting in parenting programmes (e.g. for some parents it might be that information is more important, while for others, it might be building confidence).
POLICY. The complexity and difficulties associated with parenting should not be undermined nor neglected in policy. Policy should encourage an understanding within society that parenting is not simple, and numerous issues should be considered.

**Parenting support for complex needs.** Many parents need some parenting help at some point in their lives (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Kane et al., 2007; Patterson et al., 2002). Programmes like PAFT offer parents an outlet in their community and a direction for considering the complex nature of parenting within the wider societal trends. Despite government agenda declaring the importance of considering parents' perspectives (e.g. Dfes, 2006a), this is not done enough in practice. Thus the policy agenda needs to promote this more fully, providing specific mechanisms for services to implement this. This should be promoted in policy to enable the effective development of services that meet the complex needs of parents.

**Policy should learn from other countries.** Policymakers could take lessons from other countries that have seen a significant reduction in negative parenting practices, particularly through a public systems level implementation. For example, Australia executed a widespread parenting programme which supported a large proportion of society (Sanders et al., 2003; Sanders and Ralph, 2004). Researchers argue that policymakers need to support parenting programmes across the national through to the local levels to assist families with negative parenting practices. This support at various levels of government will more likely engage families (Mann et al., 2007; Sanders and Ralph, 2004).

**Support that recognises parents as experts on their children.** Central to the collaborative element of parenting, services should be aware and policy provisions should support that parents are the experts on their child. Thus services are there to support parents, not tell them what to do. This was suggested in the many Sure Start Guidelines (e.g. 2002; 2006) and other research (Wolfendale, 1999) who advocate for parents to be active

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1 Receiving non-stigmatising support is also important here. However, this is discussed in depth below in Implication 2: 'Supporting families in context is the best way for programmes to meet families' needs as programmes operate within family relationships, the community and wider societal frameworks.' Tailored support is also important to this implication but this is discussed below in Implication 3: 'Programmes should aim to meet families' needs through flexibility and variety in their programme elements, particularly in the individualised support of families'.
participants in their services. This should be stated in more detail and considered in more depth within the framework of the complexity of parenting as a concept.

**TRAINING.** Project workers should be familiar with strategies for successfully supporting parents through the factors parents consider as influencing their parenting practices.

*Understanding the complex nature of parenting.* As parenting was perceived as a complex concept, it is vital that project workers are provided with information that engages their thought process on its complex nature. This may mean helping parents with specific wider societal concerns to day-to-day tasks. These complexities should not be overlooked nor degraded, instead they should be considered specifically by project workers in training in order to support families in practice. Only through understanding and engaging with complexity within parenting can programmes support families. In addition, project workers should be trained in ensuring they are able to appropriately adapt their PAFT information to support the family. This will enable the project workers to alleviate parental stress and promote positive parenting practices.

*Collaborative relationships.* By joining families in their environment, project workers are developing the collaborative relationship that is deemed vital by participants and programmes. However creating these collaborative relationships was considered difficult to obtain in some research (e.g. McKay et al., 2006), and therefore further training should develop practitioners' perspectives on the importance of engagement strategies and alliance building with families.

**Ensure mechanisms beyond training are in place to support project workers.** Training in and of itself may not always be sufficient (Whitehead and Douglas, 2005). Reflective practice should be encouraged in training, and supervisors should be required to support all practitioners, particularly in considering these wider contexts.

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156 Project worker assumptions are also important to this implication, and should be considered in this framework. See Implication 4: 'Family roles and relationships influence parenting programme engagement and participation' for full details.
Implication 2: Supporting families in their context is the best way for programmes to meet families' needs as programmes operate within and influence family relationships, the community, and wider societal frameworks.

A main message from the findings involved that families exist within a wider framework than simply a parent-child dyad. In addition, the project worker must support the families within these varying contexts, which requires project workers to adapt and consider these frameworks for delivering programmes.

**PRACTICE.** As programmes operate within such a variety of relationships, they need to be aware of these contexts and able to assist families in functioning within them. Only through supporting families in practice in context, can programmes aid families in their parenting practices. Research indicates that by considering the community and society, parents are more likely to engage with services (Katz et al., 2007).

**Family relationships.** Programmes need to be able to interact competently within family relationships, and thus negotiate issues with that family, and support numerous family relationships when needed. They should also ensure they are doing the best to support all family members even if some members are unable to attend visits.

**Families experience transitions.** Families should be encouraged to understand difficulties in times of transitions within their own circumstances. A great deal of research indicates that over time families go through a number of transitions (Long, 2007; McHale, Kazali, et al., 2004; Olson and Gorall, 2003). One particularly difficult one is the transition to parenthood for many families, and programmes should encourage support at this time point. These transition points are a key time for preventative services to intervene (e.g. Bell et al., 2007; Doherty et al., 2006; Feinberg et al., 2009; Hill, Stafford, Seaman, Ross, and Daniel, 2007). In the current research most of the parents had recently undergone the transition to parenthood, which had a number of different influences on both mothers and fathers. However programmes such as PAFT can assist parents by encouraging parents to realise that transitions are typical in family life and parents need to cope with these together, particularly to create a strong coparenting alliance.157

157 Discussed in chapter 5: Coparents.
Supporting the community. Community-wide support, such as that offered by Sure Start Children’s Centres, is able to reach a large number of families, due to its mandate and outreach. PAFT had relationships with schools, health visitors and a number of other services. In some cases PAFT appeared to play an intermediary between families and the community. Mothers particularly expressed their appreciation at PAFT interacting with the community. Mothers found that project worker support decreased their perceived isolation which assisted their positive parenting. Therefore programmes should be encouraged to understand and operate within this context.

POLICY. Policy should support implementation of programmes that are able to operate within specific contexts.

Policy and paid employment. One way policy could assist parents is by promoting services for parents who participate in paid employment during the day, e.g. encouraging late working hours for Children’s Centres/project workers a couple of times a week or developing other support for these populations. Also policy could encourage providing programmes to include both parents through an incentives scheme. This would greatly assist parents in working together while also sustaining community resources.

Decreasing stigma. Decreasing stigma is important to stakeholders in the current and previous research (Barlow et al., 2003; Sanders et al., 2007). Programmes with universal delivery are likely to decrease stigma among the community, and all parents needing assistance will be able to access it. Therefore by encouraging programmes like PAFT in policy, community relationships can grow through decreased stigma, and parents can be supported before negative parent-child relationship patterns are ingrained.

If increasing workload, need to increase workforce. One particular problem seen in the policy context is the recent increased rise of policy-related requirements based on the backlash to the Baby P incident. By March 2010 (BBC), a new policy agenda increased Children’s Centres workload without increasing the number of support staff. To increase supporting families fully, policy needs to take into account the full picture, particularly implementation needs. By providing recommendations and requirements of services that cannot be met, policy sets services up for failure. Therefore policy makers should
increasingly look to the context within which services are delivered to understand implementation at both the community and wider societal levels.

**TRAINING.** Programmes should train project workers on the importance of considering the context of their families and environmental features.158

*Programmes, like families, do not exist in isolation.* Due to programmes operating in contexts, project workers should be trained to understand that programmes do not exist in isolation, instead they support families with differing relationships within specific societal frameworks. Project workers must therefore be sensitive to the differing needs within these contexts and relationships. Weatherston (2007) suggests that when practitioners are being trained to implement parenting programmes, they need to consider families in a relational context in the home, rather than as individuals. The current research supports this in finding that the project workers came from a variety of backgrounds and thus they needed to be trained to understand relationships. It is essential that programmes provide training focusing on observing and reflecting on family relationships.

*Assessing families’ environment and perspectives.* Training should also focus on assisting project workers to assess the family’s environment and perspectives, without being overly official, which risks alienating families. By assisting families in their context, project workers have a unique opportunity to assist families in their specific circumstances. Therefore programme engagement and change is supported by understanding and joining the family in their context.

**Implication 3: Programmes should aim to meet families’ needs through flexibility and variety in their programme elements, particularly in the individualised support of families**

The current research found that PAFT had a number of elements that promoted support within the family. However each family was different and required an individualised focus from the programme to meet their specific needs.

158 Systemic thinking in training is also important here. However, see Implication 4: ‘Family roles and relationships influence parenting programme engagement and participation’ for full details.
PRACTICE. Several elements of PAFT promoted families’ needs being met, with the most crucial being providing support and focus on specific issues that concerned either the families or the project workers.

Empowerment-based methods. As a basis for meeting the families’ needs, the stakeholders indicated that project workers used an empowerment-based model. For programmes like PAFT to support families it remains important to all stakeholders that project workers continue to see families as trying the best they can with what they have and identifying the families’ strengths (e.g. Hill et al., 2007; Sanders and Ralph, 2004; Walsh, 2006). This allows the project workers to build on specific families’ strengths, which all stakeholders indicated as positive. By engaging parents in this supportive manner parents are more likely to stay engaged, which in turn encourages change toward positive parenting practices. Thus all programmes implemented should have a way to incorporate this element.

Delivering programmes in families’ environments. By going into families’ homes, parents felt empowered in their parenting in their own circumstances. Parents and project workers similarly saw entering families’ environments as positive, with parents expressing appreciation for their project workers interacting within the parents’ and children’s environments. Mothers saw this as helpful because they did not have to worry about getting somewhere at a certain time; fathers saw this as positive because the PAFT visit encouraged them to set time aside to learn about child development. Therefore programmes are able to offer individualised support within this environment and that should be encouraged in practice.

Flexibility and variety in implementation meets families’ needs. One-size-fits-all programmes are not going to meet all families’ needs. Therefore programmes should be implemented that allow for specific family needs to be met. PAFT programme information does not change, but parents and project workers indicated that the focus is adaptable, depending on the family. In addition, programmes should encourage parents to understand that each family has its own particular issues, and that programmes such as PAFT will support each family as its own entity.
POLICY. Political agendas should consider ways to support the tailored approach that some programmes offer families.

*Empowering parents through policy.* The policy agenda frequently aims for parents to be empowered to parent on their own. Tailoring support that is specific to parents’ and families’ unique needs is more likely to accomplish this. By supporting programmes that empower parents through building on their strengths, policy is more likely to achieve this aim.

*Home visiting and financial resources.* Financial resources are one of the main reasons that policy makers typically indicate a preference for group programmes that operate only once children have been diagnosed with developmental issues. While home visiting programmes may be more expensive in the short term, the gains for children and families would decrease expense in the longer term (Karoly et al., 2005; Knapp, Scott, and Davies, 1999). Some argue that intervention is more expensive and time consuming once the problem is underway than supporting families preventatively (Einzig, 1999; Hutchings and Webster-Stratton, 2004; Kotchick et al., 2004). In addition, Balbernie (2007) indicates that assisting families through programmes may have longer term economic advantages because intergenerational cycles of negative parenting can be eliminated. A balance should be struck between supporting families and financial means, which policy makers should be made aware of when they are allocating resources.

*Policy agenda makes wide-ranging statements without thought for implementation.* Some policy documents suggest that families require specific services for their needs, however these are not detailed sufficiently for implementation. For instance, ‘Choice for Parents’ (2006) says: ‘All Sure Start Children’s Centres should: identify families that may be excluded and tailor services to meet their needs...’ (p. 51). However no other information is provided on strategies, thus those required to implement such policies need more information to do so. Policy should focus instead on providing specific techniques to engage and understand families.

TRAINING. Training should support practitioners in understanding how to provide individualised and empowerment-based services.
Families as individual entities. Programmes should train project workers to understand families as individual entities where no two issues will be the same. By training project workers with this mindset and enabling them to maintain this in their work with families through specific methods and adequate supervision, families are more likely to be assisted.

Awareness of the strengths-based model. Project workers should be made aware of the importance of using strengths-based models. Thus if a project worker is unaware of this approach or is unable to implement it, they should be supported to find positive qualities in families. Furthermore research indicates that training practitioners in this approach engages families and promotes empowerment through parents perceiving responsive services (Dfes, 2006b).

Clinical judgement with families. It is also important within this framework that project workers receive training in referring families when necessary, and the appropriate processes for doing so. It also means that practitioners must be taught and trusted to use their clinical judgement in working with families as found in other studies (Barlow et al., 2003; Chazan-Cohen et al., 2007).

Implication 4: Family roles and relationships influence parenting programme engagement and participation
Family roles and relationships are influenced by programme participation, even if only one parent participates. Findings suggest a dynamic relationship in that a positive coparent relationship encourages full family participation in the programme, and full family participation in the programme encourages family relationships. Perhaps one of the most important points regarding this research is that mothers’ perceptions of their partner influenced fathers’ involvement in the family and the programme.

PRACTICE. Due to roles and relationships influencing parent programme engagement, it is important for programmes to consider the family relationships within each family they visit.

Programmes only delivered to mothers. Currently mothers as the ‘best’ caretaker
(Feinberg, 2002; Guerrero, 2009; Manby, 2005; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Phares et al., 2006) is being indirectly supported by programmes in only delivering them to mothers. In some cases it may be that the mother is the gateway to the father, and it appeared that if the coparents had positive communication this might be adequate. However, if the mothers were perceived as the PAFT participant and in the role of main caregiver, fathers could be excluded from the programme, thus their parenting practices may not be supported. Furthermore only promoting mothering practices may cause stress on the couple relationship as found in previous research (Lee and Hunsley, 2006; Mockford and Barlow, 2004). For instance, if mothers obtain the programme information and the coparenting relationship is positive, mothers are more likely to provide the information to fathers. In addition, if the coparenting relationship is perceived as positive, fathers may be more likely to participate in the family and the programme.

**Ideal and realistic father involvement.** Ideally all fathers would be included in every aspect of every parenting programme. However this is not always possible or viable due to a number of issues such as organisational, time and programme constraints. Therefore the current research considers these findings and suggests that there may be another way to include fathers. A key finding here is that fathers reported gaining knowledge, skills and various other outcomes from PAFT participation. However some of these fathers did not always attend the home visits. If fathers really are gaining the achievements through their partners being in PAFT, then perhaps realistically, PAFT does not need to operate at hours where all fathers can attend.

**Coparent assessment.** A possible solution to deciding whether coparents or only mothers attend programmes might be to have the couple take a coparenting or couple assessment. If they rate highly, then the mother can be the primary PAFT participant passing the information to the father. But if the couple scores with negative perceptions, programmes can adapt in order to engage both parents in visits. This would assist the parents in coparenting together and their children’s development. This proposed solution

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159 For a summary of constraints previously reported see chapter 1 or Feinberg (2002); Ghate et al. (2000); Manby (2005); McAllister and Thomas (2007); Moran and Ghate (2005).

160 Many choices exist. A few include: the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Crane, Larson, and Christiansen, 1995); Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (Locke and Wallace, 1959); Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin et al., 2001); Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm, Nichols, Schectman and Grisby, 1983); Coparenting Scale (McHale, 1997).
would need a number of policy and training implementations, but it would be more realistic than saying all fathers must attend and Children’s Centres must act around this or continue along a path where fathers participate in home visits if they happen to be at home. Research indicates that by improving coparenting practices, the couple relationship can be improved (Morrill et al., 2010). Therefore without the project workers having to act as marital therapists, they can support the family relationships by improving father knowledge, which supports the mother and coparenting practices more generally.

When one parent is experiencing difficulties, every effort should be made for both parents’ inclusion in programmes. Importantly if one parent is unable to positively interact, support and provide positive parenting for a child, the other parent is able to support the child and the child is less likely to have negative long term outcomes. Hill et al. (2007) points out that each parent can supplement the other in positive parenting practices. For example, Owen in the coparents’ chapter (5) describes that his wife had a number of difficulties due to experiencing postnatal depression. But due to financial constraints he had to return to work. He saw PAPT as assisting them in various ways, including the project worker coming in the evening to work with both of them, which increased his knowledge of child development, and that in turn helped him with his wife. Programmes should aim to assist both parents, particularly when one is having difficulties.

POLICY. Policy should support both parents’ inclusion in programmes to support family relationships and roles.

Both parents’ inclusion in programmes. Policy should be developed to encourage both parents’ participation in parenting programmes and the family. If this was done, more potential for programmes to provide positive outcomes for families and societal perspectives would be achieved. This would also require policy to encourage programmes to understand the couple and family relationships in order to support the family more fully. Policy makers should be made aware of the numerous positive outcomes that occur when fathers participate, particularly that the positive outcomes continue in the longer term (Carr, 1998; Cassano et al., 2007; Lundahl et al., 2008). Particularly in times that one parent may be experiencing difficulties, policy should support both parents’ engagement.
**Policy agendas and gender stereotypes.** Policy needs to be more sensitive to the problems of reinforcing gender stereotypes. Much of what their agendas suggests is not evidence-based, instead being based on some stereotypical notions. For instance, the ‘Practice Guidelines for Sure Start’ (2002) state that fathers need father-only services, which is not found in the current research and is still being argued by experts (Bowman et al., 2001; Page et al., 2008; Walters et al., 2001). Furthermore the document uses gender stereotypes to suggest father engagement strategies, such as ‘fathers doing the activities that men like to do’ (p. 83). Therefore policy agendas should investigate participants’ perspectives, such as fathers, before creating documents that indicate they are not aware of the stakeholders’ needs. This same document also suggests that Children’s Centres attempt to engage fathers through mothers as this is likely to be ‘the first point of contact’ (p. 83). While the current research used this approach out of necessity, fathers should be engaged in their own right. Thus it would likely prove positive for services to contact fathers through the post or arranging the initial health visits for new babies at a time when fathers can be there and providing them with the service information then.

**Multi-agency integration and couple services.** Policy currently supports multi-agency working, which is very important (Brandon, Howe, Dagley, Salter, and Warren, 2006; Dfes, 2006a). However because children exist within the family environment, it is important that early years programmes have connections to couple services that can provide the couple with an intervention before problems become entrenched. Some research indicates that couple relationships are largely unsupported in society and, because children grown within this framework, more policy should require support for parents (Chang and Barrett, 2009; Mansfield, 2005).

**TRAINING.** Training should be offered to assist practitioners in supporting families’ roles and relationships.

**Family dynamics and couple relationships.** In order to support families, it would be positive if project workers received training in family dynamics. Fathers and mothers expect similar traits from their project workers, such as a warm, positive, supportive relationship. Therefore project workers should use similar relationship-building techniques with both mothers and fathers and be trained in using skills that promote this (Crooks,
Scott, et al., 2006; Kelly and Wolfe, 2004; Sanders et al., 2010). Further research indicates that training practitioners in family relationships will encourage family members’ involvement with each other (Birtchnell, 2001; Phares et al., 2006). In addition, project workers should also receive some training in couple relationships, to support the coparenting relationship. By understanding the coparenting relationship, people working directly with families can better engage coparents. Training in couple relationships would also be positive for children as infants live within this environment, and interparental conflict has demonstrated negative influences on child development.  

Training in considering coparents’ perceptions. As programmes already operate within families, they have the unique opportunity to support coparents’ perceptions. Waldinger and Schulz (2006) found that when couples had negative attributions about their partners, they were more likely to have low relationship satisfaction. Some stakeholder groups mentioned that parents were negative about their partners. For instance, project workers may hear negative attributions about a non-attending parent (or in some cases an attending partner). Several studies indicate that the decline in perceptions of partners after the birth of a child is due to a lack of warmth and appreciation between the partners (Cowan et al., 2003; Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2000). Therefore while PAFT cannot be expected to act as family therapists, an easy way to include and operate within the family would be by better understanding the couple relationship and perceptions.

Project workers must consider their own assumptions. Project workers should be trained more fully in family dynamics, particularly in considering their own assumptions and how these contribute to their work in order to better support and empower families. Walsh (2006) suggests that all practitioners consider their own assumptions around families and relationships if they are intending to help families, otherwise their own personal opinions can affect the work with the families. Research further suggests that training should assist practitioners in considering their own gender assumptions (Dienhart, 2001; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1999; 2009).

16 For more information, see ‘Why Study Coparents’ in chapter 1.
Implication 5: Project worker-family relationship is vital to engaging and promoting change in parenting practices and families’ relationships

Throughout this research, the project worker-family relationship has been integral to the programme. This relationship was viewed as essential to all stakeholder groups, even in cases where certain stakeholder groups (e.g. fathers) were unable to participate in home visits, which is a particularly noteworthy finding due to how little is known about fathers’ perceptions of practitioner relationships (Korfmacher et al., 2007; Stolk et al., 2008). Due to the centrality of this relationship to programmes and services, it will be discussed in more depth below. This was a primary reason families engaged and participated in the programme over the years. Therefore this has a number of important implications for practice, policy, and training.

PRACTICE. The current research assisted in providing further information on the specific components for developing the project worker-family relationship.

Project workers relate to individuals and systems within families. The project worker interacted within dyadic, triadic, and whole family relationships. Thus the project worker formed supportive relationships with mothers and children together and separately. Research supports this indicating that both the child-practitioner and mother-practitioner alliance are important separately (Green, 2006). Practitioners should focus on differing family members’ relationships to promote best practice in supporting families.

Families do not discriminate between project workers and programmes. Most programmes tend to explain outcomes of programmes being based on programme elements. However the current research found that parents did not necessarily discriminate between PAFT and the project worker instead seeing the project worker as the programme. Therefore, it becomes important that project workers deliver the programme with this assumption which is also found in previous research (Roth and Fonagy, 2005). In practice, project workers should be aware of this as they may be the reason that parents become and stay involved.

Continuity of relationships. One issue that parents and project workers expressed was the importance of continuity in the family-project worker relationship. Parents appreciated that any and all assessments of their children was done with someone who knew
their children. Furthermore mothers appreciated that they saw the same person every time, which provided a great deal of support. Another aspect was with organisational change. One project worker left the programme shortly after the evaluation began in 2008. Some of the mothers were interviewed shortly after this transition and appreciated being asked about which project worker they would like to have now. One woman, Susan, who participated across phases had a child in her teenage years that was born 14 weeks premature. An important part of her parenting story was about how small and sickly her daughter was. When it was announced that she needed a new project worker, she said she wanted the project worker who had the longest duration of service as that project worker had known how small and sickly her daughter had been. It created a continuous story that was vital to her participation and accepting the programme. Mothers also contrasted this with health services, indicating that they felt less support from the health visitors because they never saw the same person more than once and thus they had to repeat all the information, which added stress and frustration to mothers’ experiences.

**POLICY.** Currently policy provides non-specific information that the project worker-family relationship is important, but does not explain strategies for its development. 

*Policy incentives should be used to encourage people with certain characteristics to apply for practitioner positions.* Incentives should be developed to encourage people with certain skills (e.g. warmth, non-judgemental attitudes) to apply to project worker posts. If people have the desire but not the ability to create such relationships, they should not be allowed to train. This applies even if someone is working in a helper role, they should still be appropriately screened if programmes and services want to ensure engagement and positive outcomes from families.

*IAPT and NICE guidelines.* Despite a growing body of literature, IAPT and NICE guidelines contain very little information on the practitioner-family relationships. Some parts of the guidelines suggest this is important (e.g. NICE, 2006\(^{162}\)), but they do not contain information on the centrality of this nor consider the process of creating this relationship. Furthermore as creating this alliance appears to occur over time, it may be that

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\(^{162}\) Parent-training/education programmes in the management of children with conduct disorders (NICE, 2006, p. 29).
a certain number of sessions are needed in order to develop the relationships, which should be considered in more depth.

**Policy and organisational culture.** The current research and previous research (Katz et al., 2007) indicate that in order for the project worker to build this alliance with families, they must be operating in a supportive organisational culture. Therefore policy should encourage positive organisational culture to allow project workers to focus on families.

**TRAINING.**\(^{163}\) The current research provided a deeper understanding of specific characteristics and abilities that promoted the project worker-family relationship.

**Screening for people with appropriate characteristics.** Potential project workers should be screened and only those considered able to promote positive, supportive relationships and the therapeutic alliance should be permitted to train. They should have a number of personal qualities that will support parents, such as warmth, positive communication skills, and express genuine, empathetic understanding. Therefore these characteristics should be considered when accepting people into training for programmes. Only if they have these skills should they be given the knowledge to develop the relationships with families in more depth.

**Project workers should be informed of the crucial nature of this relationship.** Project workers should receive information on the importance of this relationship and understand how it needs to be used for families. In all cases, particularly of very high needs families, such as Ally in chapter 3, it is vital that project workers understand the importance of their role with families. Ally’s project worker provided her with a safe attachment-based relationship, which in turn provided her with the ability to create positive relationships with her children. Furthermore by building a trusting, supportive relationship, it fosters the empowerment-based model for parents. In addition, relationship skill development is vital to support families and training should shift all practitioners’ viewpoints to operate within

\(^{163}\) Training in family dynamics/relationships would also be important for this implication. For more information see above, 'Implication 4: Family roles and relationships influence parenting programme engagement and participation'.

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relational-focused ways, rather than the medical model or exclusively problem-solving specific strategies.

*Engaging fathers in the project worker-family relationship.* The current research indicates that training service-providers in ways to engage fathers and to increase knowledge on what fathers bring to parenting would be positive which is supported by previous research (McBride and Lutz, 2004). Currently training focuses on engaging families or parents, but does not consider fathers specifically; therefore service providers may be unaware of fathering needs and priorities.

**Summary**

Implications for practice, policy, and training have been provided here. Although evaluation research is a combination of research and policy some disputes between research and policy continue, meaning that the integration can affect service offerings to parents (e.g. Noonan, Estes, and Glass, 2007; Summers, Funk, Twombly, Waddell, and Squires, 2007). Several recent studies have made calls for policy to implement practices established more fully in research evidence (Knitzer, 2007; Stafford and Zeanah, 2008; Stark, Mann, and Fitzgerald, 2007; Svanberg and Barlow, 2009) but considering the description and analysis above, policy appears to only be paying lip service to research rather than actually incorporating it. In conclusion, the current research offers a number of findings that have important implications for services at the local, community, and societal levels.

**Theoretical Implications: Attachment, Family Systems and Feminist Theories**

As explained earlier, the current research was informed and findings were illuminated using three theories: attachment, family systems, and feminist. Placing the PAFT programme in the framework of these theories created a unique perspective on programme evaluation and family relationships. The research indicated important influences that each theory has on one another, with each theory informing understandings of the findings at the individual, societal, and conceptual level. The connections between all three theories are the main focus here because one of the distinctive aspects of the current research is that the theories have rarely been considered in conjunction.
These theories have been uniquely considered in this research on parenting and parenting programmes. Some previous research, such as Lewis and Lamb (2003), suggests that attachment cannot be considered outside family dynamics and the wider societal context, however these have yet to be investigated together. This research is illuminated by these theories in three ways:

• Couple attachment operates within family systems, which are influenced by wider society, including gender.

• Children develop within the centre of attachment, family systems and gender roles being learned in families.

• Gender influences participation in the family, which affects the family system and attachment relationships.

Couple attachment operates within family systems, which are influenced by wider society, including gender. One way that the three theories illuminate the research findings is in reference to the parents’ relationship. When adults feel secure, they attribute less malicious traits to their partner (S. Johnson, 2008; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005a; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005b). Thus couple attachment influenced the parents’ perceptions of one another and the coparenting sub-system (Feinberg, 2002; McHale, 2007; Van Egeren and Hawkins, 2004). Feminist theory is involved by the influence of gender on each person in the coparenting relationship (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, et al., 2004 Van Egeren, 2003).

Within the couple relationship, parents can feel included, particularly through discussing parenting and programme information. As mentioned previously in the current findings and previous research (Lamb and Lewis, 2004; Rane and McBride, 2000), feeling included in the family is important for actual inclusion, particularly for fathers. It is this perception of inclusion that encourages coparenting, rather than behaviours. When parents feel included through secure attachment in their couple relationships, they are more able to be included in caretaking their child. These positive perceptions then engage parents to engage in more equal caregiving and parenting practices. In addition, through the promotion and appreciation of the couple relationship, parents can help their children develop relationally.
Furthermore, if couples include one another in the family, their attachment will be more positive and they may be less likely to fall back on gender roles in their perceptions, which also illustrates developing patterns in the family systems. Thus if this is positive relating, family patterns can encourage positive, gender-neutral family and attachment relationships.

In support of previous studies (Addis and Mahalik, 2003; Henwood and Procter, 2003), the current research asserts that a less gender-polarised view of mothering and fathering can be seen through some of the families, which may partially be due to couple attachment. While some fathers felt they were less able at caretaking than mothers, they continued to try, and in some cases mothers were supportive of their partners. The current research suggests that these couples had a positive attachment, which promoted father involvement in the family thereby creating a less polarised view of gender in families. Therefore while the less polarised view may still be developing, it will be of importance for this to continue being understood, including why some couples exhibited this and others did not. There is some evidence that parents themselves feel they are capable of sharing parenting if they make conscious choices (e.g. Deutsch, 2001). This means that couples, who work together due to secure couple attachment, enact shared parenting using family systems theory, and make active choices, thus not allowing gender roles to make their decisions for them.

Children develop within the centre of attachment, family systems and gender roles being learned in families. Children grow up within the couple relationship, with the parents guiding the child (Fivaz-Deursinge and Corboz-Warnery, 1999). It is important to note here that infants are born into a relational system and spend the first several years of their lives developing in a relational system which also must adapt to their birth (Sameroff, 2004; Stern, 2008; Winnicott, 1964). Children are born into families and raised within an attachment framework, which also is underpinned by expressed and underpinning gender roles. Burck and Daniel (1995) pointed out that awareness of gender and societal discourses in the family promotes new ways to understand them.

One important aspect of these theories is in the concept of internal working models. Each child is developing their internal working model based on their relationships with their
parents in the family system and the wider societal framework as suggested by several researchers (Lyons-Ruth and Jacobvitz, 2008; Pietromonaco and Barrett, 2000). Children are learning their relational world and how to be relational beings within this framework, meaning that they are developing their sense of relationships, roles, and gender socialisation in these relationships, systems, and perceived gender/societal framework. Therefore it is important that parents are supported to assist children in developing positive internal working models within these frameworks.

One emerging concept in the current research is many parents’ perceptions about the fathers’ lack of full inclusion in the parenting process. This knowledge can encourage Children’s Centres toward a more specific inclusion of fathers. Kraemer (1995) specifically maps out the fathers’ perceived exclusion from various standpoints. He suggests that if fathers fully participated with their children from infancy, then gender identity would alter at a wider level, ending the perception of the ‘mother as caretaker’, and altering gender identity development in future generations of children. Furthermore promoting the fathers’ involvement with their children in a caretaking role will encourage the father-child attachment positively throughout life (Shulz et al., 2006).

Gender influences participation in the family, which affects the family system and attachment relationships. In considering the findings on mothers’ and fathers’ participation in the family and the programme, one particular way this can be considered is through feminist theory in that if women are the authority on the home front they may not want to lose this power (Segal, 1995). Of central importance to feminist theory is power. Women often maintain power in the home and thus by encouraging father participation in the home and with programmes, they are ceding power in what may be their exclusive domain that gives them a sense of satisfaction and/or importance. Additionally, if mothers are the children’s primary caretakers, it may be that it is easier for them simply to keep parenting when fathers are around than explain ways to parent. In addition, fathers may not be open to these explanations, which might create conflict in the relationship, especially due to masculine discourses of accepting influence (Gottman and Gottman, 2007; Lee and Hunsley, 2006). There are numerous explanations for these gender and family relationship
behaviours, and yet power over the household may give mothers a sense of importance and satisfaction.

**Summary**
The current research suggests the need to address wider societal and political frameworks to consider parenting practices in order to encourage family attachments. Despite the need to consider gender in the family at a societal level, services cannot wait for the wider societal changes to empower mothers and fathers to work more closely (Goodrich, 1991). Instead it is important that in practice families are encouraged to develop considerations individually, while keeping an eye toward wider frameworks.

**Critique of Methodology: Strengths and Limitations**
As with most studies, both strengths and weaknesses appeared in the current research. Methodological strengths and limitations will be considered in turn below.

**Developing Programmes with Stakeholder Perspectives**
The research findings reported were developed from programme stakeholder perspectives, which was a strength of the current research and assisted in filling a gap indicated in previous studies (e.g., Brodie, 2003). This remained a central component to the research throughout each phase and provided the evaluation with a unique combination of perspectives for analysis. Parents consistently reported that PAFT was meeting their individual needs through a variety of avenues, while project workers indicated their commitment to families' individual needs. The current research also expanded on previous studies by arguing that by including parents and service providers, the programmes will more fully support families.

Stakeholders' views were able to provide a unique and multi-dimensional understanding of programme evaluation. This was a strength because it has implications for programme design and development, particularly in that participants' complex findings imply that using evaluation this way can develop programmes that meet families' needs within a community
which is not typically considered (Coe et al., 2003; Dale, 2004; Kindon et al., 2007a). In addition, the stakeholders are better able to examine their reality in the community, which assists in ensuring that the programmes are contextually appropriate. Considering the various stakeholder groups’ similarities and differences in perspectives provided depth and comparisons on supporting different groups of people. This method supports previous research indicating the usefulness of investigating participants’ perspectives. The current research expanded this as a method suggesting that through exploring individual viewpoints of several stakeholder groups, more in-depth and relevant information could be deduced and be helpful in interpreting and reporting results.

One limitation of developing programmes with stakeholders’ perspectives is that only those willing to participate are consulted, meaning that the ‘hard to reach’ are not able to discuss difficulties with engagement. In other words a bias may exist in that those parents who felt that PAFT was a positive contribution to their lives participated in the research, with those who did not perceive this not contributing.

Another limitation in the research based on recruitment involved parent participation. As the project workers saw the parents regularly and provided support to the families, they were protective of the families, making themselves the middle women between the researcher and the programme participants. However this choice seemed necessary as it was particularly important that families were not alienated from the programme. Therefore the large majority of the research was based on project workers’ ability to contact and receive permission for the researcher to contact the families.

One final limitation was that fathers were recruited through mothers because mothers were the primary participants. Therefore maternal gatekeeping may have occurred in recruitment strategies, meaning that perhaps the primary portion of coparents in this research were positively relating with their partners and thus see programme involvement positively. This is supported by Cowan and Cowan (2002) who suggested that programmes were less effective if mothers participating in parenting programmes were in conflicting and/or unsatisfying relationships. As the parents who participated in this evaluation found their PAFT
participation largely positive, it may be due to those that participated having high levels of relationship satisfaction, meaning that this research may not be representative of problems that parents had.

**Including Fathers in Research**

One strength of the research was including fathers. Numerous studies suggest the importance of including fathers in research and evaluation (McBride and Lutz, 2004; Phares, 1996; Ramchandani and McConachie, 2005; Russell and Radojevic, 1992). The current research confirmed previous findings that fathers have unique opinions and these need to be considered in working with families (Featherstone, 2009; Renk and Phares, 2007). The implications include that fathers do have views on parenting and programmes, and even if they are not present during the home visiting, they have formed opinions.

The current research suggests that even though fathers may not be able to attend home visits, they are still able to participate through information. Information should be provided to fathers, perhaps independently of mothers (although in considering the coparents’ findings, mothers and fathers appeared to enjoy discussing parenting). In cases where coparents are not engaging over the parenting programme, there may be a place for direct inclusion of fathers. Fletcher et al. (2008) suggests that by directly communicating with fathers, they were better able to engage and understand information unique to fathering experiences. Therefore in the future it may be beneficial for programmes (and services more generally) to access fathers to encourage their relationship with their child.

A limitation of the current research was the difficulty in accessing fathers. This research supports that fathers are somewhat more difficult to reach (Moran and Ghate, 2005; Phares, 1996), particularly evident in the numbers of fathers versus mothers at each phase of the research. However fathers were not impossible to reach. Including fathers was in some cases more work than including mothers, but their unique perspectives proved useful to understanding parenting, families, and programmes, and thus this should be promoted in future research.
One limitation for including fathers was in who was included. It may be that fathers who did not see themselves as involved heavily in parenting did not participate in the programme and the research. At each phase of the research, most fathers reported attending at least one home visit. All interviewed fathers attended at least one home visit. In the questionnaires 89% of fathers who completed the questionnaire had attended at least one visit, with only four fathers attending no home visits. Whereas 42% of mothers who completed the questionnaire reported that the father had attended no visits. In the focus group, only one father reported never having attended a home visit. This perhaps means that only fathers who subscribed to the idea of 'new fatherhood' participated in the research, or only fathers with a supportive partner. Thus this may not be an adequate vision of parents across varying viewpoints. Therefore this research should be viewed with caution to ensure that the information provided here does not lead to a bias in understanding fathers.

Field Work
Field work was both a strength and a weakness for this research. It provided an opportunity for directly accessing programme participants and understanding them in their real-world environment as considered best practice by many in the programme evaluation field (Robson, 2002; Weiss, 1998).

Obtaining reasonable sample sizes was a continuing difficulty throughout the evaluation, including that PAFT was having some organisational constraints. By conducting the evaluation through field work it required the researcher and programme to negotiate and generally interact with agreeable viewpoints throughout the research, which proved difficult in some ways due to a variety of reasons, one being differences in the two PAFT programmes. Similarly, not all people in each area were supportive of the evaluation, and in some cases this required some pursuing and petitioning of the programme to obtain information. Time constraints were another limitation in this evaluation. The project workers often reported feeling overburdened, as they were part-time with somewhat limited capacity to participate in the evaluation and continue their other work. A final limitation laid out by Robson (2002) and found in the current research was that some of the tasks associated with the research were managing issues when things did not go according to plan.
For instance, obtaining access to the research area was difficult due to transportation difficulties. The researcher regularly was required to wait long periods of time between conducting interviews or attending group meetings. This was coped with in various ways but confirmed the necessity of flexibility when conducting field work.

**Generaliseable Results**

The aim of this research was to understand a programme within the context in which it operated, which was achieved through qualitative and quantitative methods. One focus of the research was to understand the process of change from the stakeholders' perspectives, which was supported by this research design. This combination of methods, while positive for this research context, contains some limitations.

As with all qualitative studies, results cannot be generalised to the population (Dallos and Vetere, 2005; Innocenti, 2002). The information provided here should be considered in the specific context in which the research was conducted. These findings may not apply to parents who live in cities or have children older than five years of age. Although the questionnaire phase was conducted, some participant numbers were slightly smaller than ideal and the findings need to be replicated. Obtaining more data, particularly of a quantitative nature, would aid in verifying these findings.

**Process-Outcome Research**

Using the process-outcome research approach had a number of advantages to understanding stakeholder perspectives. By conducting the research with this framework, services are able to enhance programme delivery (Jacobs, 2003), meaning that PAFT can ascertain ways to improve any areas needing development. Furthermore using process and outcome assisted greatly in interpretation of the findings (Jacobs, 2003). Myers and Barnes (2005) advocate the importance of considering these concepts together as they both contribute to the changing dynamics within programmes. This allowed concepts, definitions, and issues to be explained by stakeholders in more depth. A final advantage to using this framework was that it allowed

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164 Another limitation in the generalisability of these results is in the programme participants. It may be that only those parents who appreciated PAFT participation chose to participate in the evaluation. For more details, please see 'Developing programmes with stakeholder perspectives' above.
for programme complexities to be considered. Keeping the question as ‘how’ PAFT is effective rather than ‘if’ PAFT is effective led to contextual understandings of programme involvement. It allowed for stakeholders to provide their understandings of issues and place these in their community perceptions. Process and outcome evaluation also empowered parents to state their considerations and their needs.

In exclusively outcome-based findings in the current research, the University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practice illustrated that significant change occurred from mothers’ and fathers’ perspectives in their knowledge, confidence, abilities and action (a brief summary of these findings is available upon request). While this provided evidence of a significant change, it did not address any of the other information that was illuminated in the stakeholder chapters, and thus does not allow for further interpretation and understanding of ‘how’ PAFT related to families. The information provided assisted the recommendations for practice, policy, and training, therefore allowing for a more in-depth understanding to take place on parenting processes in relation to outcomes.

Mixed Methods Research Design and Phases of Research

Mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, et al., 2008) using action research techniques (Brown and Young, 2005; Uzzell and Barnett, 2006) within a natural history approach (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005; Vetere and Gale, 1987) was an ideal way to explore the topics in this research. It allowed the researcher to obtain varying viewpoints from a multitude of people, allowing for contextual and situational findings. It also proved a unique way of exploring and confirming findings simultaneously as is typical of this design (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

In considering the specific techniques used to obtain the information from the stakeholders, the research used a number of strategies, which in evaluation research provided richness and variability in data (Jacobs, 2003; Weiss, 1998). Furthermore this triangulation allowed the differences to be compared, contrasted and considered from different stakeholder perspectives (Clarke, 1999). Also by interpreting with both qualitative and quantitative findings, the whole picture provided information that was more important than the sum of
its parts (Bryman, 2007). However the methods had a number of limitations as well. These are detailed by phase below.

One limitation of this design was the exceedingly complex findings for each group due to large amounts of differing information. While making it more ecologically valid, it made interpretation and analysis more difficult, which is typical of mixed methods research (Slonim-Nevo and Nevo, 2009; Sosluski and Lawrence, 2008). Due to the sequential nature of the research (Creswell et al., 2008; Denscombe, 2008), some findings appeared contradictory, at least at first. For instance in interviewing fathers the work-life balance appeared to be one aspect of their perspective, but upon inspection of the questionnaire data, it appeared that paid employment affected their perceptions on a variety of parenting dimensions. Fortunately the focus groups allowed for fathers to provide more information for clarity on these findings. Therefore the three phase design assisted in interpretation.

Another limitation involved the research being based on the findings of the previous phase. This meant that if a perspective was not introduced during the interviews, it could not be accounted for in the questionnaire phase. Although attempts were meant to assist with this (e.g. validating techniques of the interviews, piloting the questionnaire with several mothers etc.) this may not have worked in every case.

**Phase 1: Interviews.** One strength in using interviews is that they allowed the research to be based on participants’ perspectives, setting the platform for the bottom-up approach. They also served the purpose of allowing the researcher to understand the topics important to previous research and the current programme participants. Using a semi-structured interview schedule allowed the researcher to follow different leads that the interviewee mentioned to ensure the research was contextually appropriate.

The interviews held some limitations, one being the number of participants in the project workers’ group. The number of project workers was lower than is ideal (three). However all project workers in the geographical area when the interviews were conducted were included, meaning that recruitment of other project workers would have been infeasible. This may
have influenced the findings for project workers.

Another limitation involved the interviews possibly containing some overlapping findings with three mothers completing the mother interview and the coparent interview. Although in interpretation this included more difficulty due to fathers' responses. All five fathers interviewed also participated in the seven coparent interviews. This particular limitation appears to be related to attempting to pull coparenting and fathering apart. As mentioned previously, fathering and coparenting often have common characteristics and thus this may be more the nature of parenting than this particular research.

**Phase 2: Questionnaires.** The questionnaires phase of the research had several strengths. These included that they allowed the stakeholders to be anonymous to the researcher. Also as they were developed based on the interviews, the research upheld its commitment to action research and stakeholder perceptions. Furthermore the questionnaires were piloted to obtain feedback and adapt the questionnaires based on participant perspectives.

Questionnaires also exhibited limitations. One limitation was the definition of coparent provided by the researcher in the questionnaire. Although the definition was piloted with several parents, in the actual questionnaire almost a third of mothers indicated that despite living with their partner (father of their child), they were not coparents. This finding was verified with both mothers and fathers in the focus groups, with mothers saying that fathers were not their coparent, while fathers said they would like to hope they were considered a 'coparent' but were unsure this was the case.

As with all questionnaire-based studies, the length of the questionnaire may have caused difficulties for some parents, which may have been one reason for the low response rate on the coparenting measures (as they appeared second).

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165 Phase 2 of PAFT in area one had the questionnaires posted directly to the families. The PAFT programme provided the researcher with the details of all addresses they had on file for all families. The families were then posted the questionnaire on multiple occasions.
The questionnaires were sent to the families' homes in one area, and thus it relied on the post receiver to pass the questionnaire onto the other parent. Also for this county, the programme records used to obtain addresses were often only in the mothers' name, meaning that it relied on mothers passing the questionnaire onto their partners. If as the current research found and previous studies indicate (e.g. Mockford and Barlow, 2004), mothers acting as gatekeepers to parenting programme information, would likely not pass the questionnaires onto the fathers, which may explain their lower response rate.

Obtaining project worker responses proved exceedingly difficult and it is only through the continued commitment of three project workers to pursuing other project workers' questionnaires, that these final numbers were achieved. In the project workers' data this does influence the results as the proposed findings, particularly the MDS models, cannot be considered stable due to these low numbers. Larger sample sizes would greatly improve the stability of the MDS analysis and thus the correlations in understanding the experiences of each group, especially the project workers.

**Phase 3: Focus groups.** The focus groups had many advantages, particularly in validating and examining findings from the previous research phases. They allowed for a great deal of information on stakeholder perspectives to be obtained in a short period of time. Furthermore the mothers' and project workers' focus groups took place in their typical meeting rooms with other members of the same stakeholder group they regularly interacted with, creating group cohesion easily, thus making them an ecologically valid collection method. Group process assisted stakeholders in providing in depth consideration of previous findings. An important finding of the focus group analysis was that stakeholders were able to express ideas that had not been reported previously, this likely being due to the group setting in which new points were conveyed due to the environment and discussion between the group members.

The focus groups also had some limitations. One limitation in the focus group was particularly related to numbers in each group. While the ideal number in focus groups is six to eight (Millward, 2006; Wilkinson, 2003), to ensure that people are able to voice their
opinion and are able to openly discuss issues, more than this was found in both the mothers' and project workers' groups. The mother and project worker groups had ten participants. While each person spoke at least twice, conversations occurred in different parts of the room making transcription and engagement difficult a couple of times. In contrast slightly fewer fathers attended the group (five) than ideal due to one father having an unexpectedly ill child.

The Way Forward

The current research provided a number of possible avenues for research, policy, and practice. The findings from the current research can be considered as a platform for the way forward.

Family Relationships and Longitudinal Research

One particular avenue is in family relationships over time. Very few studies investigate changes to families over time and this would greatly assist in promoting positive family relating and developing appropriate interventions based on current societal trends. Future research would aid in comprehension of relationship dynamics that support and discourage parents' programme engagement by investigating participation over time. This is also relevant to growing families. If a family has a second child, is the father given more of a role in caretaking the second one or do they tend to take over more care of the first? Therefore information is needed to understand family relationships over time (Parke et al., 2005; Utting and Pugh, 2004).

Culture

A key area for future research is cultural considerations and parenting programmes. Very few parents from non-Western backgrounds were involved in the research and thus conclusions cannot be drawn. Although few mothers from other cultures participated in the current research, initial findings indicate the importance of understanding this. For instance, not one mother from an Asian culture believed themselves to be a coparent, even though living in the UK and participating in PAFT. Therefore it would be beneficial to gain an understanding
of the influence of culture on parenting perceptions, parenting practices, and parent programme engagement. Some research argues the importance of cultural considerations due to increasing globalisation (Moran and Ghate, 2005). While assessing cultural contexts can be exceedingly difficult, understanding culture’s relationship to parenting is vital in understanding overall family dynamics (Manby, 2005; Singh and Clarke, 2006; Turner and Sanders, 2007). Due to culture influencing family belief structures, many parenting specialists insist on the need for developing helpful parenting strategies while keeping the cultural beliefs at the centre of parenting/family research (Emde, 2006; Melendez, 2005). While this may be true, some researchers argue that the same parenting practices are harmful no matter the culture, e.g. family violence will influence the family negatively in all cultures (Sorkhabi, 2005). Researchers also argue that children should have similar developmental expectations in all cultures (Sorkhabi, 2005; Willemsen and van de Vijver, 1997). Although a number of difficulties exist in researching culture, it is a vital aspect of family dynamics and requires further investigation.

Work-Life Balance and Family Functioning

Although the work-life balance was briefly considered in the current research, a particularly important avenue for future research involves the understanding of dual-income couples or where the mother chooses to go back to work instead of the father. Some research indicates that organisations create problems based on gender assumptions. For instance, Singley and Hynes (2005) indicated that organisations often promote gender roles through things like making it easy for women to take maternity leave and difficult for men. Further research indicates that father-infant relationships are more negative when the mother is in full-time paid employment (Grych and Clark, 1999). Furthermore there is a possibility that mothers will exhibit more gatekeeping behaviours if they are in full-time employment (Lamb and Lewis, 2004). However, other research indicates that in dual-earner couples, fathers participate more with their children, particularly sons (Manlove and Vernon-Feagans, 2002). Matjasko and Felman (2006) suggest that emotional experience differs based on the parent who is employed, and what they bring home from outside experiences to the family. The current research did not specifically address the ideas of working mothers, and it is important that future studies investigate this to better understand how this influences
parenting, coparenting, and parent programme engagement.

Child as an Active Participant

According to parents, the child appeared to be an active participant in relationships, even from early infancy. Some initial studies indicate that children's perceptions of their parents is important to the relationship between parent and child (Marshall and Lambert, 2006), and other observational research indicates that even infants can be active participants with their parents (Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery, 1999). As it was an underlying tone throughout this research, investigating it in more depth may provide important implications and assessment techniques for parenting and parenting programme involvement.

Conclusions

The current research had a number of central findings that informed current understandings of parenting and parent programme perceptions. One of the most important findings indicates that parenting programmes operate within multiple contexts, particularly families, communities, and wider society. This requires that evaluations do so as well, to ensure that families' needs are being met, and programmes support parents in ways stakeholders see as needed. Within this wider framework, complexity within family systems is central to being understood, and keeping this in mind, programmes can ensure that parents are supported.
Overall Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, I have provided a number of findings and points for development, particularly about context, family relationships, and parenting programmes. I began with the notion that services can only help to assist families when the services are developed and understood within stakeholders' perspectives. Overall the research found support for this view and allowed me to conceive a number of suggestions for developing future research, practice, and policy.

I began my research by examining the research, practice, and policy backgrounds of evaluation to develop my research plan. The resulting research facilitated the explanation of the way my findings can inform and develop these fields and training for those practitioners delivering programmes. By considering these findings in various ways, numerous steps are provided for advancing the field of parenting and parent support programmes.

Research Achievements and Contributions to the Knowledge

I achieved what I set out to do in a number of ways. I intended to explore parenting and parenting programmes from a number of perspectives to provide practical, policy and training implications as a way forward. I did this through the three phase design, connecting it to previous research and maintaining a commitment to stakeholders’ views, particularly telling their story. Throughout this process I confirmed and challenged a number of central assumptions of previous research, particularly those of parent blame and the need for a societal movement to equalise parenting.

I see my research as an original piece of work which contributes in a number of important ways:

- Conducted a UK-based evaluation of PAFT
- Conducted a process-outcome based evaluation of a PAFT/parenting programme
- Engaged with various stakeholders’ and based the research on their perspectives
- Continuously attempted to understand stakeholders’ perspectives on parenting and programme involvement
- Included fathers, coparents, and comparisons between different stakeholders
• Used a bottom-up evaluation of stakeholders' perspectives
• Investigated numerous contextual factors in understanding stakeholders’ perspectives
• Combined attachment, family systems, and feminist theory lenses to illuminate findings
• Contributed to the understanding of mother-father programme participation
• Offered parents the opportunity to feedback their perspectives using a three phase design
• Created links between parenting perceptions, practices, and programme participation
• Developed models of the connections between parenting perceptions and programme involvement

Overall it could not be clearer that it is of the utmost importance that programmes continue to operate in family environments and family relationships and offer support to families as a whole. The research, policy, and practice domains should enable families to be engaged and supported in the best ways possible, primarily in context. Ensuring that programmes and families are supported and understood in their context, family difficulties can be assisted to promote change toward positive parenting practices.

A Revised Definition of Positive Parenting

By the time I concluded the research, my definition of positive parenting had changed from what it was at the outset of my research when it was based solely on resources. One area I had not considered was that parents themselves are trying the best they can with what they have. After completing this research I believe that it is vital for perceptions of services and parents themselves to consider their own definitions and remember that 'they are trying the best they can.' In addition, a component regarding parenting-as-a-process should be added to the definition as positive parenting develops over time, because too often it seems that parents are not given room for slight mis-steps. If parenting was considered more process-oriented from early on, parenting concerns might be alleviated. Therefore I propose the amendment shown in bold below:
Positive parenting is aiming to promote children’s healthy development through providing appropriate physical, emotional, and social care, setting developmentally appropriate and consistent boundaries, promoting children’s development in cognitive, physical, social, and mental health domains through interaction, social networks, material resources, and time with their child. Parents try the best they can with what they have and the act of positive parenting is process-oriented, allowing for changes over time within family relationships and wider society.

Mother, Father, and Child

Over the course of my PhD I have reflected numerous times on the Mother, Father, and Child discussed in the introduction. I considered them when I first came across the mother-as-gatekeeper scenario, and I thought about them during the interviews, especially when mothers told me that their partners were not helpful and when fathers made jokes about not knowing what to do with their children. I thought about them during the questionnaires, especially the coparenting questionnaires, and I considered what they might have told me about the findings in the focus groups. While I still see the scenario with sadness and surprise, I continue to see similar situations being enacted regularly in front of my own eyes. But to conclude with my understanding of Mother, Father and Child, I think most likely Father had less time with Child. It seemed likely that Father had less knowledge than Mother, and if this was the case, it appeared unlikely that he was going to gain that knowledge in his current circumstances. Without the knowledge, Father was unable to challenge Mother, requiring her to remain ‘expert’ in matters of Child. I wonder and hope that if a programme had intervened that could give Father knowledge and confidence, he would have felt more able to engage with Child. I also believe that if someone had intervened with Mother, she might have been able to stand back to support the growing relationship between Father and Child.

This example illuminates the complexity and variety of factors that influence families as they adjust to being a family. This family also illustrated much of my PhD, especially when considering the multi-faceted dimensions of family relationships and that a parenting
programme's support would likely support the family. It is clearly hard work to have a family that functions well, as demonstrated by how many families experiencing difficulties I observed over my personal and professional life and during this research. Parenting programmes have the potential to provide benefits not only for the current generation, but for future generations by promoting healthy family relating. The potential exponential benefits over time dictate that investments in parenting programmes must be made.
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  - B5: Coparents’ semi-structured interview schedule
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Appendix C: Phase 2: Questionnaires packets
  - C1: Mothers’ and Mother as a Coparents’ Questionnaires Packet
  - C2: Fathers’ and Father as a Coparents’ Questionnaires Packet
  - C3: Project Workers’ Questionnaires Packet

Appendix D: Phase 3: Focus Group: Information sheets; Interview Topics; Sample Questions
  - D1: Parents’ information sheet
  - D2: Project workers’ information sheet
  - D3: Mothers’ and mothers as coparents’ interview topics/sample questions
  - D4: Fathers’ and fathers as coparents’ interview topics/sample questions
  - D5: Project workers’ interview topics/sample questions

Appendix E: Mothers’ Data Samples
  - E1: IPA quotes to superordinate themes
  - E2: Sample text of original interview transcripts with analysis in margins
  - E3: Sample output
  - E4: Sample text of original focus group transcript with analysis in margins

Appendix F: Stakeholder group normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations
  - F1: Mothers’ normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations
  - F2: Fathers’ normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations
  - F3: Mothers as coparents’ normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations
  - F4: Fathers as coparents’ normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations
  - F5: Project workers’ normal and non-normal distribution scores and parametric and non-parametric correlations

Appendix G: IPA theme comparison between the themes presented in text and one family with multiple difficulties
The following materials have been created, but were not included within the scope of these appendices. However they are available upon request:

- **PAFT Programme Materials**
  - PAFT detailed model
  - Examples of PAFT programme materials
  - Example of a PAFT milestones checklist
  - PAFT Personal Visit record
- **Previous PAFT evaluation descriptions**
- **Mixed Method Research Design, Action Research, and Natural History Approach: Detailed Descriptions**
- **Ethical approvals**
  - Phase 1
  - Phase 2
  - Phase 3
- **Fathers' Data Samples**
  - Phase 1: Chart of IPA quotes to superordinate themes
  - Phase 1: Sample texts of original interview transcripts with analysis in margins
  - Phase 2: Sample output
  - Phase 3: Sample text of original focus group transcript with analysis in margins
- **Coparents' Data Samples**
  - Phase 1: Chart of IPA quotes to superordinate themes
  - Phase 1: Sample texts of original interview transcripts with analysis in margins
  - Phase 2: Sample of outputs
  - Phase 3: Sample text of original focus group transcript with analysis in margins
- **Project Workers' Data Samples**
  - Phase 1: Chart of IPA quotes to superordinate themes
  - Phase 1: Sample text of original interview transcripts with analysis in margins
  - Phase 2: Sample of outputs
  - Phase 3: Sample text of original focus group transcript with analysis in margins
- **Significant differences in mothers' and fathers' parenting practices due to PAFT participation based on the University of Idaho measure, statistical differences demonstrated using Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Tests**
  - Mothers: Paragraph summary of findings, charts, and output
  - Fathers: Paragraph summary of findings, charts, and output
Appendix A:
A Review of Key Debates in Parent Support Programmes Literature

Key Debates in Parent Support Programmes Review

This review summarises key literature in the field of parenting programmes as a whole creating a framework for the research. This review is a synthesis of a wide-range of literature focussing on the key assumptions and debates currently being utilised in this developing discipline. This examination will only include information directly related to the current project as the field is quite extensive in terms of target populations, age ranges, and underlying principles.

Interventions versus prevention: Are interventions (after an issue occurs) or prevention programmes (before an issue occurs) more effective for families?

One key debate in the literature is that of intervention versus prevention services. That is, whether services should focus on addressing families’ issues before problems occur (prevention), or after problems occur (intervention). The key underlying question is what works best for families experiencing difficulties, providing the most positive outcomes.

Numerous researchers have found support for prevention-based services leading to more positive outcomes than later intervention (Beckwith, 2005; Osofsky, 1998). Fonagy (1998) asserts the significance of increased emphasis on prevention services, claiming that such services reduce child and adult psychopathology. He points out that the earlier a problem is identified and a course of action planned, the more likely the issues can be prevented in young children. Similarly, MacLeod and Nelson (2000) in a meta-analysis of programmes designed to prevent child maltreatment found that programmes focussing on prevention were more effective than being reactive only after problems had been identified.

Beckwith (2005) furthers this argument by stating that prevention increases the likelihood of typical development in children. She explains that prevention is based on risk factors such that families experiencing higher levels of risk factors are more likely to have children with negative outcomes. Similarly Beeber, Chazan-Cohen, Suies, Hardem, Boris, Heller, and Malik (2007) contribute to the field by examining factors for five programmes operating within Early Head Start. They suggest that numerous risk factors within the family and environment have demonstrated their influence on child outcomes. They explain that by combining typical services offered with an intervention in the context of the family, families are more likely to develop positive parent-child relationships, thereby positively reducing negative child outcomes.

Nevertheless, some recommend that issues (e.g. developmental delays, behavioural concerns) be identified before service involvement. Karoly, Kilbum, and Cannon (2005) suggest that early intervention may be the best way forward. After identifying issues

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1 Note. This review of the literature intends to encompass only programmes targeting parents with children five years of age and younger because the parenting programme evaluated in the current research, and all programmes intended for Children’s Centres, are for parents of children younger than five years. For further information on these topics for older age groups, a number of options are available such as: Dodge and Petit, 2009; Moran et al., 2004.

2 Each of these debates has been developed in detail elsewhere. Therefore, accessing the references provided in each section will provide a more comprehensive perspective.
within a family, services should become immediately involved. In addition they recommend that service involvement early in life is likely to increase children’s cognitive and social-emotional development in the long term, while ensuring cost effectiveness for policymakers. Appleyard, Egeland, van Dulmen, and Sroufe (2005) support this idea. In longitudinal research Appleyard et al. found that the more risks present early in life, the more negative outcomes for the family. They therefore advocate for more services for those identified as high-risk.

While prevention produces the most positive outcomes, intervention is better than no services at all. Reppucci, Brüner, and Woolard (1997) point out that prevention and intervention services both advocate the same objectives (e.g., positive parent-child relationships), the main difference is becoming involved at different time points. Moran Ghate, and van der Merwe (2004) suggest that both prevention and intervention have merits, despite interventions’ inability to produce longer term outcomes in many evaluations. They advocate that these are better than no intervention, and that interventions may help parents deal with stress.

In the final analysis, prevention is better than intervention. While the cost of preventative programs is high, in the long term they are preferable. However, intervention as soon as possible after issues are identified is a useful adjunct where prevention has not been possible and/or successful.

Universal versus targeted services: Should services be for everyone or exclusively for specific groups of people?

Typically two types of programmes exist, one being universal (offered to everyone in a catchment area), and the other targeted (offered only to those meeting certain ‘risk factors’). Universal programmes typically offer support to promote infant mental health and the parent-child relationship within a community. In contrast targeted programmes aim to increase positive outcomes of families living at risk of poor outcomes due to any number of psychological and/or social issues (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Einzig, 1999; Long, 2007; Moran et al., 2004).

Universal services have various advantages. These services can help any parent and do not require parents to be experiencing specific diagnosable issues. They can provide support for lower level problems before they develop into larger issues. Parr and Joyce (2009) assert that current universal services offered by the NHS are not meeting the needs of parents. They suggest that offering universal services aimed at supporting parents in the transition to parenthood can aid families in numerous ways such as through decreasing stress and anxiety levels, while increasing parents’ communication and problem-solving skills. Universal services also screen all families for issues that could influence a positive parent-child relationship. Davis (2009) suggests that offering services universally allows early identification of those parents likely to experience difficulties later, who can then be encouraged sooner to enter an in-depth support programme.

Some argue that programmes offered universally decrease the possibility of stigma in the community. Stigma is an important research topic, particularly because in some cases parents refuse to obtain help when a problem begins, waiting instead until problems become intolerable (Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Rinaldis, Firman, and Baig, 2007). Furthermore researchers report that parents feel inadequate and unable to obtain services
due to perceived stigma (Barlow, Stewart-Brown, Callaghan, Tucker, Brocklehurst, Davis, et al., 2003; Kane, Wood, and Barlow, 2007). Thus to promote parenting programmes public health services should be framing the classes in ways that draw parents to attend, e.g. calling it ‘parent social club’ (Barlow et al., 2003). Parents report that if stigma for parenting programmes was lower, they would be more likely to seek help for their parenting related issues (Kane et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2007).

That said, programmes often target specific groups or particular problems. In some cases programmes are targeted at specific groups that illustrate certain characteristics. For instance programmes for parents of children exhibiting preschool behaviour problems (Barlow, Spencer, Coe, Laine, and Vostanis, 2004) or families who experience multiple risks (e.g. Heinickie, Fineman, Ruth, Recchla, Guthrie, and Rodning, 1999). One group typically targeted is ‘hard to reach’ parents. These parents typically refuse to participate in parent support programmes (Barlow et al., 2003; Barlow, Kirkpatrick, Stewart-Brown, and Davis, 2005). Several studies have demonstrated that this can have grave consequences because of the high level of need in this population. Typically programme refusers have not only more negative outcomes for themselves and their children, but also are less likely to attend midwifery and health visitor appointments (Barlow et al., 2003; Fonagy, 1998; Murray, Cooper, Wilson, and Romaniuk, 2003). Barlow et al. (2003) asked mothers why they did not participate in support programmes, and mothers responded to the questions as if unable to conceptualise that services could be helpful. The researchers suggest that if service providers worked to ascertain the kind of help the women needed/wanted, they would have had a better possibility of engaging mothers.

The answer to this question lies in what the programme is intending to do. If the programme is designed for all parents, with information that can meet all parents’ needs, then offering the programme to all families can be positive. However if the design of the programme is for specific populations then programmes should only be offered to them. In a perfect world, both universal and targeted programs would be used because each has its advantages. However, when choices must be made, a balance should be struck in which some level of each is utilized, the ratio between them being determined by the problems predicted for a particular population.

Specific factors: Are there specific factors that promote parent support programme effectiveness?

Various factors promote effectiveness with parents according to research conducted on parenting support programmes. While these components are not written in stone, they are nevertheless important considerations in programme design and evaluation.

According to the literature the following characteristics indicate the likeliness of interventions’ effectiveness, including organisations promoting a relationship with parents, increasing maternal self-esteem, and encouraging parents to create relationships with other group members (Coe, Spencer, Barlow, Vostanis, and Laine, 2003; Puckering, Rogers, Mills, Cox, and Mattsson-Graff, 1994).

One element of parenting programmes that has demonstrated effectiveness is using empowerment (also called strengths based) models for intervention. This means positively promoting parenting skills by telling parents what they are doing right, rather than telling parents what they are doing wrong as in the deficits model (Davis, 2009; Einizig, 1999; Marsh, 2003; Walsh, 2006). MacLeod and Nelson (2000) reviewed
numerous programmes and concluded that strengths based approaches were more likely to lead to positive child outcomes such as increased social and emotional development. They suggest that the positive approach utilised by some programmes aid families more by empowering their abilities. Pearson and Thurston (2006) found that encouraging positive parenting through empowerment based models, led to mothers' more in-depth engagement, meaning mothers were more likely to attend services regularly.

Programmes underpinned by theory are often considered more likely to produce the desired effects on parenting behaviour (Moran et al, 2004; Sanders, Cann, and Markie-Dadds, 2003; Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). In addition, these programmes often have a detailed mechanism of change meaning that the programme has a clearly mapped out way of achieving aims with families (Moran and Ghate, 2005).

Many evaluators and policy makers argue that parent support programmes can prevent numerous issues, including child abuse, through increasing social networks for families and thus decreasing social isolation. Research indicates that if parents have a social network they are less likely to exhibit negative parenting behaviours, thereby having a more positive relationship with their child (Bornstein, Putnick, Suwalsky, and Gini, 2006; Gomby, 1999; Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Pevalin, Wade, and Brannigan, 2003; Reppuci et al.,1997; Zubrick, Ward, Silburn, Lawrence, Williams, Blair, et al., 2005).

Because of the number of components addressed, this debate is continuing. While a few factors have initial evidence to suggest their importance, a complete picture of effectiveness in parenting programmes has yet to emerge. One element that has demonstrated importance is based on empowerment based models, which build on families’ strengths, as opposed to a deficit based model, which examines what the families are doing wrong. Another component in effectiveness is that programmes that are underpinned by theory are more likely to produce change in parenting practices. A final feature of programmes that promote positive parenting is increasing social support networks. However little is known about a multitude of other factors (discussed in depth below) and further research is required to fill in the gaps of specific aspects that promote change in parenting practices.

Programme format: Are group meeting or home visiting based programmes more likely to assist families?
Parent support programmes are delivered in either a group or one-on-one format, or a combination of both. An ongoing debate in the field of parent support programmes revolves around best practice in terms of whether home visits or group meetings meet parents’ needs better (MacMillan, Watthen, Barlow, Fergusson, Leventhal, and Taussig, 2009; Moran and Ghate, 2005; Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). One of the key reasons home visiting exists is that those who need services for young children are somewhat unlikely to attempt to access them (Moran and Ghate, 2005). Therefore services taken to families experiencing difficulties provide them with the assistance they require (Gomby, Culross, and Behrman, 1999). Home visiting programmes have many advantages such as meeting individual families needs (Izzo, Eckenrode, Smith, Henderson, Cole, Kitzman, et al., 2005); rapport building (Reppucci et al., 1997); and bringing services to the family, rather than them having to seek them out (Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004).

Group based programmes have been developed and used with the notion that people are supported by other people through group process (Sharry, 2001; Zubrick et al., 2005).
Others experiencing similar difficulties can give parents a sense that they are not alone in their parenting related issues (Coe et al., 2003; Puckering et al., 1994). Group based parent support programmes have been found to be a cost effective way to promote positive parent and child relationships (Lloyd, 1999; Patterson, Mockford, and Stewart-Brown, 2005; Sanders and Turner, 2005).

Perhaps the best way to conceptualise the debate is to consider that both home visiting and group meetings are likely to ‘fit’ in different ways for different families. Thus group programmes benefit families where parents can benefit from the social aspects while also learning about the issues in an open format. Whereas home visiting is better for families with severe entrenched difficulties who are unable or unwilling to work in a group (Moran et al., 2004; Moran and Ghate, 2005).

Programme aims and achievements: Should programmes be based on teaching specific skills, increasing parental mental health, and decreasing stress or changing parental attitudes and behaviours, or a combination?

One issue in the parenting programme literature is what programmes should be doing to ensure they reach their desired outcomes. Kane et al. (2007) discuss parent guilt, anger and loss of control suggesting that parents believe their parenting skills were poor, and this caused their children’s problems. Parents feel socially isolated and stigmatised due to their children’s behaviour. They did not seek help for fear of rejection, but accepted responsibility for the problem. Parenting programmes helped parents gain confidence and increased their ability to cope, with parents acquiring knowledge, skills, understanding and support.

In terms of teaching parents skills, Stiefel and Renner (2004) suggest that parents can aid children with behavioural problems by encouraging parents and children to have positive relationship building, thus enabling the child to develop self-regulatory patterns in stressful situations. The authors claim parents of children with difficulties often have difficulty establishing expectations and consistency due to exhaustion, constancy of children’s demands and push for control. Therefore parenting programmes can help parents build these skills in themselves and their children.

Morawska and Sanders (2007) state that interventions often exclusively teach skills. However they argue this is a mistake because the concrete underlying issues are the family context, parents’ confidence and emotional regulation. Similarly, Bor and Sanders (2004) found that enhancing parent self-efficacy with specific parenting tasks with children with behavioural issues has the possibility of preventing future conduct issues. Beckwith (2005) suggests that to provide the most supportive service, programme developers must have knowledge of the risk factors. That said, Beckwith explains that families experiencing too many risk factors may impede positive parenting. Therefore parent support programmes should consider a wide variety of issues, including environmental risk factors, not simply behaviour and skills in influencing parenting practices.

Parent support programmes can have a major influence on parental mental health. One issue that has demonstrated influence on the parent-child relationship is anxiety and depression. These can create relational problems and reduce the predictable interaction in this relationship, which in turn negatively affects child outcomes for many years.
For instance, Nicol-Harper et al. (2007) found that maternal anxiety led to less sensitive responses during mother-child interactions. Pawlby and Fernyhough (2009) used a video feedback intervention with mothers experiencing severe mental illness, and found that it increased mothers sensitive responding and quality in the parent-infant relationship. Goodwin, Broth, Hall, and Stowe (2008) found that mothers with postpartum depression were more likely to have depressed partners, meaning that their infant was receiving less positive interactions. They suggest that the reciprocal nature of families’ relationships needs to be addressed. Thus parent support programmes could have a key role in aiding these reciprocal relationships. Fletcher (2009), also investigating mothers with postpartum depression and fathers, found that supporting the father can aid both mother and father interactions with their infant. Therefore, in considering parents’ relationships with their infants, supporting fathers can aid the whole family.

Another important issue is self-efficacy in the parent-child relationship. Parents’ self-efficacy can have a strong impact on the parent-child relationship as it relates directly to parenting practices (Jones and Prinz, 2005; Sanders et al., 2003). Sevigny and Loutzenhiser (2009) also studied parental self-efficacy and found that this was directly related to relational functioning for both mothers and fathers. Some parent support programmes have suggested they raise levels of self-efficacy. However, little is known about the way in which self-efficacy is raised in this parent-programme context.

Mind-mindedness is a key area of study and has demonstrated its importance to the parent-child relationship. Essentially the better parents are able to understand and interpret their baby, the more likely the baby is to experience a number of positive outcomes over time (Meins, 2004; Oppenheim and Koren-Karie, 2002). Mind-mindedness, sometimes termed mentalization (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, and Target, 2002), can be thought of as parents’ viewing their child as having internal emotional and mental states, which aids the child’s development of others and self. Mothers able to be insightful about their child’s feelings promote empathy in their children, and their children typically understand others’ ideas in more depth (Ruffman, Perner, and Parkin, 1999; Strayer and Roberts, 2004; Walker and Cheng, 2007). Other studies suggest that parents with abusive practices have lower empathy levels such that they lack an understanding of their child’s feeling states and therefore cannot promote empathy in their children (De Paul, Perez-Albeniz, Ormaechea, Vergara, and Torres-Gomez de Cadiz, 2006). One suggestion for promoting mindfulness is through self-reflection in parenting. Reynolds (2003) argues that a key aspect in promoting the parent-child bond is encouraging parents to reflect and be mindful of their interactions. This evidence suggests that reflective parents demonstrate better parenting abilities (Oppenheim, and Koren-Karie, 2002; Rush, Sheelden, and Hanft, 2003).

Some evidence suggests that reflective parenting may be exhibited by parents who try to understand their child with child-centred worldviews (Puckering, et al., 1994). Therefore, they are better able to reflect accurately on their parenting experience. They experience more consistent, positive interactions with their children and often promote their child’s understanding of others (Kane et al., 2007). The idea of child-centred viewpoints promoting empathy remains largely unexplored especially in the context of parent support programmes. However, it appears it could provide direction in encouraging
parent-child relationships. Some research argues that parent education should promote parents teaching empathy to their children (Edwards, 2002; Kernberg, 1987).

As considered by Kane et al. (2007) the answer to this question relies not only at whom the programme is aimed, but also the goals of the programme. In particular, groups at high risk for parent-child relational issues, a combination of intensive intervention would be more likely to work. Thus, for parents experiencing mental health issues, programmes should aim at decreasing these, while increasing the instances in which parents respond to their children positively and reliably.

The other aspect of the answer to this question is that by teaching parents’ skills, promoting mental health, and decreasing stress, parents will in turn change their parenting practices, thus creating a combination of the above for best family outcomes (Barlow and Svanberg, 2009; Reppucci et al., 1997). For instance Gomby et al. (1999) found that programmes often combine providing parents support, practical assistance, linking families to community resources, and parent education. The goals they suggest are promotion of enhanced parent knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to child rearing; promotion of children’s health; promotion of children’s development; prevention of child abuse and neglect; and enhancement of maternal life course.

Offered services: How can programmes involve, engage and retain potential participants?
When considering services, it is important to understand the best ways for engaging and retaining participants (Davis, 2009; Law, Plunkett, Taylor, and Gunning, 2009). Some research indicates that providing services from the participants’ perspectives is more likely to engage and encourage parents’ participation (Olds, Sadler, and Kitzman, 2007).

One way to involve, engage and support families is through an integration of services. McKay, Shannon, Vater, and Dworkin (2006) found that by creating a system of assessment, referral, and service delivery, professionals were better able to provide appropriate care in early intervention services. This coordination allowed for a more efficient and clear service to promote family inclusion. Similarly Park and Turnbull (2003) suggest that a partnership model between families, service providers and professionals creates the most effective platform for positive outcomes in early intervention. They argue that integrating services this way will allow families’ needs to be met. MacLeod and Nelson (2000) found that the earlier and more proactively parents are involved in a parenting programme, the better and longer the effect.

Meeting families’ needs in context is key to engaging and retaining families. Law et al. (2009) found that integrated services that exist within families’ contexts are more likely and more able to aid them. Their research suggests that while no programme will meet all families’ requirements, programmes should aim to aid individual families within their specific needs and contexts. Similarly Wall, Taylor, Liebow, Sabatino, Mayer, Farber, et al. (2005) indicate that programmes should be as easy as possible for families to access. They also recommend that programmes should include individualised services to meet families’ needs.

Understanding the communities’ context in developing and promoting services is key to meeting service users’ needs. Sanders et al. (2003) argue that all services and interventions must ensure they consider the ecological context within which families exist. They point
out that no intervention will work without this consideration because families will not be able to access assistance based on their needs.

Melhuish, Belsky, Anning, Ball, Barnes, Romaniuk, et al. (2007) found that some programmes operating out of Children’s Centres were better functioning than others, suggesting a need to establish which specific programmes aid families in context. They also suggest that less stigma is perceived when programmes operate for the entire community, meaning area-based initiatives are more likely to promote change in parent practices. Avis, Bulman, and Leighton (2007) explored participation in Sure Start programmes and found that those parents who did not access services, particularly due to stigma, were more isolated and had lower levels of confidence. This indicates a need to ensure that services attempt to be inclusive in their provision and outreach to overcome potential perceptions of stigma. Similarly Coe, Gibson, Spencer, and Stuttaford (2008) suggest that parents do not access Sure Start services due to barriers of lack of information, accessibility and social isolation. By understanding service users’ perspectives, services can become more inclusive.

Like infants, parent support programmes do not exist in one dimension. Both exist within a specified framework. Beeber et al. (2007) explore and explain that little is known about what works with high risk parents to promote attachment and parent-child relationships. Without understanding this to ensure an appropriate mechanism of change and underpinning best practice, high risk parents’ needs may not be met.

Many parents report feeling incapable of coping with a problem that their child is having (Barlow and Stewart-Brown, 2004; Morawksa and Sanders, 2007). Parents who report going to their physician - about a quarter of parents who are concerned about their child’s behaviour - often feel ashamed, and then the physician prescribes medication or gives them very quick ‘advice’ (e.g. set boundaries; Sanders et al., 2007). The parent/mother feels socially isolated and stigmatised due to the child’s behaviour, and then the parent/mother report not receiving services for fear of rejection, and accepting the problem as their fault (Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Puckering et al., 1994).

Barlow et al. (2003) suggest the best way for services to engage families is through a partnership between the service and the families. This perspective indicates that instead of using the practitioner as an ‘expert’ who teaches the family, services and families should work together to promote positive parenting. Numerous clinicians and researchers argue that by creating a partnership between parent(s) and educators (parental services, schools, etc.), children will have healthier development (Barlow, et al., 2003; Manby, 2005; Pearson and Thurston, 2006). If these partnerships are created, child outcome is immensely improved (Coe, et al., 2003; Morawska, and Sanders, 2007). If all caregiving members work together, the child is more likely to exhibit appropriate behaviours (Coe et al., 2003; Manby, 2005; Moran and Ghate, 2005).

The answer to the question of which services to offer is exceedingly complex. It involves a combination of the above components such as: service integration; family and community context; and encouraging a family-service partnership, but that still leaves many aspects unconsidered. A few authors argue that programme providers are not adequately prepared for families’ difficulties and that more preventative services are needed, particularly those that aid parents in obtaining secure attachment, empathetic, and sensitive care giving (Asscher, Hermanns, and Dekovic, 2008; Barlow et al., 2003).
Other researchers discuss using a process of observation and reflection in promoting positive parenting with a focus on collaborative relationships between family members, childcare providers, and early interventionists to select and implement meaningful strategies to achieve functional outcomes (Pearson and Thurston, 2006; Rush et al., 2003). Therefore specific aspects still need to be considered and extracted.

References


Davis, H. (2009). The family partnership model: Understanding the processes of


van Doesum, K. T. M., Riksen-Walraven, J. M., Hosman, C. M. H., and Hoenfngels, C.


Appendix B:
Phase 1: Interview information sheets and semi-structured interview schedules
B1: Parent information sheet
B2: Project worker information sheet
B3: Mothers’ semi-structured interview schedule
B4: Fathers’ semi-structured interview schedule
B5: Coparents' semi-structured interview schedule
B6: Project workers' semi-structured interview schedule
Appendix B1: 
Parent Information Sheet

Information Sheet for Parents 
This project hopes to gain your opinions of parenting, your general thoughts on Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) and any potential other ideas you have on parenting and/or PAFT.

I will ask you questions and you can answer them with your own judgements - there are no right or wrong answers.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to parents in PAFT.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The interview should take approximately one hour.

Your interview will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The tapes and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The information will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, Principal Researcher on 014838 76939 or your PAFT project worker on 011898 32332.

Thank you so much for your time.
Information Sheet for Participants-PAFT Project Workers

This project hopes to gain your opinions of your process when working with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) families, PAFT’s community relationship, your general thoughts on PAFT and any potential other ideas you have on parenting services generally and/or PAFT.

I will ask you questions and you can answer them with your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to project workers that work with families and PAFT.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The interview should take approximately one half hour.

Your interview will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The tapes and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, Principal Researcher on 014838 76939.

Thank you so much for your time.
A. Demographic Questions
1. How many children do you have?
   a. Ages?
   b. Gender?
2. How long have you been with PAFT?
3. How many of your children have worked with PAFT?

B. Joining PAFT
1. How did you first hear about PAFT?
2. Why did you join PAFT originally?
3. What has kept you involved with PAFT?
4. Have any barriers existed in your working with PAFT?

C. Parent-Project Worker Relationship
1. Tell me about your project worker, what's it like working with her?
2. Does the PAFT project worker do anything that benefits your family?
   a. If so what?
3. Is there anything that you would like to change about your relationship?

D. Partner
1. How much involvement does your partner have with your child?
   a. Has PAFT influenced this?
2. Would you like your partner to be more involved with PAFT?
3. Is there a way that PAFT could include your partner more?

E. Overall PAFT Project
1. Do you feel your knowledge of children has increased/changed due to PAFT?
2. Do you feel your knowledge about your child has increased/changed due to PAFT?
3. What types of things do you feel you have learned from PAFT?
4. Do you feel your perspective of parenting has changed due to PAFT?
   a. How?
5. Do you feel your perspective of your child has changed due to PAFT?
   a. How?
6. Has PAFT influenced your relationship with your child/family?
   a. If so, How?
7. Do you feel confident about your parenting skills?
   a. Do you think PAFT has influenced this?
8. Have you ever had specific concerns about your child?
   a. Has PAFT worked with you on these?
9. Is there anything you would like to change about PAFT?
10. Do you have any concerns/thoughts about PAFT that I have not covered here?

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3 Developed from Literature: Allen (2007); MacAllister and Thomas (2007); Osofosky et al. (2007); Smith and Bryan (2005)
Appendix B4:  
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Fathers

A. Demographic Questions
1. How many children do you have?
   a. Ages?
   b. Gender?

B. Parenting
1. Can you tell me a little bit about how much time you spend interacting with your child/children?
   a. alone?
   b. as a family?
2. What kind of things do you do with your child?
3. What kind of things does your partner do with your child?
4. Do you interact with each child differently?

C. PAFT Involvement
1. How involved have you been with PAFT?
2. How involved would you like to be with PAFT?
3. Are there things that PAFT could do to make you feel more involved?
4. Do you know what PAFT does when they come to visit with your family?
5. Have you met the project worker that works with your partner and child?
   a. If so, did you have any impressions?
   b. Does she do anything that makes you feel included?

D. Partner
1. How much time do you think you spend interacting with your partner about PAFT?
2. Is there anything your partner does that makes you feel included in PAFT?
3. Do you speak with your child/children about what they did with PAFT?
   a. What kind of things do they usually tell you?
4. Would your partner like you to be more involved with PAFT?

E. Overall Questions
1. How do you feel your perspective of parenting has changed over time?
2. Do you feel your perspective of parenting has changed due to PAFT? If so, how?
3. Do you feel that your perspectives of your family as a whole have changed over time?
4. Has PAFT influenced your relationship with your child/family? If so, how?
5. Do you feel your knowledge about your child has increased/changed due to PAFT?
   a. What types of things do you feel you have learned from PAFT?
6. Do you feel confident about your parenting skills? Do you think PAFT has influenced this?
7. Have you ever had specific concerns about your child?
   a. Has PAFT helped you with these?
8. Is there anything you would like to change about PAFT?
9. Do you have any other thoughts on parenting or your family that we have not spoken about?
10. Do you have any concerns/thoughts about PAFT that I have not covered here?

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4 Developed from Literature: Addis and Mahalike (2003); Harel et al. (2006); Hawkins et al. (2008); Lewis and Lamb (2003)
Appendix B5:
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Coparents

A. Demographic Questions
   1. How long have you been a couple?
   2. How long were you together before having your first child?
   3. How many children do you have? Ages? Gender?

B. Parenting
   1. Can you tell me a little bit about how much time you spend interacting with your child/children?
      a. alone?
      b. as a family?
   2. What kind of things do each of you do with your child?
   3. What kind of things do you think your partner does with your child?
   4. Do you interact with each child differently?

C. PAFT Involvement
   1. How did you first hear about PAFT?
   2. How long have you been with PAFT?
   3. How many of your children have worked with PAFT?
   4. How did you decide to join PAFT? Was this together or separately?
   5. Do you remember why you joined PAFT originally?
   6. Have any barriers existed in your working with PAFT?

D. Coparenting and PAFT
   1. How does the PAFT information get from one of you to the other?
   2. Do you discuss the PAFT information together?
   3. Have you both ever done a PAFT session together?
      a. If so, what was it like?
      b. Did it change your dynamics together?
      c. Specific examples?
   4. Do you think the Project Worker does anything to encourage you to work together? If so, what?
   5. Is there any way you both see that PAFT could include your partner more?

E. Overall Coparenting and PAFT Project
   1. How do you feel your perspective of parenting together has changed over time?
   2. Do you feel your perspective of parenting together has changed due to PAFT? How?
   3. Do you feel that your perspectives of your family as a whole have changed over time?
   4. Has PAFT influenced your relationship with your one another and/or your child? If so, how?
   5. Do you feel confident about your parenting together? Do you think PAFT has influenced this?
   6. Have you ever had specific concerns about your child? Has PAFT helped you both with these?
   7. Is there anything you would like to change about PAFT?
   8. Do you have any other thoughts on parenting together or your family as a whole that we have not spoken about?
   9. Do you have any concerns/thoughts about PAFT that I have not covered here?

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5 Developed from Literature: Feinberg (2002); McHale and Rotman (2004); Mockford and Barlow (2004); Patterson et al. (2005)
Appendix B6: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: PAFT Project Workers

A. PAFT and Project Worker Process
1. What do you see as your role in PAFT?
2. How has PAFT evolved since you have been here?
3. What goals do you hold for yourself in your role with PAFT?
4. What goals do you hold for PAFT?
5. What do you want for PAFT from this evaluation?

B. PAFT-Family Relationship
1. Do you think parents have clear expectations of PAFT?
   a. Do these change over time?
2. What role do you believe PAFT plays to families?
3. What do you think parents' perspectives of PAFT are?
4. How involved do you think parents are in PAFT?
   a. How involved would you like them to be?
5. How do you feel you encourage parent participation in PAFT?

C. Project Worker-Family Relationship
1. What kinds of issues do you typically deal with in families?
2. How do you establish a relationship with the family?
3. What are typical barriers in your relationship with a family?
4. What are typical facilitators in your relationship with a family?
5. Do you have specific strategies when working with families experiencing difficulties?
6. Do you think that the needs of parents lessen while you are working with them?
7. Do you feel that you encourage father participation? In what ways?
8. What kind of characteristics do you typically see at the start of work with a family?
9. What kind of characteristics do you typically see towards the end of work with a family?

D. PAFT in the Community
1. What role does PAFT currently play in the community?
2. What role would you like to see PAFT play in the community?
3. How useful do you see PAFT in the community?
4. What are typical barriers in your relationship with the community?
5. What are typical facilitators in your relationship with the community?

Is there anything else you would like to say about PAFT that I have not covered here?

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6 Developed from Literature: Beeber et al. (2007); Brown and Young (2005); Ho (2002); Kornacher et al. (2007); MacAllister and Thomas (2007); Mann et al. (2007)
Appendix C:
Phase 2: Questionnaires packets
  C1: Mother and Mother as a Coparent Questionnaire Packet
  C2: Father and Fathers as a Coparent Questionnaire Packet
  C3: Project Worker Questionnaire Packet
Appendix C1:
Mother and Mother as a Coparent Questionnaire Packet
Information Sheet for Participants-Mothers

This project hopes to gain your opinions of parenting and your general thoughts on Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).

Please answer the questions on the forms using your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to decline answering any question which does not apply to you or you would prefer not to answer.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to parents and PAFT participants.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The questionnaire should take approximately 20-30 minutes.

The information you provide in your questionnaires will be for research purposes only. Your answers/completed questionnaires will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with any families, your PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The completed questionnaires and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, principal researcher on 01483 876939.

Thank you so much for your time.

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.
Consent Form

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on parenting and Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).
- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been advised about any discomfort and possible ill-effects on my health and well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I agree to comply with any instruction given to me during the study and to co-operate fully with the investigators. I shall inform them immediately if I suffer any deterioration of any kind in my health or well-being, or experience any unexpected or unusual symptoms.
- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for the research project detailed in the information sheet, and agree that data collected may be shared with other researchers or interested parties. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

Date

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

Date
Information about You

The information here will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared with anyone. Please tick the box that best describes your experience. Please feel free to not answer any questions you would not like to.

What is your gender?

□ Male □ Female

What is your parenting status?

□ Single Parent
□ Married Parent
□ Living together but not married
□ Living apart and parenting together
□ Parenting with another family member
□ Other

What is your age?

□ 18 or under □ 19-24 □ 25-29
□ 30-34 □ 35-39 □ 40+

How would you describe your ethnic origins?1

White:
□ British □ Irish □ Other

Mixed:
□ White and Black Caribbean □ White and Black African
□ White and Asian □ Mixed-Other

Asian or Asian British:
□ Indian □ Pakistani
□ Bangladeshi □ Asian-Other

Black or Black British:
□ Caribbean □ African □ Black-Other
□ Chinese
□ Other

1 The format of this question is taken from the 2001 UK census.
What type of area do you currently live in?

□ Rural □ Semi-Rural □ Suburb
□ Village Centre □ Town Centre □ City Centre

Are you currently in paid employment?

□ Yes □ No

What is your current occupation (or, if you are no longer working, what was your last occupation?)

________________________________________________________________________

If you parent in a two parent family, are both parents currently in paid employment?

□ Yes □ No

What is your highest educational qualification?

□ None □ GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)
□ A-level(s)/AS-level(s) □ Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)
□ University Degree □ Postgraduate degree/diploma

Parent Satisfaction Scale

On a scale of 0 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how satisfied would you say you are in your parenting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Relationship Satisfaction Scale

On a scale of 0 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how satisfied would you say you are in your current partnership?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PAFT Questions

What is your project workers name? _______________

Are you currently working with PAFT?

□ Yes    □ No

If yes, what is the age of your child in PAFT?

□ 3-6 months    □ 7-12 months    □ 13-18 months
□ 19-24 months    □ 25-35 months    □ 36+ months

If no, were you signed off from PAFT because your child reached three/five?

□ Yes    □ No

Do you have children not in PAFT?

□ Yes    □ No

If yes, what are their ages: _______________

How long have you been working with PAFT? (If you are no longer working with PAFT, how long did you work with them?)

□ 3-6 months    □ 7-12 months    □ 13-18 months
□ 19-24 months    □ 25-35 months    □ 36+ months

What was your initial reason to join PAFT?

□ Saw information and contacted PAFT
□ Community referral (e.g. health visitor, social services)
□ Friend/acquaintance recommendation
□ Other_________________________

How many PAFT home visits has the mother/coparent attended?

□ None    □ A few (e.g. 1-5)    □ Some (e.g. 5-10)
□ Many (11+)    □ All

How many PAFT home visits has the father/coparent attended?

□ None    □ A few (e.g. 1-5)    □ Some (e.g. 5-10)
□ Many (11+)    □ All
Mothering and PAFT

Please say how much you agree with the following statements as a mother and for your involvement with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT)

Each statement can be answered on a 6 point scale with: 0 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, and 1 = disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = slightly agree, and 4 = agree

Please choose the number that best indicates your experiences of mothering and PAFT

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So if you agree that you liked to go shopping, you would tick 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is NOT a test- there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer
1. You as a Mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree 0</th>
<th>Disagree 1</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree 2</th>
<th>Slightly Agree 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree 5</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothering is about figuring out what is beneficial to your child</td>
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<td>I do not want to be one of those mums who gets into competitions with other mums</td>
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<td>My child can be difficult to manage</td>
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<td>All the way through the pregnancy, I had mixed feelings toward becoming a mother</td>
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<td>I have some ongoing struggles with my child</td>
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<td>My child’s behaviour stresses me out sometimes</td>
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<td>After my child was born, no one asked how I was</td>
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<td>It is easier to take care of your children if you can put yourself in their shoes</td>
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<td>When I feel stressed with my child, it goes around the whole family</td>
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<td>I hate thinking bad things about my children</td>
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<td>I constantly shout at my child</td>
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<td>Sometimes my child makes me feel out of control</td>
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<td>Other people judging my mothering, makes me feel like a big failure</td>
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<td>It is my job to give my child boundaries</td>
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<td>You cannot compare two children</td>
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<td>Lots of mothers try to tell me what to do</td>
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<td>People really expect me to know what I am doing with my child</td>
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<td>When my child is fussy, the blame comes back onto me</td>
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<td>During pregnancy, everybody told me I would be fine at mothering</td>
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<td>It is important for mothers to give their child space to be an individual</td>
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<td>When I expect my child to do things and he does not, it puts a lot of pressure on me</td>
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<td>I want to stay at home to bring my child up</td>
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</table>
2. Mothering and PAFT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree 0</th>
<th>Disagree 1</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree 2</th>
<th>Slightly Agree 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One benefit of PAFT is the community spirit of people involved with it</td>
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<td>My project worker tells me the PAFT information in a positive way</td>
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<td>My project worker suggested that I went to see a health visitor for an issue my child was having</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is about having someone sit down and say try parenting this way</td>
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<td>My project worker leaves parenting things up to me to make the ultimate choices</td>
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<td>My child’s enjoyment of PAFT has kept us involved</td>
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<td>If my project worker does not know an answer, she points me in the right direction to find it</td>
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<td>PAFT highlights the things parents should do, guiding you down a good path</td>
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<td>When my project worker leaves, I feel like somebody has listened to me</td>
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<td>Everything with parenting seems a little easier to deal with because PAFT is helping me</td>
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<td>PAFT is good because it gives you support at home and support at group meetings</td>
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<td>I think without PAFT I probably would be depressed because of all my worries about parenting</td>
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<td>PAFT helps me see that there are no right or wrong answers in parenting</td>
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<td>My project worker helps me see that my child is not so bad</td>
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<td>My project worker gives me the confidence to get involved with the community</td>
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<td>PAFT is like my friend turning up every month who helps me understand my child</td>
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<td>PAFT makes you appreciate what is going on in your child’s little mind</td>
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<td>PAFT suggestions might not work but if they do, it will make your life a lot easier</td>
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<td>I have a great relationship with my project worker</td>
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<td>PAFT makes me feel like I can keep going when things are hard with my child</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT shows me that you do not have to give your kids toys, you should give them your time</td>
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<tr>
<td>My project worker goes over any problems that I have</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How much do you agree with this statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree 0</th>
<th>Disagree 1</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree 2</th>
<th>Slightly Agree 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can say bad things about my child to my project worker and we talk about them</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT gives a practical response to raising children</td>
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<td>My project worker always says I am a good mum and that gives me confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT took away my fear of getting into competitions with other mothers</td>
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<tr>
<td>I thrive on the chances that PAFT has given me</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lot of stuff that my project worker has done with me, I have done with other people</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is not just an information thing, it is a social thing</td>
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<tr>
<td>The mother inside me has changed a lot because of PAFT</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A coparent is a person that parents with another person. (For example: a biological, adoptive or step- mother/father, the child’s grandparent, a friend.)

Are you a coparent? □ Yes □ No

If yes, please answer the following questions about coparenting as a mother and PAFT

Please remember that:

This is NOT a test- there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer
1. Coparenting as a Mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (0)</th>
<th>Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Slightly Agree (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My partner tries to be as involved as much as he can with the children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner has always been okay about doing housework</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I was worried about something then I would talk about it with my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>It makes you feel good as a mum when you see your partner helping you out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before we had children, I cannot remember talking about how we will raise them</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner is more than happy to do anything that is involved directly with the children</td>
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<tr>
<td>When our child is fussy about something, my partner's answer is to give in to what our child wants</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner looked after me really well during the pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children make your life take a different focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>If my partner was excluded from community services, I would be upset about it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Before having a baby, my partner and I had very similar ideas about everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anything to do with the children tends to fall on my shoulders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important to encourage a teamwork aspect rather than a competition between parents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If daddy is around, I do not get a look from our child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner would love to be a stay at home dad</td>
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<tr>
<td>After I found out I was pregnant, my partner wanted me to tell him what to feel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Since our child was born, my partner is no longer my main priority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner makes me feel good about myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is very important that we have a consistent parenting approach between us</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I get angry at my partner for not helping enough, he will make the effort</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is difficult for my partner to be involved with our children due to his work</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree with this statement?</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 1</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree 2</td>
<td>Slightly Agree 3</td>
<td>Agree 4</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner needs to know why our child is doing something</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We made a decision together that we wanted to have children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When my partner does not know what to do with our child, it is very stressful for me</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not think fathers should be excluded from community services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>After our child was born, I was keen to get some routine and my partner did not see the benefits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We have a child now and that brings us closer together</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We had sorted all our relationship differences before we decided to have a family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting is highly stressful. You need a strong relationship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Before our child was born, I had more understanding as to what parenting was than my partner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel like I am nagging my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>When we brought our child home from the hospital, we really did not know what we were doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>We know it is a benefit to our child if we work together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting can often seem like it is full of spectacular failures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am the emotional support to our child and my partner does the playing</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you arranged something for fathers in the community, I do not think they would turn up</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel stronger for my partner because he is such a great dad</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think a woman is programmed to know what a child's routine is</td>
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<tr>
<td>After our child was born, there was not anything for dads in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>When fathers try to take an active role with their children, it is seen as a competition between parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>The give and take in our relationship does not bother me in the least</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner teaches our child things differently from me</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 2. Coparenting and PAFT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAFT told us we were doing really well with our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is reassurance for us that we are doing the right thing with our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>I get my partner to sit down and read the PAFT handout rather than just nagging him about parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT helps us know actually how to deal with issues our child is having</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT encourages parents to talk about parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT try and involve the dads by giving the handouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>If PAFT did not have the handouts to remind me of what they said, I would have no idea</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No one tells parents that they are doing a good job, but PAFT does</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner and I have a quick chat about PAFT but we do not go into real conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>If people do not talk to their partners, then their partner would need to be around for PAFT visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>In an ideal world if my partner could be more involved with PAFT, it would be fantastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner tells me to ask the project worker things about our child at the next meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>My project worker helps me sort things out when I am frustrated at my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner is generally at work during the day when PAFT comes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes I thrust the PAFT handouts in my partner's face so that he will scan it</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner is very supportive about PAFT</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is not that my partner does not want to do PAFT, it is just that he is always focussed on work</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is not just a mummy thing, daddy can do it as well</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT never really stops with my child, my project worker incorporates the whole family</td>
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</table>

Thank you so much for all of your help. It is most appreciated.

If you have any questions or need any other information, please feel free to contact your PAFT project worker or the principal researcher, Corinne Huntington (01483 876939)
Coparenting Questionnaire

If you are currently in a coparenting relationship (parent with another person e.g. the child’s mother/father, grandparent), please answer the questions about your coparenting experiences below.

Each statement can be answered on a five point scale of: never, rarely, sometimes, usually and always. Please choose the box that best indicates your experiences of coparenting with your partner.

This is NOT a test; there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas.

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind.

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My partner...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tells me lots of things about our child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undermines my parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivers messages to me through our child rather than saying them to me</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fills me in on what happens during our child’s day</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Says cruel or hurtful things about me in front of our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supports my discipline decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argues with me about our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>And I have different rules regarding food, chores and bedtime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Says nice things about me to our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses our child to get back at me</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>And I have different standards for our child’s behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tries to get our child to take sides when we argue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shares the burden of discipline</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks my opinions on issues related to parenting</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 From Margolin, Gordis, and John (2001)
Survey of Parenting Practice

This is a survey about how you feel Parents as First Teachers (PAT) has changed the knowledge and skills you have as a parent. Your answers will help us know how our program is working.

Shade Circles Like This: ●
Not Like This: ○ or X

Please think of one of your children as you complete this survey. What is their age?

Look at the Parenting Ladder. Where are you on the ladder NOW?
(Fill in the circle that represents where you are on the ladder)

Today

Low 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
High 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

a. My knowledge of how my child is growing and developing.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
b. My knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
c. My knowledge of how my child's brain is growing and developing.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
d. My confidence in myself as a parent.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
e. My confidence in setting limits for my child.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
f. My confidence that I can help my child learn at this age.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
g. My ability to identify what my child needs.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
h. My ability to respond effectively when my child is upset.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
i. My ability to keep my child safe and healthy.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
j. The amount of activities my child and I do together.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
k. The amount I read to my child.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
l. My connection with other families with children.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Think back to **before** you participated in the Parents as Teachers program. Where were you on the ladder **THEN?**

*(Fill in the circle that represents where you are on the ladder)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a. My knowledge of how my child is growing and developing.
- b. My knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age.
- c. My knowledge of how my child’s brain is growing and developing.
- d. My confidence in myself as a parent.
- e. My confidence in setting limits for my child.
- f. My confidence that I can help my child learn at this age.
- g. My ability to identify what my child needs.
- h. My ability to respond effectively when my child is upset.
- i. My ability to keep my child safe and healthy.
- j. The amount of activities my child and I do together.
- k. The amount I read to my child.
- l. My connection with other families with children.

---

How would you rate the following services provided by the PAT program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How helpful have the personal visits been?</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you attended parent meetings, how helpful have you found the group meetings to be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How likely would you be to recommend PAT to another family?</th>
<th>0 Yes</th>
<th>0 No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did your parent educator recommend that you see a trained professional about a concern with your child’s health, vision, hearing or development?

- If yes, what did you do?
  - I took my child to a professional
  - I called for advice/made an appointment
  - Nothing yet, but I plan to take action
  - Nothing, I do not think it is necessary
  - Other, explain: __________________________________________

---

Thank you for participating.
Appendix C2:
Father and Fathers as a Coparent Questionnaire Packet
Information Sheet for Participants-Fathers

This project hopes to gain your opinions of parenting and your general thoughts on Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).

Please answer the questions on the forms using your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to decline answering any question which does not apply to you or you would prefer not to answer.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to parents and PAFT participants.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The questionnaire should take approximately 20-30 minutes.

The information you provide in your questionnaires will be for research purposes only. Your answers/completed questionnaires will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with any families, your PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The completed questionnaires and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, principal researcher on 01483 876939.

Thank you so much for your time.

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.
Consent Form

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on parenting and Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been advised about any discomfort and possible ill-effects on my health and well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I agree to comply with any instruction given to me during the study and to co-operate fully with the investigators. I shall inform them immediately if I suffer any deterioration of any kind in my health or well-being, or experience any unexpected or unusual symptoms.

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for the research project detailed in the information sheet, and agree that data collected may be shared with other researchers or interested parties. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

Date

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

Date
Information about You

The information here will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared with anyone. Please tick the box that best describes your experience. Please feel free to not answer any questions you would not like to.

What is your gender?
□ Male □ Female

What is your parenting status?
□ Single Parent
□ Married Parent
□ Living together but not married
□ Living apart and parenting together
□ Parenting with another family member
□ Other

What is your age?
□ 18 or under □ 19-24 □ 25-29
□ 30-34 □ 35-39 □ 40+

How would you describe your ethnic origins?¹
White: □ British □ Irish □ Other

Mixed: □ White and Black Caribbean □ White and Black African
□ White and Asian □ Mixed-Other

Asian or Asian British:
□ Indian □ Pakistani
□ Bangladeshi □ Asian-Other

Black or Black British:
□ Caribbean □ African □ Black-Other
□ Chinese
□ Other

¹ The format of this question is taken from the 2001 UK census.
What type of area do you currently live in?

- □ Rural
- □ Semi-Rural
- □ Suburb
- □ Village Centre
- □ Town Centre
- □ City Centre

Are you currently in paid employment?

- □ Yes
- □ No

What is your current occupation (or, if you are no longer working, what was your last occupation?)

- ______________________________________________

If you parent in a two parent family, are both parents currently in paid employment?

- □ Yes
- □ No

What is your highest educational qualification?

- □ None
- □ GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)
- □ A-level(s)/AS-level(s)
- □ Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)
- □ University Degree
- □ Postgraduate degree/diploma

Parent Satisfaction Scale

On a scale of 0 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how satisfied would you say you are in your parenting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Relationship Satisfaction Scale

On a scale of 0 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how satisfied would you say you are in your current partnership?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PAFT Questions

What is your project worker's name? ______________________

Are you currently working with PAFT?
□ Yes □ No

If yes, what is the age of your child in PAFT?
□ 3-6 months □ 7-12 months □ 13-18 months
□ 19-24 months □ 25-35 months □ 36+ months

If no, were you signed off from PAFT because your child reached three/five?
□ Yes □ No

Do you have children not in PAFT?
□ Yes □ No
If yes, what are their ages: ______________________

How long have you been working with PAFT? (If you are no longer working with PAFT, how long did you work with them?)
□ 3-6 months □ 7-12 months □ 13-18 months
□ 19-24 months □ 25-35 months □ 36+ months

What was your initial reason to join PAFT?
□ Saw information and contacted PAFT
□ Community referral (e.g. health visitor, social services)
□ Friend/acquaintance recommendation
□ Other ______________________

How many PAFT home visits has the mother/coparent attended?
□ None □ A few (e.g. 1-5) □ Some (e.g. 5-10)
□ Many (11+) □ All

How many PAFT home visits has the father/coparent attended?
□ None □ A few (e.g. 1-5) □ Some (e.g. 5-10)
□ Many (11+) □ All
Fathering and PAFT

Please say how much you agree with the following statements as a father and for your involvement with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT)

Each statement can be answered on a 6 point scale with: 0 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, and 1 = disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = slightly agree, and 4 = agree

Please choose the number that best indicates your experiences of fathering and PAFT

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So if you agree that you like to go shopping, you would tick 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is NOT a test- there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer
## 1. You as a Father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once I had a child, he became my number one priority</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming a father has been a motivation to spend more time at home</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel much more confident as a father than I did a year ago</td>
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<tr>
<td>When it comes to bonding and being with my child I would like to do more</td>
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<tr>
<td>When my child first arrived, he was a poop factory that screamed, babies cannot do anything</td>
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<tr>
<td>As soon as I could after our child was born, I went back to work because I found it easier to be there</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that there is a place in the community where fathers are encouraged to talk to each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I could, I would definitely be a stay at home dad</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lot of fathering is whether you feel something is right or wrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fathering is a juggle of time, what is important to do versus what you would like and what is fair to do</td>
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<tr>
<td>You should win the lottery before you have children</td>
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<tr>
<td>My first feeling in becoming a father was panic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning how to be a dad is always evolving</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have been lucky because I had a close family upbringing</td>
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<tr>
<td>When my child was born, my world was turned upside down</td>
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<tr>
<td>More availability of father services is the key to their involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>After my child was born I was a dad, because something changed inside me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Since becoming a father I have made slight changes to my work-home life but nothing significant</td>
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<tr>
<td>When my child arrived, the reality of the hard work dawned on me</td>
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<tr>
<td>You look toward the future all the time for your child, you think what is the next step forward?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would be quite upset if I was excluded from community services</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree with this statement?</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your child can knock your confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>I never had any involvement from my dad when I was little</td>
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<tr>
<td>I asked a question on one of these parenting internet forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soon after my child was born I remember taking him off by myself and thinking what happens if he kicks off (starts screaming/crying)?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am fulfilling that traditional 'breadwinner' role in the family</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have tried to find some father-child activities in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel as though I miss out on fathering</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need alternatives to shouting at our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>As my child does more and more physical things I feel more of an attachment to him</td>
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<tr>
<td>I realised that children do not run like clockwork but at work I am still the opposite: 'You said you were going to do it so where is it?'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting to see my child develop, that is the magic in fathering</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Fathering and PAFT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a flip through PAFT handouts and take out what information I think is useful</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT builds massive amounts of confidence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project worker has been through everything we are going through as parents</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of PAFT have been to understand that my child is developing at the rate that he should be</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not think I gained from PAFT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could, I would definitely be more involved with PAFT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PAFT handouts make me start to watch for what my child should be doing, bringing it to the front of my mind</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### How much do you agree with this statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a father you have the opportunity to attend or not attend PAFT visits

My knowledge about children has significantly improved because of PAFT

There are always pamphlets left behind by PAFT for fathers to follow up on

**If you have attended at least one home visit with a PAFT project worker, please answer the following questions:**

### How much do you agree with this statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project worker meets my needs to learn about my child

My project worker is very good at talking and listening to people and that encourages me to get involved

If I want to say something during a PAFT visit, the project worker considers my input valid

We are here for PAFT visits as a family unit and the project worker comes along and interfaces into that

I do not feel excluded from PAFT

When I am at the visit rather than addressing all the questions and options to my partner as the mother, the project worker addresses me as well

It is quite nice to see what PAFT and the kids are doing rather than just reading about it from the handouts

---

A coparent is a person that parents with another person. (For example: a biological, adoptive, or step-mother/father, the child’s grandparent, a friend.)

**Are you a coparent? □ Yes □ No**

If yes, please answer the following questions about coparenting as a father and PAFT

Please remember that:

This is NOT a test - there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer

---

Page 4
# 1. Co-parenting as a Father

How much do you agree with this statement? | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
When your child is first born, you cannot do anything as a bloke | | | | | | |
My partner and I try to experience parenting equally | | | | | | |
My partner is very managerial | | | | | | |
I think father involvement in the family has to come through the mother of the family | | | | | | |
We sorted all our relationship differences before we decided to have a family | | | | | | |
Parenting can be left to the mum | | | | | | |
Parenting can often seem like it is full of spectacular failures | | | | | | |
I remember saying to my partner before we had a child, ‘what do you do with a baby’? | | | | | | |
I do pretty much everything around the house | | | | | | |
A fathers’ role initially when the nipper is born is to support and help the mother | | | | | | |
To get the right balance of good cop bad cop, you need two parents to raise a child | | | | | | |
Community services should be centred around the mother | | | | | | |
I am not as good at teaching our child as my partner is | | | | | | |
My partner does everything to keep the house together | | | | | | |
Being with my partner and child is where I am happiest | | | | | | |
My partner and I tend to know what each other needs or wants | | | | | | |
I enjoyed my partner’s pregnancy | | | | | | |
The transition to parents was difficult for us as a couple | | | | | | |
There is this tendency in society to cast the father as the second class parent | | | | | | |
Everything is stacked up against couples, because so many people these days do not stay together | | | | | | |
I do a lot of what I am told to do by my partner | | | | | |
### 2. Co-Parenting and PAFT

#### How much do you agree with this statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

- If you arranged something for fathers in the community, I do not think they would turn up
- Before having a baby, my partner and I had very similar ideas about everything
- When fathers try to take an active role with their children, it is seen as a competition between parents
- We made a decision together that we wanted to have a child
- Parenting is highly stressful. You need a strong relationship
- I end up juggling everything, the relationship with my partner, the child, the house, work, shopping
- Children overtake the greater percentage of daily tasks than their size dictates they should
- Having a child brings my partner and I closer
- It is a benefit to our child if we work together
- Parenting is a few clashes of what I thought would work with what my partner thought would work
- My partner and I lean on each other very well
- A lot of support out there for fathers is: ‘you can come along too or whatever’
- When we brought our child home from the hospital, we really did not know what we were doing
- My partner is a tuft of emotional support for our child and I have always played a lot more
- It is very important that my partner and I have a consistent parenting approach between us
- My partner does loads more of the household tasks than I do
- Before we had children, I cannot remember talking about how we will raise them
- My partner makes me feel good about myself

The PAFT handouts were really useful because we did not have any experience parenting

PAFT helps parents see this cute little bundle is interesting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My partner gives me good reports on PAFT</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT gives my partner support so she feels more relaxed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am not going to read through the PAFT handout, my partner has to talk me through the visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents make time for their child when somebody like PAFT turns up on their door</td>
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<tr>
<td>The project worker will have explained things to my partner and then she passes it on to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is teaching my partner and I to be aware of what things the baby should be doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner gives me just the important bits after a PAFT visit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT makes parents talk about parenting things when they read through the handouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT helps us know actually how to deal with issues our child is having</td>
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<tr>
<td>The project worker comes and gives my partner a nice warm feeling which gives me one</td>
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<tr>
<td>If only one parent can attend PAFT, the father or the mother, ultimately you are going to get something out of it</td>
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<tr>
<td>My partner and kids gained a lot from PAFT</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thank you so much for all of your help. It is most appreciated.

If you have any questions or need any other information, please feel free to contact your PAFT project worker or the principal researcher, Corinne Huntington (01483 876939)
Coparenting Questionnaire

If you are currently in a coparenting relationship (parent with another person e.g. the child's mother/father, grandparent), please answer the questions about your coparenting experiences below.

Each statement can be answered on a five point scale of: never, rarely, sometimes, usually and always. Please choose the box that best indicates your experiences of coparenting with your partner.

This is NOT a test - there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas.

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind.

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My partner...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tells me lots of things about our child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undermines my parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivers messages to me through our child rather than saying them to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fills me in on what happens during our child's day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Says cruel or hurtful things about me in front of our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supports my discipline decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argues with me about our child</td>
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<tr>
<td>And I have different rules regarding food, chores and bedtime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Says nice things about me to our child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses our child to get back at me</td>
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<tr>
<td>And I have different standards for our child's behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tries to get our child to take sides when we argue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shares the burden of discipline</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks my opinions on issues related to parenting</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

1 From Margolin, Gordis, and John (2001)
Survey of Parenting Practice

This is a survey about how you feel Parents as First Teachers (PAT) has changed the knowledge and skills you have as a parent. Your answers will help us know how our program is working.

Shade Circles Like This: ○
Not Like This: ☐ or ❌

Today

Please think of one of your children as you complete this survey. What is their age? □

Look at the Parenting Ladder. Where are you on the ladder NOW?
(Fill in the circle that represents where you are on the ladder)

a. My knowledge of how my child is growing and developing.
   Low = High
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
b. My knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
c. My knowledge of how my child's brain is growing and developing.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
d. My confidence in myself as a parent.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
e. My confidence in setting limits for my child.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
f. My confidence that I can help my child learn at this age.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
g. My ability to identify what my child needs.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
h. My ability to respond effectively when my child is upset.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
i. My ability to keep my child safe and healthy.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
j. The amount of activities my child and I do together.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
k. The amount I read to my child.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
l. My connection with other families with children.
   ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6
Think back to **before** you participated in the Parents as Teachers program. Where were you on the ladder **THEN**?

(Fill in the circle that represents where you are on the ladder)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. My knowledge of how my child is growing and developing.

b. My knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age.

c. My knowledge of how my child's brain is growing and developing.

d. My confidence in myself as a parent.

e. My confidence in setting limits for my child.

f. My confidence that I can help my child learn at this age.

g. My ability to identify what my child needs.

h. My ability to respond effectively when my child is upset.

i. My ability to keep my child safe and healthy.

j. The amount of activities my child and I do together.

k. The amount I read to my child.

l. My connection with other families with children.

---

**How would you rate the following services provided by the PAT program?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful have the personal visits been?

If you attended parent meetings, how helpful have you found the group meetings to be?

How likely would you be to recommend PAT to another family?

Did your parent educator recommend that you see a trained professional about a concern with your child's health, vision, hearing or development?

○ Yes  ○ No

If yes, what did you do?

○ I took my child to a professional
  ○ I called for advice/made an appointment

○ Nothing yet, but I plan to take action
  ○ Nothing, I do not think it is necessary

○ Other, explain: _______________________

---

**Thank you for participating.**
Appendix C3:
Project Worker Questionnaire Packet
Information Sheet for Participants-PAFT Project Workers

This project hopes to gain your opinions of your work with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) families, PAFT’s community relationship, your general thoughts on PAFT and any potential other ideas you have on parenting services generally and/or PAFT.

Please answer the questions on the form using your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to continue offering a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to project workers that work with families and PAFT.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes.

Your answers/completed questionnaires will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with any families, other PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The completed questionnaires and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, principal researcher on 01483 876939.

Thank you so much for your time.

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.
Consent Form

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on parenting and Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been advised about any discomfort and possible ill-effects on my health and well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I agree to comply with any instruction given to me during the study and to co-operate fully with the investigators. I shall inform them immediately if I suffer any deterioration of any kind in my health or well-being, or experience any unexpected or unusual symptoms.

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for the research project detailed in the information sheet, and agree that data collected may be shared with other researchers or interested parties. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ............................................................

Signed ..............................................................................................................

Date ..................................................................................................................

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) ..............................

Signed ..............................................................................................................

Date ..................................................................................................................
Information about You
(Project Worker)

The information here will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared with anyone. Please tick the box that best describes your experience. Please feel free to not answer any questions you would not like to.

What is your gender?
□ Male □ Female

Are you a parent?
□ Yes □ No
If yes, how many children do you have?
□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5+
What are their ages? ___________________

Did you have an occupation before becoming a project worker?
□ Yes □ No
If yes, what was the occupation? ________________________

What is your highest educational qualification?
□ None □ GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)
□ A-level(s)/AS-level(s) □ Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.)
□ University Degree □ Postgraduate degree/diploma

How would you describe your ethnic origins?1
White: □ British □ Irish □ Other
Mixed: □ White and Black Caribbean □ White and Black African
□ White and Asian □ Mixed-Other
Asian or Asian British:
□ Indian □ Pakistani
□ Bangladeshi □ Asian-Other
Black or Black British:
□ Caribbean □ African □ Black-Other
□ Chinese □ Other ___________________

1 The format of this question is taken from the 2001 UK census.
How long have you been working as a project worker with PAFT?

☐ Under 1 year  ☐ 1-3 years
☐ 4-6 years  ☐ 7+ years

How many families do you currently provide with PAFT home visits?

☐ 5 or less  ☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15  ☐ 16-20
☐ 21-25  ☐ 26+

In your entire time as a project worker, how many families have you provided with at least one home visit?

☐ 5 or less  ☐ 6-10
☐ 11-20  ☐ 21-30
☐ 31-40  ☐ 41+

In cases of two parent households, have you ever had both parents attend a PAFT home visit together?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, approximately how many families have had both parents in attendance for at least one home visit?

☐ 1-5  ☐ 6-10  ☐ 11+

How did you find out about PAFT?

Do you remember anything specific that made you want to become a PAFT project worker?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as a PAFT project worker?
Project Workers and PAFT

Please say how much you agree with the following statements as a project worker and your involvement with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT)

Each statement can be answered on a 6 point scale with: 0 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, and 1 = disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = slightly agree, and 4 = agree.

Please choose the number that best indicates your experiences with PAFT

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree 0</th>
<th>Disagree 1</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree 2</th>
<th>Slightly Agree 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So if you agree that you like to go shopping you would tick 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree 0</th>
<th>Disagree 1</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree 2</th>
<th>Slightly Agree 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is NOT a test- there are no right and wrong answers. It is just about your experiences and opinions. Please answer these questions using just your own thoughts and ideas

Please fill this in quickly, ticking the box that first comes into your mind

Please do not fill in any boxes that do not apply to you or you do not wish to answer
### Section 1: PAFT and the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We work very closely alongside other community officials (e.g. health visitors, schools)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT is open to all families but that message does not always get across</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group meetings help parents realise that they are not on their own</td>
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<tr>
<td>To offer PAFT to more families, we need more project workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>If families are concerned about their child, project workers signpost them to somewhere in the community that might be able to help</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think we should look into having group meetings at other venues to include more people</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to keep the reputation that PAFT has in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>In an ideal world it would be great to offer PAFT to every single family in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to see the PAFT message spread</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Section 2: PAFT, Project Workers and Family Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with this statement?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I help parents build on whatever skills they have</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT raises ideas that parents may not have thought about</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families can use PAFT to fit in with their lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT tries to help parents have realistic expectations for their child’s development</td>
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<tr>
<td>All families are different, so project workers must pitch the information at their level</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is very important that project workers talk to families about their successes</td>
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<td>If a family is going through a rough time, I like to support them</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT makes parents better observers of their children</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree with this statement?</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 1</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree 2</td>
<td>Slightly Agree 3</td>
<td>Agree 4</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I have a relationship with a family, it can help getting the information across more easily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes parents I work with are going through difficulties with their children</td>
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<tr>
<td>My difficulty is that I see a smaller number of families than other project workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT makes parents more aware of their child's development so they can look for it</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a project worker I try to meet the families' needs of the moment</td>
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<tr>
<td>I always ask the parents if they have any particular problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being able to highlight to parents how they have made an impact on their child is an important part of PAFT</td>
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<tr>
<td>I support families in their parenting to enable them to have fun with their children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certain families that I work with seem to be very interested in their children's development</td>
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<td>I think families carry on because project workers have said that they are doing a good job</td>
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<tr>
<td>It does not matter what parents' learning style is, PAFT provides parents with information in various ways</td>
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<tr>
<td>You can see the difference PAFT makes in the parents and children</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that if I can work alongside a family, they will learn new parenting skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each visit I do I build up more of a relationship with that family, then it is easier to share the information</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is not the project workers' job to tell parents what to do in terms of parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I can model things for parents, they can build their skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>One of the most important parts of PAFT is empowering parents to parent more confidently</td>
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<tr>
<td>If parents can understand why their child is having an issue, it helps that parent realise that they are going to get through it</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes parents are lonely and PAFT gives them a chance to talk to somebody</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How much do you agree with this statement? | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Sometimes project workers have to adapt the programme to meet an individual family’s needs | | | | | | |
Trying to book home visits can be difficult because of all the other things I have to do | | | | | | |
We can support families with their issues, but we cannot fix them | | | | | | |
I try to blend the PAFT information with my own personality in presenting it to a family | | | | | | |

Section 3: PAFT Inclusion of the Entire Family, including Working Partners

How much do you agree with this statement? | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Project workers have to build the relationship with the whole family | | | | | | |
I try to have a realistic idea about partners’ feelings on parenting (even if unable to attend the home visits) | | | | | | |
One reason it might be difficult for fathers to go to groups in the community is because a lot of things are mainly women | | | | | | |
I do not ask about partners on visits | | | | | | |
There are a lot of families where dad is working so he cannot attend the home visits | | | | | | |
If mums are negative about dads’ involvement in the household, I try to help the mum understand some possible reasons | | | | | | |
It is always good to have fathers on board with PAFT | | | | | | |
I think parents share PAFT information with their partners | | | | | | |
I pitch the information to both parents if they are both there | | | | | | |
If you are looking at family dynamics it is important to know what the fathers role is | | | | | | |
PAFT should leave handouts/activities for parents who are not at the visit | | | | | | |

Thank you so much for all of your help. It is most appreciated.

If you have any questions or need any other information, please feel free to contact your PAFT project worker or the principal researcher, Corinne Huntington (01483 876939)
Appendix D:
Phase 3: Focus Group: Information sheets; Interview Topics; Sample Questions

D1: Parent information sheet
D2: Project worker information sheet
D3: Mothers’ and mothers as coparents’ focus group topics and sample questions
D4: Fathers’ and fathers as coparents’ focus group topics and sample questions
D5: Project workers’ focus group topics and sample questions
Appendix D1:
Parent information sheet

Information Sheet for Participants-Parents

This project hopes to gain your opinions of parenting and your general thoughts on Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).

The group will discuss questions I ask and you can answer them with your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT’s strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to parents and PAFT participants.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The group should run for approximately 60 minutes.

The information you provide in your focus groups will be for research purposes only.

Your answers and discussions as part of the group will remain confidential. I will not share any identifying information with any families, your PAFT project workers or anyone else.

The tapes and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, principal researcher on 014838 76939 or your PAFT project worker.

Thank you so much for your time.

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.
Appendix D2:
Project worker information sheet-Focus Group

Information Sheet for Participants-PAFT Project Workers

This project hopes to gain your opinions of your work with Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) families, PAFT's community relationships, and your overall general thoughts on PAFT and parenting services.

The group will discuss questions I ask and you can answer them with your own judgements—there are no right or wrong answers.

The reason to do this study is so that PAFT can be assessed in a meaningful way in order to find out PAFT's strengths and if any areas need improvement. Your perspectives will enable PAFT to offer a useful and valuable service. In addition, you will help the researcher recognise what ideas are important to project workers that work with families and PAFT.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

The group should run for approximately 60 minutes.

The tapes and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

The completed questionnaires and consent forms will be kept in a locked cupboard and at the end of the project they will be destroyed. The data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any complaints or concerns about this study or any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact: Corinne Huntington, principal researcher on 014838 76939.

Thank you so much for your time.

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.
Appendix D3:
Focus Group Interview Schedule: Mothers

Mothering:
There was an internal concept of mothering that mothers had of what mothers should be doing, of what a mother is. So something is going on inside mothers that tells them that says this is what a mother is. This seemed to have caused pressure on some mothers.

- Do you feel this is the case?
- Do you particularly feel pressure to do certain things?
- Where do you think it comes from? Is it society or from within yourself?
- Do you think this happens to your partners at all?
- Does anything help with that? Does PAFT help?

PAFT:
A combination of four things that PAFT does promotes positive parenting and they are confidence, ability, knowledge, and action. Increase these, mothers will feel better able to parent.

- Does that make sense to you?
- Is that your experience?
- Is there anything specifically that PAFT does to encourage this?

PAFT appeared important to meeting families' needs.

- Do you think that PAFT has influenced you?
- Your relationship with your child?
- Your understanding of your child?
- Your thinking and perspectives about mothering?
- Your family relationships?

Mothers seemed to view their project workers as particularly positive.

- What words would you use to describe your relationship with your project worker(s)?
- Is this a reason you have stayed involved in the programme?

Partners and Family Relationships:
Is coparent a good way to describe your parenting partner?

- How do you see partners being involved in the family in the future?

One finding was that mothers, seem to decide father involvement in the programme.

- Is this the case in your experience?
- Do you see partners as playing a role in programmes such as PAFT? If so, what role?
- Has PAFT influenced your relationship with your partner?

PAFT seemed to have helped coparents develop together and discuss parenting more thoughtfully.

- Is that your experience?
- Can you describe this more fully?

Anything else that I have not covered here?

7 Present day literature indicates that five to seven questions is ideal for focus groups (e.g. Millward, 2006). Thus each schedule has six main questions (two for each section) and the questions underneath (bullet-pointed) can be used as prompts if the previous questions are not understood or not generating discussion among participants.
Fathering:

Fathers had some roles and expectations on their considering fathering. But mothers felt a great deal of pressure and expectation of them, whereas fathers did not express this.

- Is this your experience?
- What do you think your job as a father is?
- Was fathering something that required a lot of changes to your life?
- Were you expecting them?

Do you think your ideas of fathering will change over time?

- If so, how?
- If you feel stressed with your child does it go through the whole family?

PAFT:

A combination of four things that PAFT does promotes positive parenting and they are confidence, ability, knowledge, and action. Increase these, fathers will feel better able to parent.

- Does that make sense to you?
- Is that your experience?
- Is there anything specifically that PAFT does to encourage this with you directly?

Fathers saw PAFT as having some influence on family relationships in most cases perceiving PAFT positively in encouraging positive family relationships.

- Do you think that PAFT has influenced your relationship with your child?
- Your family relationships?
- Your parenting?
- Your coparenting development?

The project worker-family relationship was important to some fathers and most mothers.

- Do you see this relationship as important to you? Your child? Your partner?
- Did this encourage your involvement?

Partners and Family Relationships:

Is coparent a good way to describe your parenting partner?

- Are you an equal parent? Or are you more of a mothers’ helper?
- Do you see yourself as supporting your partner?
- How do you see partners being involved in the family in the future?

It was indicated that fathers saw mothers as the gateway to PAFT involvement. If fathers got along well with their partners, they were more likely to perceive an influence from PAFT and adapt their parenting with their coparent.

- Do you see this as accurate?
- Do you see your involvement as through your partner?
- Is this okay with you?
- Did it give you a base to talk about parenting?

Anything else that I have not covered here?
Appendix D5:  
Focus Group Interview Schedule: Project Workers

Community:
Project workers saw the community as very important to their PAFT work.
- Is the community important?
- What do you see as the community links between PAFT and other services? Is this positive/negative? If so, in what way?
- Is there anything you would like improved between PAFT and the community?

Project workers also saw engaging with families in the community through outreach as important to PAFT.
- How do you engage families in the community in the first instance?
- Is there anything specific you do to continue this relationship over time? Any examples?

Role of PAFT and Project Workers:
Four areas showed as to parents in PAFT involvement and change. These were knowledge, confidence, ability, and action.
- Do you think this is accurate in your experience?
- Are there specific things you do or PAFT trained you to do, such as skills, to encourage development in positive parenting?
- Is there anything else that might be important to parents participating in PAFT? (e.g. societal pressure alleviated)
- Does PAFT do anything else to encourage families’ involvement and change over time?

The project worker-family relationship was vital to both parents and project workers.
- Do you see this as important?
- What do you see your role as in being a project worker in creating the relationship?
- Do you see any links between being a parent and being a project worker?

Parents and project workers felt that PAFT met families’ individual needs.
- Do you think this is true?
- How do PAFT and project workers meet families’ needs?
- Does seeing the families in context/environment assist you in doing this?
- Is this about a specific role that project workers’ take with families?

Partner and the Wider Family:
One finding was that project workers and parents felt that fathers were included.
- Do you think this is the case?
- Do you think fathers are important and should be encouraged to participate in PAFT?
- Are there things you do or propose to do that might encourage them?

It was found that PAFT helps mothers and fathers, although fathers more indirectly.
- Is this true in your experience?
- Do you think that PAFT helps both mothers and fathers?
- Does PAFT help family relationships between parents and with their children?

Anything else that I have not covered here?
Appendix E: Mothers’ Data Samples
  E1: Phase 1: IPA quotes to superordinate themes
  E2: Phase 1: Sample text of interview transcripts with analysis in margins
  E3: Phase 2: Sample of outputs
  E4: Phase 3: Sample text of focus group transcript with analysis in margins
### Appendix E1:

**Mothers’ IPA Quotes to Superordinate Themes (phase 1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate</th>
<th>Subordinate</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ valued connections between PAFT, community resources and the overall</td>
<td>1a) Social networks were increased through PAFT participation</td>
<td>...PAFT helps you meet people you never would have met... (Carolyn, 57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community network.</td>
<td>1b) Mothers perceived their involvement with community resources positively</td>
<td>...it was only when we went out to um the PAFT meetings and all these other babies and they’re not throwing up and I was like well no one’s as sick as my baby... I thought maybe this is normal...getting out and seeing other babies really (Susan, 907-915)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and felt encouraged to access these resources through their PAFT participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c) Family’s connection to community was promoted through PAFT participation</td>
<td>...socially it’s good for the parents because a lot of the time um people focus on the children so much that parents get forgotten...people in the community would actually benefit from that one to meet other people but then also to have that support at home...it’s nice that there is that community spirit with something... (Beth, 439-451)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project worker-family relationship was vital to programme engagement, involvement</td>
<td>2a) Mothers perceived project workers using various techniques to engage and</td>
<td>...you forget what you’re really meant to be looking for and you just an extra person that’s just sort of doubly checking to make sure... (Patricia, 299-300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over time and mothers’ perceived success</td>
<td>support them, such as being friendly, supportive and providing mothers with information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b) The mother and child relationship with the project worker was vital to programme success</td>
<td>...[project worker] wasn’t allowed to speak to me because she was here to see him. (Carolyn, 310-311)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3a) Sense of self in mothering included transitioning to being a mother</td>
<td>...it gives you that bit of a confidence that do you know I’ve got as much right to be there as cause I’m a good mum and I can do these things (Ally, 602-604)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Process of change in mothering:

**Mothers perceived that various influences, including PAFT, contributed to their change in mothering cognitions, behaviours and overall practices, and their perceptions of maternal discourses**

|   | 3b) Increasing mothers' knowledge, empathy and child-centred perspectives played an important part in mothers' understanding of their child |   |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|   |
|   | 3c) Reflection was important to adapting mothering practices                                                                                                                                                                                                 |   |
|   | 3d) Maternal discourses influenced mothers' perceptions of themselves as mothers                                                                                                                                                                                   |   |
|   | 3e) Role of education in parent support programmes for reassuring and promoting positive child development and mothers' consideration for children                                                                                                                                                      |   |

**Numerous programme elements promoted positive parenting practices, such as information and the empowerment based model**

|   | 4a) Parenting programmes that assert that parents are always trying the best they can, empower mothers in parenting                                                                                                                                                     |   |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|   |
|   | 4b) Role of group meetings and home visits in PAFT success                                                                                                                                                                                                           |   |
|   | 4c) Maternal stress and anxiety hindered parenting practices. PAFT helped in various ways, including behavioural suggestions and challenging negative ideas                                                                                                                                 |   |

---

...it's made it a bit easier...because if I expect [child] to be able to do these things and she can't do them and then someone says it's okay she doesn't have to do them then it'll take the pressure off (Susan, 935-942)

...[PAFT] probably has I think it's made me more relaxed and laid back about it and made me realise that all babies are individuals and they all do things in their own time and their own order... (Elaine 685-687)

...it took away that you know that fear of getting into comparisons with other parents about well my child isn't toilet trained my child is and my child does this and my child does that... (Carolyn, 81-83)

Confidence as a parent... [project worker] said 'oh that's going well then I must be doing an okay job then there so yeah so your self-esteem as a parent then it kind of goes up. (Beth, 696-701)

... [project worker] say 'you're not a druggie, you're not a child beater, you're not a child neglecter... you're strong and you're a good mum' and just to have somebody else say that makes you think 'I can do it'... (Ally, 1138-1141)

The group meetings are great cause you get to meet everybody and obviously other parents and things um and they do the activities and [child] really enjoys it... (Patricia, 265-267)

...lots of picky groups of parents...so much competition about my daughters' doing this at this age...nice for [project worker] to come in and say they do that between 18 and 24 months...there's no right and wrong answers children are all different and it just brought that home... (Carolyn, 348-352)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Table Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family as a whole: Mothers saw their families interacting as an entity with several differing subsystems that were valued by PAFT</td>
<td>4d) PAFT information and reassurance aided mothers' confidence and relationships with their children</td>
<td>...[project worker] gives me is support and reassurance... (Elaine, 339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5a) The father's role in families influenced PAFT participation, such that the mother-father relationship was central to father programme involvement</td>
<td>...if [partner]'s worried about something he'll say oh maybe we should-you should ask [project worker] about this on the next visit... (Susan, 605-607)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5b) Families interacted as dyads, triads and a whole</td>
<td>As a family so that [partner] could see cause it's all very well for me sitting in with [child 2] and sitting with [child 1] and me just telling him what to do and stuff and him to go 'oh okay'... (Beth, 531-533)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5c) Interaction within families was valued and encouraged by PAFT participation</td>
<td>I suppose it's another sort of ripple effect really for me so whenever I have had a PAFT session with [project worker], [partner] when he gets home wants to know all about it...if I'm feeling reassured and confident about [child] from my conversation then I can share that with [partner] and then he feels happy too...he reads all the stuff as well... (Elaine, 434-445)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-other interaction: Mothers perceived external pressure and relief from the other people around them</td>
<td>6a) Role of social network as supportive and/or putting negative pressure on mothers</td>
<td>I have a friend who's not got any children and she's so judgemental... (Susan, 865-866)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6b) Influence of relationships from families and intergenerational transmission</td>
<td>...so there's a lot of stuff that project worker's done with me I've done with my sister, she's a mum but she's not a very mothering mum (Ally, 101-103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6c) Competition between mothers was alleviated due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>I take all the thundery of everybody and then sort of muddle my way... [project worker] was sort of there to say you know to say make sure that I am still grounded down... (Patricia, 527-531)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E2:
Phase 1: Sample text of interview transcripts with analysis in margins
Mother 2: pages 31-33
Mother 5: pages 38-40
Interview 2 (Mother)

disempowering if (yeah) you were 'the expert'. Did that affect your feelings about PAFT?

M: Well, got to think now. It um yeah cause everybody expected of me to

know it all and [partner] did as well um he's been through but he um cause

I've you know (right). But I suppose PAFT anybody sort of helped out on

that score because as much as I thought cause I used call [child] 'toad the

monster' uh he's fine he's not a monster and they all say that at PAFT. 'No

he's lovely' and at PAFT as well another mum has the same problems as me

her child's very much like [child]'s um I can't remember what his name is

now but he comes to the toddler-group and he's the same he's always at the

doors always here always there so it was quite nice that at PAFT we

managed to get to talk to one each other there's [PJW 1] and um um

forgotten her name now-

I: [PJW 2]?

M: Yeah, [PJW 2] oh they're always 'they're lovely children, they're fine'.

Well yes but we didn't do this, this, and the other and everything but it was

quite nice sort of me and her to talk and of course I had given all the

information that [PJW] has given me to her ultimately and said you know 'it

doesn't matter. Just calm down. It doesn't matter.' And she was worried that

he eats loads of biscuits on a Friday well so does [child] but I just let him get

on it. And then we make sure he has lots of fruit it's fine if he wants to eat

10 biscuits let him eat 10 biscuits and then just chill out have a cup of tea

and have a chat with the other parents and I'd kind of learned that off of
PACT so if I hadn't been going to PACT and someone had asked me I would've I sort of similar information but I felt a lot more confident because I'd had my own child that I'd been through so I didn't feel like it had just come out of a book or it was from personal experience properly from the heart it works so it's been tried and tested and it worked and it was fine and it worked on my own ultimately and not on somebody else's.

I: <something about the similar situations—not on tape—tape being flipped over>

M: Yeah I think we both did cause it was quite it was quite nice that yeah we had both been through the same situation and I looked and think that gosh my child's not just that child that does everything there are other children out there who do it as well. And ultimately yes I felt quite nice that look she's going through what I went through it sounds awful but it was really good to know.

I: Yeah, to know that you're not isolated. I would think it would be good to feel that it's that kind of isolation that-

M: Yeah when you see another parent screaming and dragging them down the road I'm like I normally do that (been there). Yeah when you're carrying and walking.

I: Sometimes you hear from parents that they don't want to take their children to anyone else's house because they're quite wild.

M: [Child] was very much like that it's like I used to say that very similar to...
Mother has numerous concerns about child’s behaviour in own house but other people’s house he’s going to get stuff and do stuff.

I: And people don’t know that about him.

Mother says child has had tantrums since he was one and still does (chuckles) but because he had all them say no to him that’s it devastation and then everyone looks at you and even parents that have got young children if they’re children are quite well behaved they’re not used to having a child that is wants to riot the whole time. They kind of think it’s the parents not having good parenting skills. And it’s not maybe not to a certain extent because you have everything in place and everything some of it is just the way the children are.

I: Right exactly. (Baby stirs). I think that it’s interesting because if you ask a lot of mothers or even boys who become men they sort of say ‘oh yeah I was wild you know’ and they are perfectly normal adults.

Mother: But then I was a wild child as well. I was exactly the same as [child] my mum did laugh and ‘haha you used to be like that.’ Nothing as bad as [child] she did say (chuckles).

I: Has your feelings toward [child] changed because of PAFT?

Mother: I think so cause I did used to get so stressed with him I just constantly wanted to shout at him all the time and stuff I was constantly nearly in tears. 

P.A.F.T. stands for Parental Alienation Family Trauma
you appreciate that because you know I would never say that (right) she did (but she did) so that's the other way she sort of helps and supported (no definitely).

I: So kind of in a general picture it sounds like you've changed so much since [PJW] has come into your life how much of that is [PJW] and how much of that is other things?

M: The mother inside of it a lot of is her (hmm) I'd say 80% (wow) how I act differently is [PJW] obviously there's other influences like my partner's sort of open with me and he you know say 'oh you know calm down it ain't that bad (hmm) you know and things like that but my mother, my mum's died about four years ago so I haven't had that support so you know you'd see [PJW] and I'd just need to cry about something (yeah) and she'd just stand there and give me a hug do you know what I mean? (That's nice.) So a lot of it I think I mean just show me you know you can do it this way. It doesn't it's no money just do this (right) and giving you that confidence to act like a pratt. So yeah she knows I mean she'd be crying now just like she was minute ago cause she she knows what a difference she's made in my life. I said I you know said to her as well she was crying now iust like she was minute ago cause she she knows what a difference she's made in my life. I said I you know said to her as well she said things like listen and said my mum used to say to that and she say 'well what do you want me to be your surrogate m-' and I said 'yeah you do that' (both laugh) I've now employed you as my stepmum' and that's fine so...
I: Right so was it your relationship with her or the things that she was teaching you that kind of made this change?

M: Both and how she did it because it was you know like a teacher properly would come in and go this is the schedule and this is how you do it blah blah blah whereas she just sat there you know 'here you go' then [mother] grab that other bag put it and she'd make me do it so we weren't just sat there havin' fags goin' 'oh God you know you can do that. No I can't' and by the time you know she'd come round she'd have to take stuff off me because I would be doing like colourin' in and I'd be like she'd go 'mother] just a bit' and 'yes I know mummy's just goin' to do this'. And you like see uh [child 3] was she'd ask [child 3] questions so [child 3] would look at me and I'd go to tell her 'it's 2 I think. Mummy doesn't know you know darling and I would be tellin her (right) and [PJW]’d be like '[mother] you don't do that' but because obviously I had more confidence I was just bein myself. You know and helpin her cheat and it a was just fun you know (yeah) so yeah I suppose a lot of it was how she is as a person and how she applied that to her work yeh. I: That's great. Um can I ask now you ended up with social services originally if that's okay? M: I had had a drug problem uh a heroine addiction. Okay so when you had the children you were still...
M: Hmm except for uh [child 3] no except for [child 1] sorry

I: Okay that was when you were still living—sorry I don’t think I remember

where you said you were living

M: We was livin in Pearly (okay) and Hersham we moved quite a bit. It

was nothing ever to do with hurtin the children otherwise I think I would

have never got rid of ‘em if it was to do with the children (hmm). The

problem was um I had decomposed arms because I’m things looked very

bad all my teeth are all crowns and and they just didn’t like drug addicts

and instead of thinkin that you could be drug addict and a good parent you’d

can’t you’re just a drug addict (right). Um and obviously you get other

people who see through they see now that she’s been givin a chance she’s

thrived on it and that’s that’s what happened (right yeah) and so social

services saw that and another thing as well I think it helps gettin rid of

social services me working with PAFT because I’d never let anyone in so

secret I wouldn’t ask at all the social workers. And then I met [PJW] let

her in (hmm) and she started goin to these meetings these child at risk

meetings and all this shit and sayin ‘it ain’t happenin mate. That’s a load

of crap. This is the truth. This is what this girl is doin, this is how her

children are and they didn’t have a leg to stand on (right). You know the

head teacher’s from other schools sayin and I be sat there tryin to save my

neck and the head teacher I’ve kept this from this woman for years (yeah)

and she and I saw her and [head teacher] and burst into tears and I said I

Don’t have a

child yet been born
Appendix E3:  
Phase 2: Sample of outputs

Analysis of 'You as a Mother' Questionnaire Output Example

Step 1: Analysis of all questions in the ‘You as a Mother’ Questionnaire (1-22)

Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solution (in squared distances)

Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iteration</th>
<th>S-stress</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.05363</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.04256</td>
<td>.01107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>.00111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.03677</td>
<td>.00095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than .001000

Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances

RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are Kruskal's stress formula 1.

For matrix

\[
\text{Stress} = .08902 \quad \text{RSQ} = .98222
\]
Question 2 is influencing the interpretability of the analysis as it appears on the other side of the plot from all the other questions. Therefore the analysis needs to be re-conducted without this question.

**Step 2: Analysis of all questions (1-22) excluding Question 2 (I do not want to be one of those mums who gets into competitions with other mums).**

Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solution (in squared distances)

Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iteration</th>
<th>S-stress</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.08644</td>
<td>.03366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.08171</td>
<td>.00473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>.00117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.08016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than .001000

Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances

RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are Kruskal’s stress formula 1.
Question 19 is slightly farther from the rest of the points influencing the interpretability of the plot. Therefore the analysis needs to be re-conducted without this question.

Step 3: Analysis of all questions (1-22) excluding Question 2 and Question 19 (During pregnancy everybody told me I would be fine at mothering). (Final)

Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solution (in squared distances)

Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iteration</th>
<th>S-stress</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.06829</td>
<td>.00534</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.06663</td>
<td>.00040</td>
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</table>

Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than .001000

Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances
RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are Kruskal's stress formula 1.

For matrix
Stress = .08787    RSQ = .96865

Step 4: Calculate Reliability using Cronbach’s alpha each scale
Example: Mothers’ perceived stress and negative attributions about their children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Item Statistics |
|-----------------|-------------|----------|
|                 | Mean        | Std. Deviation | N |
| QM3             | 2.64        | 1.443     | 80 |
| QM5             | 2.44        | 1.367     | 80 |
| QM6             | 3.10        | 1.132     | 80 |
**QM9** 3.16 1.267 80
**QM12** 2.09 1.380 80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QM3</td>
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<td>.437</td>
<td>.765</td>
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<tr>
<td>QM5</td>
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<td>.526</td>
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<td>QM6</td>
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<td>16.070</td>
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<td>.535</td>
<td>.714</td>
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<tr>
<td>QM9</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>17.715</td>
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<td>.305</td>
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<td>QM12</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>16.150</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.769</td>
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**Step 5: Calculate Normal Distribution**

Example: Mothers’ perceived stress and negative attributions about their children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</td>
<td>-0.370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skewness: \(-0.370/0.261=-1.42\)

Kurtosis: \(-0.238/0.517=-0.46\)

For other skewness and kurtosis scores, please see Appendix F1: Mothers
Appendix E4:
Phase 3: Sample text of focus group transcript with analysis in margins
Mothers’ Focus Group

B: So you come away with positives like ‘oh my baby’s doing this’ and then come away with negatives and that’s what so good about PAFT is it is just about your child.

H: I think ‘cause they know your child and they know you say ‘I’m worried they’re not doing this or they’re not doing that’ like they say ‘oh that’s alright, they’re fine.’ Like the health visitor said it but they didn’t know your child and it’s all a bit-but if [PJW] come around and say it’s ‘oh that’s alright, they’re fine’ and they record it, you think well actually ‘cause you know how my child is, then that is reassuring so actually okay you know because you know them.

S: And they know what the good days are and the bad days are ‘cause not every child is going to perform on that day you know they’re not going to sit there and do the jigsaw puzzle you know there’s a lot to get into.

Group: Laughter

S: You say we’re gonna do this. Well they’re having a bad day.

Group: Agree

S: No that’s not in my book you know whereas PAFT it’s ‘they’re having a bad day. Okay let’s do something different’ you know so it’s not a book you have to follow their guidance is another thing.

H: But it is again you know um setting up for the potty training whatever it is the sort of thing you have to go around then speak to the health visitor problem or an illness or anything it
was just I want a bit of advice 'cause the way I'm tackling it isn't working. And is this normal? And better and you do get that reassurance and things.

I: Does PAFT kind of make you think about things in a different way?

D: I think it's they're little people you know? They've got their views and they know what they like you know what you don't like. Rather than saying to you 'you're gonna do this,' you give 'em a choice you know when they want something to eat: 'do you want this or do you want this?' You give 'em two choices not a thousand choices but two choices and then they can make their own choice. And then they feel empowered 'cause they've made a choice and you're happy 'cause they're happy.

L: One visit sits in mind I don't know anyone else but it was about your child's personality what fits into your child's personality and being sensitive to that and mine and it's something that I'd never even thought of 'til I had that visit that personality is such a big thing. And it was only through the PAFT visit I thought 'well I'm trying to force him to do something doesn't against his personality'. Quite different both my boys have quite different personalities and yet I was trying to parent them in exactly the same way. But it was the PAFT visit that I made me start thinking about how personalities are not the same and should and how my personality fit into that and I should parent into that.
I: How it all fits together?

L: Yeah, yeah.

I: So thinking about that a bit, is that something other people did?

D: I always get like from my parents ‘in my day’-

Group: Chuckling. Agree

K: Yes

D: ‘In my day’ and it’s like well it’s not your day is it?

Group: No

D: It’s my day. I was brought up in a very strict family background, seen and not heard, do as you’re told, la la la, um- but that’s not how we’re going bring [child] up you know? Like he’s ‘cause like he’s his own person in his own right and it’s important that he learns to make his own choices and he’s going to make choices all the way throughout his life no matter what age you are. And with PAPT it’s sort of makes you think about that and sort that out, too many people don’t have that ability to make their choices and we want him to be able to, on that day and I know it’s not simple as a parent but that’s how it is.

K: Yeah, that makes sense yeah.

D: ‘Cause um it’s like my dad was shouting about [child] like ‘cause he didn’t do something um quite right. And I was just like ‘hmmmm, well he is only just one at the time dad.’

Group: chuckle
Appendix F: Stakeholder group normal distribution scores and correlations

F1: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Mothers
F2: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Fathers
F3: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Mothers as coparents
F4: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Fathers as coparents
F5: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Project workers
### Appendix F1:
**Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Mothers**

Table F1.1

*Skewness and kurtosis scores for mothers’ scales computed to establish whether scales were normally distributed in order to conduct appropriate inferential statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>-.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual understanding of mothering</td>
<td>-2.59*</td>
<td>2.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived societal pressure and other people’s influence on mothering</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>-.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers</td>
<td>-2.12*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ perceived knowledge due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ perceived confidence due to PAFT participation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ perceived ability due to PAFT participation</td>
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<td>4.51*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mothers’ perceived actions due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>-2.14*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting satisfaction</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Scales with a * are non-parametric.

*Note.* Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers' perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</th>
<th>Perceived societal pressure and other people's influence on mothering</th>
<th>PAFIT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</th>
<th>Change of mothering practices due to PAFIT participation</th>
<th>Mothers' perceived knowledge due to PAFIT participation</th>
<th>Mothers' perceived confidence due to PAFIT participation</th>
<th>Parenting satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived stress</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and negative attributions</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-.398(**)</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-.155</td>
<td>-.256(*)</td>
<td>-.295(**)</td>
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<tr>
<td>about their children</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>-.279(*)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>Mothers' perceived confidence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>-.279(*)</td>
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<td>-.113</td>
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<td>77</td>
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<td>-.026</td>
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<td>.397(**)</td>
<td>.454(**)</td>
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table F1.3

Spearman’s Correlations of the Mothering Questionnaires’ Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers’ perceived stress and negative attributions about their children</th>
<th>Spearman’s rho Correlation</th>
<th>Family support, including the project worker-family relationship, provides encouragement to mothers</th>
<th>Mothers’ perceived ability due to PAFT participation</th>
<th>Mothers’ perceived actions due to PAFT participation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Spearman’s rho Correlation</td>
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<td>.436(**)</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>PAFT programme elements that engage and influence mothers</td>
<td>Spearman’s rho Correlation</td>
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<td>.508(**)</td>
<td>.313(**)</td>
</tr>
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<td>.757(**)</td>
<td>.391(**)</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change of mothering practices due to PAFT participation</td>
<td>Spearman’s rho Correlation</td>
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<td>.102</td>
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<td>.740(**)</td>
<td>.237(*)</td>
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<td>.136</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.336(**)</td>
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<td>Correlation</td>
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<td>Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIknowledge_NVal_div</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived ability due to</td>
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<td>.001</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>.534(**)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' perceived actions due to</td>
<td>.178</td>
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<td>80</td>
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</tr>
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<td>PAFT participation</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>77</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

*Note:* For clarity, only non-parametric scales are stated on the horizontal axis.
Appendix F2:
Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Fathers

Table F2.1

Skewness and kurtosis scores for fathers' scales computed to establish whether scales were normally distributed in order to conduct appropriate inferential statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external factors that shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of change in fathering develops within family relationships, particularly the father-child relationship</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.49</td>
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Note. Scales with a * are non-parametric.

Note. Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal and external factors that shape fathers' involvement with their children and in the community</th>
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*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
### Spearman's Correlations of the Fathering Questionnaires' Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men's assimilation of fatherhood informs their perceptions and behaviours</th>
<th>PAFT elements that encourage change and father involvement</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. For clarity, only non-parametric scales are stated on the horizontal axis.
Appendix F3:
Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Mothers as coparents

Table F3.1

Skewness and kurtosis scores for mothers as coparents’ scales computed to establish whether scales were normally distributed in order to conduct appropriate inferential statistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
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<td>5.53*</td>
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<td>Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family</td>
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<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coparents relationship develops and changes over time</td>
<td>3.72*</td>
<td>11.31*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coparenting influences family relationships</td>
<td>-.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT influences coparenting and the family</td>
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<td>Cooperation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>7.86*</td>
<td>10.86*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting satisfaction</td>
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<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>-7.05*</td>
<td>8.40*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scales with a * are non-parametric.

Note. Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
Table F3.2

Pearson's Correlations of the Mothering as a Coparent Questionnaires' Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coparents exhibited specific roles and responsibilities in the family</th>
<th>Coparenting influences family relationships</th>
<th>Mothers act as the gateway between PAFT and fathers</th>
<th>PAFT influences coparenting and the family</th>
<th>Parenting satisfaction</th>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table F3.2

**Spearman’s Correlations of the Mothering as a Coparent Questionnaires’ Scales**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Mothering and fathering as separate parenting styles</th>
<th>The coparents relationship develops and changes over time</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Relationship satisfaction</th>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho Correlation</td>
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<td>-.52**</td>
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<td>-.55**</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho Correlation</td>
<td>.31*</td>
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<td>-.54**</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho Correlation</td>
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<td>.56**</td>
<td>-.55**</td>
<td>-.50**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. For clarity, only non-parametric scales are stated on the horizontal axis.
Appendix F4:
Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Fathers as coparents

Table F4.1

Skewness and kurtosis scores for fathers as coparents' scales computed to establish whether scales were normally distributed in order to conduct appropriate inferential statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale name</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coparenting support provided in family relationships</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</td>
<td>2.80*</td>
<td>3.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT assists coparenting practices</td>
<td>-.69</td>
<td>-.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>-.99</td>
<td>-.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>5.51*</td>
<td>8.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting satisfaction</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>-6.88*</td>
<td>14.50*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Scales with an * are non-parametric.

*Note. Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
Table F4.2

Pearson's Correlations of the Fathering as a Coparent Questionnaires' Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coparenting support provided in family relationships</th>
<th>Societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting</th>
<th>PAPT assists coparenting practices</th>
<th>Fathers see mothers as their connection to PAFT</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Parenting satisfaction</th>
</tr>
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<td>.31</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>.56**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.11</td>
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<td>.002</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.43*</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAPT assists coparenting practices</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.43*</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.44*</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.029</td>
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<td>.48*</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>-.40*</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.045</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.48*</td>
<td>.21</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.21</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
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<td>.19</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.48*</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.48</td>
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<td>.52</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.25</td>
<td>-.01</td>
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<td>.21</td>
<td>-.15</td>
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<td>.23</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.045</td>
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</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table F4.3

*Spearman's Correlations of the Fathering as a Coparent Questionnaires' Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
<th>Relationship satisfaction</th>
</tr>
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<td>Spearman's rho correlation</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Societal and family perspectives shape fathers' coparenting</td>
<td>Spearman's rho correlation</td>
<td>.72**</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.56</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Challenges in the coparenting relationship impact father involvement</td>
<td>Spearman's rho correlation</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.26</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>.17</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Spearman's rho correlation</td>
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<td>-45'</td>
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Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01
<table>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>- .46*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Parenting satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Spearman's rho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Note: For clarity, only non-parametric scales are stated on the horizontal axis.
## Appendix F5: Normal distribution analysis and correlations: Project workers

### Table F5.1

Skewness and kurtosis scores for project workers' scales computed to establish whether scales were normally distributed in order to conduct appropriate inferential statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting families in the community</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing community connections and expanding PAFT</td>
<td>-1.85</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
<td>-.64</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance and potential strategies for including both parents in PAFT</td>
<td>-4.19*</td>
<td>5.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>-.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scales with a * are non-parametric.

*Note.* Those scores that fall above +1.96 or below -1.96 in skewness and/or kurtosis are not normally distributed and thus non-parametric statistical procedures must be conducted on these scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting families in the community</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Developing community connections and expanding PAFT</th>
<th>PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs</th>
<th>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</th>
<th>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</th>
<th>Including the family in PAFT as a whole conceptually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting families in the community</td>
<td></td>
<td>.418(*)</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.403(*)</td>
<td>.518(**)</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing community connections and expanding PAFT</td>
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<td>.418(*)</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.481(*)</td>
<td>.443(*)</td>
<td>.545(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.037</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.664</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFT and project workers meet families' individual needs</td>
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<td>.245</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.504(*)</td>
<td>.632(**)</td>
<td>.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.010</td>
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<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme elements and the project worker-family relationship assist families in the process of change</td>
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<td>.403(*)</td>
<td>.481(*)</td>
<td>.504(*)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.759(**)</td>
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<td>.046</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationale for families engaging and maintaining programme involvement</td>
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<td>.518(**)</td>
<td>.443(*)</td>
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<td>.759(**)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.027</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
### Table F5.3

**Spearman’s Correlations of the Project Workers Questionnaires’ Scales**

<table>
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* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Note.* For clarity, only non-parametric scales are stated on the horizontal axis.
Appendix G:
IPA comparison between the themes presented in text and one family with multiple difficulties

Ally and Pete
Interview six, was conducted with a couple who did not fit in with a theoretical sample required by IPA. However due to their unique circumstances they have a great deal to contribute to discussions on parenting and parenting programmes. Therefore their interview will be used here as a comparison on the previous themes and consider in more depth what they add to the discussion due to their specific experiences.

Background
To understand much of Ally’s and Pete’s discussions below, their current situation and families of origin should be explained first. Ally and Pete have three children ranging from six to eleven years of age, with Ally having their first child at 14. Pete grew up in care and Ally was severely abused in her home and taken into care on several occasions. They had numerous confrontations with the law, had their children on the child abuse register, and reported numerous difficulties with community services, particularly social services. They also experienced heroin addiction. It is through this framework they must be considered or their views of parenting and life perspectives may not be understood. To better describe it, the following descriptions are taken from Ally and Pete coparent interview.

Ally grew up in an abusive home, here are some excerpts on what she experienced as a child:

Ally: “my dad was a big issue ‘cause he was a paedophile arrested nine times for molesting boys” (492-493)
Ally: “He let me be raped every night for three years... he was allowing the lodger to rape me and my sister and one night we had bunk beds and he stood there and watched...” (532-535)
Ally: “I was expelled for smacking a teacher... I was sent to a school for where nutters went then they try to expel me to a school that had bars on the windows and that was it I’m not going there that... So I used stop at the lights and jump out of the taxi and go to Pete’s...” (1640-1656)

Pete grew up in care as his mother killed his father. He was excluded from numerous schools. He also recounted that he was raped in care on several occasions. Here are a few excerpts from Pete:

Pete: “My mum killed her first husband, pushed a knitting needle through his ear and killed him. I didn’t know him until we was drunk talking to my dad who I hadn’t met for 18 years and he just come out with your mum killed her first husband. I said ‘that’s why I’m fucking mad? I got that from her?’ I’ve got a few problems as well you know.”

*Note. Information reported was stated by Ally and Pete during the interview.*
what... I never knew no parents or nothing... I was brought up in the system you see. That's why I'm so f*cked up you see. It's the systems fault that's why I keep banging on about it. That's why it helps to keep moaning about social services 'cause I had problems with social services they done me up more than once. I asked them to find my file when we was up there asking for money once and I said 'you dig my file up' and they said 'well I don't know if I go back that far.' 'Well if you could find that we wouldn't be having that conversation now.' 'Cause they were f*ckers to me (800-815)

Pete: I hurt some people at school though. They bullied me for two years I lost it. I took a big piece of wood to school after class after I did them in... Torture like every single day... I used to shake in the morning worried about going to school. I tell social services and they didn't do nothing about it... Forcing me to go. They'd 'oh look there's the care boy- bash him up, chase him around, kick him.' And one night I said 'right I ain't putting up with it anymore.' ...'okay first person that looks at me today I'm gonna kill 'em.' And I did try. If it weren't for the teacher stopping me I would have killed there and then. (1597-1610)

As one can see Ally and Pete grew up in very difficult environments and had difficulties establishing stable relationships and having their needs met. They both express feeling disappointed by their families and experienced adversity in their childhoods. But in considering resiliency (Hill, Stafford, Seaman, Ross, and Daniel, 2007; Kaplan and Owens, 2004; Maldonado-Duran, 2002; Walsh, 2006) both Ally and Pete explain that they gained control of their circumstances, which is indicating a resiliency and/or a sense of being able to change their world. Therefore rather than express this as victims, they provide their previous explanations to express their abilities to survive and adapt to adverse circumstances.

Of particular note is that Ally and Pete state a rigid gender stereotype underpinning their relationships in the family and with their children. This framework particularly the established, inflexibility differed a great deal from the other parents and should be taken into account during the following analysis.

**Theme 1: Dyadic relationships between the mother, father, and child differed and could complement one another**

In considering theme 1, individual relationships existed between the parents and children with Pete taking on a great deal of the support and parenting. One way this relationship existed within the gender related framework was that Ally reported having a great deal more to do with parenting their daughter and Pete having to do with parenting their sons:

Ally: [daughter] gets her bath from me.

Pete: I think sometimes I deal more with the boys than the girl. I don't clean [daughter] when she had a nappy, that's just wrong, blokes don't do that kind of thing.

Ally: But I like that 'cause-

Pete: And I don't like her cleaning the boys either (1035-1040)
Here cleaning and caretaking the children are divided along gender lines with Ally and Pete each taking their children by gender and creating a division of labour through gender. Numerous possible reasons exist for this. One reason is that due to negative experiences in their childhood, these gender divisions, may offer what they perceive as safety for their children. An alternative explanation revolves around gender is often learned in families of origin (Haddock, Zimmerman, and Lyness, 2003; Phares, 1996). However due to Ally and Pete having difficulties in childhood, with Pete growing up in foster care, they may have drawn their own lines of gender norms within the family. Furthermore as many feminist theorists suggest, people perform gender (Butler, 1990; 1993; Nentwich, 2008). Thus, Pete and Ally simply do these gender roles differently than many might see as typical.

**Theme 2: Domestic responsibilities and paid employment: External factors impacted coparents’ relationships, which required parents to negotiate with one another**

In addition to the individual parent-child relationships, as seen above Pete takes part in these responsibilities along gender lines.

Ally and Pete had set out domestic responsibilities in a way that most other couples did not. They lived in council housing and mentioned several times during the interview that they did not have jobs. Pete said at one point if he had a job he would not be able to caretake his family. Pete’s role in the family as the protector was seen by Ally as exceedingly important and Pete denied liking it while also telling stories about its importance, including information on sleeping arrangements:

*Pete:* I don’t like sleep fuck—if someone is trying to break into the house I can deal with that before my kids have to get involved or she comes down ahh you know? I can remove that problem, my kids wake up in the morning, everything in place.

*Ally:* We haven’t slept in the same bed in 12 years.

*Pete:* Never. We obviously have, we’ve got three children. Like that.

*Ally:* He visits (MF laugh)... cause we don’t works we’re always together, we live in each other— if I was away from him for an hour I’d started getting a bit anxious... But I feel safe with him (712-725)

In addition to the role dynamics which place Pete as particularly important to safety in the family, it is also linked to the amount of time spent together. Ally justifies Pete’s lack of sleeping in the bed as acceptable because they do not participate in paid employment and so remain together during the day, thus justifying the lack of time together during sleeping hours.

In addition this quote brings to light the interesting point that while the parents live within certain gender norms, they do not see the father as needing to be the ‘breadwinner’ as many parents feel that this is the male role in the family in the current research and previous
studies (Deutsch, 2001; Nentwich, 2008). When Ally and Pete were asked specifically about their roles in the household, they took what they perceived as a 'traditional' view, which supports the argument made above about performing gender differently than many other couples:

Pete: Yeah, she does everything...I'm old-fashioned right the bloke deals with the problems and the woman should do the cleaning and the feeding that's it...
Interviewer: So if the kids are having an argument, that's your job?
Pete: Yup, course it is
Ally: Yeah that's how it is most of the time...
Pete: I'm the taskmaster. I make sure everyone is doing what they should be doing when they should be doing it...(1060-1074)

Pete and Ally explain their division of labour with Ally doing what many would consider 'traditional' in that she cooks and tidies the house. However the interesting point is that is her sole responsibility. If Pete is in the house, he is with the children, and in charge of solving any disagreements.

The fact that Pete plays a major role in his children's lives is different than what many might argue as untraditional, this is often considered a mothers’ task (as seen above in numerous parent interviews in the main text). He does function though as the head of the household as ‘the taskmaster’ in a way that other fathers typically did not state. Perhaps due to their very difficult childhoods, it could be that Pete and Ally not only have different perceptions of what parents ‘should’ be (e.g. their conceptual understand of parenthood), but that the feel proud of managing how they have despite their lack of involvement and evidence from their families of origins. By creating this life they are able to explain the positives they feel despite having lived without positive parenting examples. When asked further about discipline Pete and Ally explained:

Pete...[children] they know, if it comes to me, it's over.
Ally: See where that wouldn't work is if he was at work and the kids were doing something and I said 'cause that's negative- then they're never looking forward to him getting back 'cause when he gets back we're gonna be in trouble...(1078-1082)

As can be seen from the quotes, Pete and Ally both believe the children view Pete as fulfilling the disciplinarian role. However in contrast to other parents, Ally and Pete perceive this positively due to Pete's high level of day to day involvement. They attribute this to Pete's lack of employment, which they seem to use as their model of coparenting. It also explains that they see parenting as double sided requiring both the mother and father to participate.

In these examples it appears that Ally and Pete value one another's contribution to the household, which influences the next theme regarding underlying perceptions toward one another.
Theme 3: Underlying perceptions of the other parent influenced coparenting practices and cognitions, and includes the transition from single to couple to parents

Throughout the interview Ally and Pete appeared to have similar and positive perceptions of one another, explained ‘turning towards’ one another, generally spoke finishing one another’s sentences, and thus presented a supportive narrative. In considering their upbringings described above and their commitment to one another, it appears that they see one another as positive in helping them find a way out of the negative upbringings they experienced. In their story, it seems that they perceived the other as having saved them from negative spirals they felt their lives were going.

It is important to note that Ally and Pete seemed to discuss their relationship less than many of the other couples. They did not particularly describe their transition to parenthood or their relationship more generally. They appeared to appreciate one another a great deal though, particularly in taking care of one another. In addition to ‘turning towards’ Ally and Pete supported one another against people they saw as not having their best interests at heart. Like many other couples, a united front appeared central to their couple relationship over time:

Ally: One time the police came, ‘cause my dad was the key holder of the bedsit we was living in and he called the police—no my mum called the police and Pete tried to hide me behind the sofa and he he pushed it up so I was gonna to be sick they were we know she’s here and the torch and shined it he said right he said get her out of there we’re taking her to a care home-
Pete: [institution]
Ally: And Pete’s sayin-
Pete: I've been to [institution]
Ally: He said I haven’t been there for ages. I'll have her out in 10 minutes'
Pete: I knew everyone of the ways out of the place
Ally: So he woulda come to get me
Pete: I didn’t need no map (552-563)

In this dialogue, Ally and Pete describe their partnership that they support of one another. Pete explains that even though services attempted to take her into care, Pete would protect her and if she had been taken, he would have helped her flee, which provided her with less anxiety about the situation. This united front provides a safe ground for them to exist with one another.

In addition to the dedication to one another and their children (discussed below), they have similar perspectives to one another on other aspects of life:

Pete: We've had a lot of luck though that's a lot of it you know
Interviewer: What do you mean by luck?
Pete: Well a doctor, got a script, my-
Ally: Off drugs.
Pete: Good things happen to good people. I keep saying that if you’re good to people good things happen. With- we’re living proof of that, helped an old lady change her tire the other day, mate’s been round to fix his light I sent money for it we don’t money for it, because somewhere along the line it will, you shouldn’t expect it but it always does
Ally: I’ll be broke down with the kids you know and he’ll drive past-
Pete: Something like that, always something (582-592)

They see luck as a reason that they have cleaned themselves up and are living the way they are. In particularly Pete and Ally share in the perspective that what goes around comes around and that this is the way they see their lives going forward. Similar to many other couples, by sharing in their life perspectives and value structure, couples can experience numerous benefits (Khazan, McHale, and Decourcey, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000).

A final aspect of how Pete and Ally see their relationship is through the eyes of their children as their lives, which is similar to many other parents interviewed. They explain their devotion and platform as a couple as being based on their children. They expressly state that no matter what goes on between them, their children are their lives, especially when considering their early relationship development:

Pete: ...it was wrong... 30 year old man 14 year old girl-
Ally: Yeah I was having [first child] and a nurse said ‘your father’s here.’ And I said ‘he better not be’ and it was Pete. And I said ‘that’s not my father! That’s my partner!’ And he stood there and took it you know? He didn’t run off and hide you know-
Pete: I’m still here even when things like that. It’s 11 and half years
Ally: (laughs) It’s twelve. We’ll never agree
Pete: It’s too long to remember. 11 years with someone you do get sick of the sight of someone
Ally: He’s charmin idn’t he?
Pete: Oh you do though don’t ya? Don’t lie and say it’s ‘I need a break, you’re sick of it, abb I’m sick of this.’ I ain’t going no where. We’ve got children, we’re more responsible, and the kids no matter the kids what happens between us, the kids have got to come first. I keep sayin- (1658-1671)

In this dialogue, Ally and Pete discuss that their relationship is based on the foundation of their children. Although other things have happened during their relationship, they have developed together, changed over time, especially becoming more responsible, and overall they express their commitment to their children. Another key point in this dialogue is about their perceptions of one another. They joke with one another, seeming to enjoy one another (as they did throughout the interview) which is supported in the literature as positive between couples and parents (Driver and Gottman, 2004; Gottman and Silver, 1999; Kolak and Vernon-Feagans, 2008; Shaprio, Gottman, and Carrere, 1999). They also mutually express their commitment to one another, put aside disagreements and say that despite everything else, they focus on their children’s well-being. This leads to illuminating the next theme through understanding the process of change in their relationship and their support of their children.
Theme 4: Process of change in coparenting practices was based on the developing family relationships, leading to the coparenting alliance

Ally and Pete are interested in changing their parenting practices but seem to express their process of change differently than many of the other parents. For instance, Ally explains wanting to change by saying:

Ally: I uh I wanted to be a better mum. Obviously you try to be a better mum
Pete: No one wants to be a heroin addict
Ally: And I knew I could do it when I was clean I can make better where I screwed up with [child one] and partly [child two] I can make better with this child you know if I can do something different I will where you know naked I will take it on you know doing this for okay properly again and as I say with [project worker] even teach you straight away I wouldn't react to it in the same way I would before... (922-929)

Ally begins by explaining a desire to improve her mothering while Pete explains no one would want to be in the situation they were in of experiencing drug addiction. That said, Ally goes on to say she felt she needed to change her mothering and that her PAFT project worker provided this option. She further indicates that she decided she was going to allow someone else (PAFT) to enter her life and help her, rather than attempt to disengage. Therefore Ally's internal desire to mother positively and her support from her project worker supported her process of change.

Pete indicates that it is always within the framework of being ex-addicts but their continued commitment to their children encourages their changes to be maintained:

Pete: Once you've had a habit, you suffer for the rest of your life after, doesn't matter if you do it like there will always be a time you think back. Your head thinks God bills, babies coming, that bloke's down the street pissing me off... whether it's you know it's beer, it's a joint, whatever always sort of think back to- I didn't have none of those problems when I had a habit it was great...But if I felt like that, like I did the other day then someone's got a bit of gear have a little bit to make you feel better. It's dodgy but since I've got kids, I'd say 'hang on a minute' you know? We wouldn't have given up if we've been two people but children-
Ally: Yeah (277-294)

In other words, Pete suggests that his children are his motivation to remain off drugs. In this quote the continued importance as the parents' focus on the children as the basis is the framework for Pete's thinking.

They also express that within their process of change as not wanting their children to be like them, which is contrary to many of the other interviews. They express that they want their children to lead better lives than they did:
Ally: They won't be slappin' people.
Pete: They won't have drug addiction.
Ally: Yeah
Pete: They won't be robbing people 'cause dad's already done that and—
Ally: We're not going to pass that on the line.
Pete: They know the difference between right and wrong and it's 'cause the parents can be bothered to teach it (1355-1361)

In this dialogue, Ally and Pete gave a list of antisocial behaviours that they have done in which they want to ensure their children do not participate. They suggest that their children will not be involved in these activities because of Ally and Pete's influence. They suggest by contributing values to their children's lives they can encourage their children to take a positive direction, such as: going to university (e.g. line numbers: 1565); dressing appropriately (e.g. line numbers: 1542-1546); and being responsible as adults (e.g. line numbers: 1353). Thus, Pete and Ally aspire for their children to achieve more than they were able, and feel a sense of pride in being able to provide that for their children through ending the negative pattern they established.

**Theme 5: Coparents felt unsatisfied with services, with both parents feeling that fathers were excluded and mothers were being forced to act as a gatekeeper to service information**

Ally and Pete did not seem to address this theme specifically perhaps due to their gender norms differences from other parents or their perception of Pete's involvement currently. Therefore this theme is not supported nor denied by Ally and Pete's stated experiences.

**Theme 6: The role of other people in influencing the coparenting relationship and individual parents**

Ally and Pete did not perceive others⁹ as influencing their relationship, possibly due to their strong sense of a united front.⁹ They told a few stories about people they used to live with (particularly drug abusers) and their neighbours; however they mostly did not seem to allow others into their lives as many of the parents in the main text reported doing. Pete and Ally explained this:

*Pete:* ...I don't like talking to people.
*Ally:* He's the most unsociable person I ever met, he really is.

⁹ Ally and Pete's family of origin perspectives were discussed at the beginning of this analysis, and thus they were excluded here.

¹⁰ Discussed in Theme 3 above.
Pete: ...if no one ever knocked on my door again I'd be happy. I hate people. People are so two faced I hate it...(635-639)

In these quotes it seems that Pete and Ally do not feel that having a network of friends is important to them, which is possibly due to, as Pete suggests here, the mistrust they feel from most people. However this mistrust may play into the high levels of trust they place in one another that result in the alliance seen throughout this analysis.

The way that Ally and Pete appear to be influenced is that they have been taught over time that others are not necessary which results in the safe nest they appear to have created for themselves. Alternatively it could be that they are less influenced by others meaning that creating this nest is one more way in which they can ensure they remain isolated and thus not influenced others. The outcome is the same, they reported being less influenced currently than other couples interviewed.

**Theme 7: PAFT information and the project worker-family connection promoted positive coparenting through inclusion, information and support for both parents**

Like the other coparents interviewed, Ally and Pete reported positive perceptions of PAFT. They saw numerous benefits from it:

> Ally: I’ve seen the benefits from it...
> Pete: [Project worker]’s got loads of good things about her don’t get me wrong. Ally loved it and so did [children]... (1263-1267)

They both agree that PAFT benefitted at least Ally and their children’s lives. By seeing the influence PAFT had on them, Pete accepted their participation. However one area in which Ally and Pete disagreed was with regard to Pete’s participation in PAFT. He was home during the sessions so could have participated but both see PAFT as more for mothers than fathers:

> Pete: ...That’s a woman-woman thing I never had nothing to do with [project worker] at all really, apart from she’s all right, she’s okay... (936-937)

This is an excellent example of previous research that suggests that men are less likely to access services due to the perceived nature of services (Ghate Shaw, and Hazel, 2000; McAllister and Thomas, 2007). Ally appears to be the main PAFT participant according to Pete, although Ally supports and disputes this:

> Ally: Like most of it was like how to play, interact with the child, it was more like motherly things... (1281-1282)
> Ally: If [project worker] needed him to do something specific and gave him like ‘here you know? He’d be there straight away. But as much as the work side of it, it was my thing... (1291-1293)
In these quotes Ally is agreeing with Pete in that PAFT is for mothers not fathers however disagreeing in the next statement by saying that Pete participated if asked explicitly by the project worker.

The both agreed that PAFT changed their parenting practices:

Ally: ...I said if they’re bad they need a smack on the hand or they need discipline. I mean don’t get me wrong, the corner works for me every time one of mine are in the corner a day easily that does work. But I don’t know with me it’s like the shouting thing I was always shout. I mean arrr and [project worker] did help me to see: no, you don’t need to...

Pete: The kids get corners no matter where we are, in the doctors if they take the mick, you say ‘alright in the corner’ and it’s not nice there. (1309-1320)

As Ally explains that she learned this technique from PAFT, both parents’ discipline changed due to PAFT involvement. It may be that Pete feels more positive not saying that PAFT influenced his parenting, however according to this description it seems apparent that PAFT had some influence, albeit possibly indirectly. Furthermore Pete directly suggests that PAFT is worthwhile:

Pete: ...we’d been around the world a few hundred times. I’m not saying she didn’t do a good job, but if the hidden reasons for you to do this for to find out if PAFT teachers are worthwhile then [project worker] is worthwhile because she’s such a nice person. It doesn’t mean every PAFT teacher is, there might be some blokes, I wouldn’t let them in the garden. It’s all about the person you know? I don’t think I personally gained but I think we did. And if she needs financing then you need to get it for her!

Ally: Yeah, exactly! (1296-1303)

This quote summarises Pete’s views of coparenting and PAFT. He sees PAFT as benefitting them not him personally, thus creating a difference between what he sees as himself, and what he sees as the couple and family relationships. He further makes the platform for this statement that they were a couple that had serious problems and that he sees value in the project worker and possibly the PAFT programme. He further supports other parents’ perspectives in stating the importance of the project worker.

Furthermore he endorses previous research (e.g. Gomby, Culross, and Behrman, 1999) and other parents’ perspectives that the project worker and the programme are the same in stating specifically that PAFT is: ‘all about the person’. It is also seen that Pete sees ‘secret’ reasons behind people behaviours, including the interviewer. This statement also illustrates his gender perspectives in stating that in his view men simply by being men, would not be suitable PAFT project workers. This particular statement further draws into question comments in the main text regarding whether men support worker are better at recruiting fathers (Lloyd et al, 2003; McAllister et al, 2003; Page et al, 2008). Clearly Pete sees this as a

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For a more in-depth discussion of Ally implementing this practice, see Chapter 3: Mothers.
female occupation and only participated due to his gender assumption. Overall these points illuminate that PAFT can benefit a family as a whole even if not directly changing specific family members individually.

Conclusions
In considering Ally and Pete as different than the other parents interviewed, it appears that many themes are similar across them. The main difference between Pete and Ally and the other parents interviewed is actually their underlying frameworks. Numerous studies illustrate that developing in abusive environments alters perspectives (e.g. Busch et al, 2008). Therefore Ally and Pete have adapted their underlying perceptions to understand their current framework in a way that promotes positive parenting with the children as the basis for their relationship and worldview. Besides having abusive experiences in their early years, Pete and Ally also expressed the view that their family dynamics worked successfully at least partially due to gender norms. The rigid application of these gender assumptions may create a sense of safety between the parents and allow their needs for themselves and their children to be met.

References

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