

Evaluation of



PARENTING PROGRAMME

December 2005

Kindly funded by:

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1. INTRODUCTION

Love for Life, is a Waringstown based relationship and sexuality educator, who have been delivering a range of programmes to schools and young peoples groups over a number of years. Following a period when the organisation showed itself able to deliver impartial programmes in both the primary and secondary sector, Love for Life made an application to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to deliver a focused parenting / carers programme.

The proposal sought to fund Love for Life to deliver a programme of capacity building and resource development that would better place parents and carers to address issues in regard to relationships, sexuality and health that face young people today.

This interim evaluation report seeks to evaluate if the project has been implemented in the manner agreed by the letter of offer and if the impacts anticipated are being achieved in a means which contributes to the overall objectives of the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The evaluation also seeks to establish a number of key recommendations upon which Love for Life can act, in order to further enhance its ability to fulfil the Departments objectives.



Thomas J Stewart
External Evaluator

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In designing the methodology for the evaluation of the DHSSPS Parenting Programme we determined that in addition to desktop evaluation the evaluation should consult with a range of stakeholders. These were:

- (i) The Senior Programme Developer (employed by Love for Life to run the programme);
- (ii) The Chief Executive Officer of Love for Life (Dr Richard Barr);
- (iii) Representatives of groups who had benefited from programme delivery;
- (iv) Representatives of Health Boards and Trusts;
- (v) A representative of the Women's Resource Development Agency with whom the project partnered to develop resources.

2.1 Project Initiation/Desktop Analysis

During this phase a number of actions were completed:

- An initial meeting was held with the Senior Programme Developer appointed by Love for Life to agree the format and timescale for the evaluation and to discuss the format of the evaluation report;
- Review of all desktop evidence – the Senior Programme Developer was asked to submit a range of documents including monitoring reports;
- Additionally the evaluator had access to the original application made to the funder, all written communication with the funder and other evidence of programme delivery.

2.2 Consultation

As part of the evaluation, evidence in terms of implementation, resourcing and progress were sought from the stakeholders identified above. Consultation took the form of:

2.21 Semi structured one to one interviews with:

- The Senior Programme Developer;
- The Chief Executive Officer of Love for Life.

Additional input was sought from other stakeholders as deemed appropriate.

2.22 Group Survey

A group survey was designed (See Appendix A) and sent to:

- A range of organisations where the project had made presentations
- Representatives of Health Boards and Trusts
- Women's Resource Development Agency

Those surveys, which were returned, were analysed independently by Vision Management Services. A list of all those who provided evidence to the evaluation can be viewed in Appendix B.

2.3 Consideration of Evidence and Development of Report and Recommendations

The final element to the evaluation was broken into a number of key tasks, which included:

- Drawing together all evidence presented, both quantitative and qualitative;
- Developing a framework for consideration of effectiveness;
- Evaluating comments made by contributors;
- Cross comparison of evidence with funders objectives;
- Development of strength and weakness analysis based on evidence presented during the evaluation period;
- Development of a written evaluation report for submission to Love for Life.

Together these strands of the evaluation have enabled objective comment which is documented in the sections that follow.

3. DESKTOP ANALYSIS

In the development of the evaluation we first sought to review all relevant project documentation to enable an objective evaluation of progress prior to engaging the views of stakeholders (Section 4).

3.1 Evidence Required

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety provided clear guidance to Love for Life as to the nature and structure of evidence that should be considered as part of the evaluative process. As a result during the evaluation we sought to gather and collate evidence that could demonstrate the programmes efficiency in delivering the project in line with the terms established in the letter of offer from the funder.

The areas where we sought evidence were:

- The contribution the programme was making to the Departments policy objectives;
- Whether it is was providing value for money in terms of the grant given and whether the resources allocated were being managed efficiently and effectively;
- Information deriving from the performance indicators which would enable the scheme's level of success to be measured;
- Information on feedback from users on data collected routinely by the project;
- In relation to potential recommendations as to the scheme's financial needs and scope for development;
- Efforts by the scheme's organisers to raise funds from other sources;

- The projects success in meeting agreed project outcomes/benefits.

3.2 Evaluation Inputs

In giving consideration to the above requirement we also sought to measure:

(i) Effectiveness of Programme:

- Group satisfaction
- Involvement of stakeholders in programme planning
- Quality standards
- Methods of redress, complaints procedure
- Effectiveness in promoting programme

(ii) Effectiveness in meeting objectives:

- Efficient and effective use of the grant
- Planning process
- Ability to set and meet targets
- Evidence of progress and achievements

(iii) Effectiveness and Efficiency of Use of the Grant

- Payments, terms and conditions of service
- Administrative and secretarial support
- Value for money

(iv) Adequacy of Organisational Systems

- Management information systems
- Systems for monitoring and reviewing
- Commitment to total quality approaches
- Financial accounting and auditing
- Policies and procedures

In section 5 of the report we evaluate how we believe these performance measures have been met.

3.3 Documentary Evidence Considered

To enable effective evaluation a range of desktop evidence was requested and reviewed. This included:

- The original application form;
- The letter of offer;
- Job Description for Senior Programme Developer;
- Quarterly Returns Submitted to the Funder;
- Project Budget Expenditure report 2004/2005;
- Records of all venues where programme has been delivered;
- Numbers attending at various venues;
- Internal Reports on each presentation made;
- Copy of presentation evaluation sheets;
- Copy of the PowerPoint slides used at presentations;
- Input to inter agency training day planned by the project.

4. KEY STAKEHOLDER INPUT

In evaluating the outcomes and outputs achieved by the "Exposure" Parenting Programme we sought to obtain direct input from a range of beneficiaries and stakeholders. In essence these consultees were representative of three groups:

- (i) Programme Management staff;
- (ii) Health professionals;
- (iii) Groups who have benefited from the programme.

Evidence was either collated through one to one meetings based on a pre-designed semi structured interview basis or through pro-forma postal questionnaires sent to the respondent with a free post return service

4.1 Programme Management Staff

4.1.1 Senior Programme Developer

During the course of the evaluation we met twice with Bernie Mc Hugh, the Senior Programme Developer. During these meetings we sought to gain an understanding of the nature of the programme delivered and the programmes inputs, outcomes and outputs.

In addition we discussed with Bernie what she believed to be the main strengths and weaknesses of the programme, along with the opportunities and threats faced by the programme.

Strengths

- Meets the needs of parents and of organisations where we provide input;
- Unique programme style, not delivered by anyone else;
- Leads to increased awareness for otherwise unaware adults;
- Provides support for teachers to engage with parents;
- Provides resource material;
- Is delivered in an informal, easy to approach style;
- Creates opportunities for networking;
- Enables strategic communication with Health Boards;
- Builds capacity in the community.

Weaknesses

- Inability to have time to follow up on individual issues raised at workshops with potential loss of impact;
- Need for more effective management of limited time;
- Lack of money for higher quality resources;
- Stereotype perceptions of organisations that deliver parenting training;
- Lack of co-operation from and engagement with some stakeholders within the sector;
- Public image of the subject matter.

Opportunities

- Opportunities for the programme are endless;
- Awareness raising among community and health professionals;
- Developing programmes to fill identified training gaps;
- Establishing a training pack for local delivery;

- Establishing partnerships with other organisations;
- Sharing information to expand area of impact.

Threats

- Lack of resources/sustainability
- End of funding period
- Public perception of parenting programmes;
- Adverse public policies;
- Review of Public Administration;
- Failure to re-establish Stormont;
- Reduction in funding for the voluntary sector.

4.12 Love for Life Chief Executive

The purpose of our meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of Love for Life (Dr. Richard Barr) was to review programme management and implementation procedures and to enable him to provide evidence to the evaluation in terms of how the programme is meeting the Departments objectives.

As a result of our meeting it was apparent that:

- (i) Love for Life believed that the programme was firmly contributing to a range of Departmental objectives. Specifically Dr. Barr highlighted the contribution the programme had to a range of health related issues including the Department's Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Strategy, the Departments parenting policy and the contribution the parenting programme made to mental health.

- (ii) Dr. Barr noted that there was a clear management structure in place whereby project volunteers reported to the Senior Programme Developer who was in turn responsible to the Chief Executive. Overall programme implementation and direction was then given by the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with Love for Life's Board of Directors who meet monthly and reviewed project progress.

Dr. Barr indicated that Love for Life had been seeking to gather such information as would provide appropriate levels of monitoring information. Additionally our desktop review evidenced that regular and detailed monitoring and reporting was being filed to the Department.

- (iii) From the project outset Dr. Barr indicated that the Parenting programme had adopted and adapted existing Love for Life's evaluation forms that are completed by beneficiaries after each session delivered.
- (iv) The Chief Executive Officer felt that there was much scope for developing a programme of this nature on a wider basis, subject to funding. He believed Love for Life could develop enhanced resources and become a trainer of trainers.
- (v) It was reported that Love for Life has continued to seek other funding sources for the parenting programme. In house fund raising projects have been ongoing and Love for Life is working on a longer term sustainability plan for all its services including the Parenting programme currently funded by DHSS&PS.
- (vi) Dr. Barr envisages that Love for Life has the potential to network other organisations providing parenting skills and believes the organisation can fulfil a major role in the delivery of parenting workshops in Northern Ireland and beyond, as

parenting programmes become a central tenet of Government policy.

4.2 Key Stakeholders

4.21 Linkage with Love for Life

Evidence from the returns received indicated that Love for Life has established long term relationships with agencies that work within the sector and also with those organisations which can access networks of parents to whom the programme can be delivered. This seems to place Love for Life in a strong position to deliver parenting/carer programmes.

4.22 Impact of love for Life's Parenting Programme

Respondents were asked to rank the impact of the programme on a number of issues. In each case they were asked to rank the issue with **5 indicating major impact** and **1 indicating no impact**.

The aggregate impact score for each issue was as follows:

Issue	Aggregate Rank
Provision of information that could assist parents	4.4
Provision of knowledge about relevant initiatives/ policies/programmes	4.0
Enabling parents to better relate to their children	4.8

4.23 Nature of Service Delivery

Stakeholders were asked to consider the nature of the programme managed and delivered by Love for Life:

- All reported that the programme was provided to a professional standard;
- None believed the programme could be delivered as effectively by a public sector organisation;
- All however were of the view that the Parenting programme delivered by Love for Life should be core funded.

4.25 Most Important Aspects of the Programme

We asked respondents to tell us what they believed to be the most important aspects of the programme. Comments included:

- "Essential relevant information is presented in a professional interactive way"
- "Programme reinforces 'No' as a viable option"
- "Giving parents advice on how to guide young people"
- "Programme is well presented at appropriate level for parents"
- "Presenters are very well informed and approachable"
- "Presenters are able to speak in a real way to parents embracing all kinds of issues and scenarios experienced in family life and in society"
- "Programme is based on research around best practice. It is person centred. It offers not only information but skills and values"
- "Provides opportunity for parents to discuss and support each other"

4.26 Programme Strengths

Additionally we sought those responding to the questionnaire to identify other programme strengths. Those identified included:

- "Gives parents power to change lives"
- "Excellent multi-media presentation"
- "Informative and relevant programme"
- "Good information leaflets & handouts"
- "Programme based on relevant research and statistics"
- "Its value base and the fact that it is a non judgemental approach"
- "Overall professionalism, organisation, PR and excellent resources"
- "Importance of the moral ethos of the programme"

4.27 Areas Where Programme could be Strengthened

Largely stakeholders felt that there was little area for improvement. Comments made reflected this:

- "No areas to be strengthened. It is great"
- "Need this programme for junior, middle and senior school"
- "No areas to be strengthened. Love for Life are a professional skilled group who equip themselves with accurate knowledge and information to appeal to students, parents and staff"

- "Could be opportunity to develop more links and to expand multi-disciplinary approach"
- "Opportunity for parents to role play difficult situations"

4.28 Other Comments Made by Stakeholders

A range of other comments were made by stakeholders. We have included them to demonstrate the range of support for the programme.

- "It is superb and should be funded for schools. They are professional and bring the topic from a morally acceptable standpoint"
- "As the programme is so good it would be beneficial if it could be delivered appropriate to issues which may arise at all key stages"
- "Excellent programme, cannot praise it enough"
- "Very positive feedback received from parents who thoroughly enjoyed the evening and the presentation"
- "I think it is an excellent programme which engages with parents in an informal learning style which supports and empowers"

5 Evaluative Measures

The following analysis and observations are based upon comments received during the evaluation or upon the evaluator's observation of the implementation and management of the programme.

5.1 Resource management and value for money

It is apparent that Love for Life has many years of experience managing major programmes funded by Government Departments and European monies. We were pleased to observe that the organisation has developed detailed and professional management practices and policies which have enabled the smooth implementation and management of this programme.

The Programme Developer is being effectively managed and supported in programme delivery by the organisations Chief Executive Officer and by the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and have many years of experience in managing similar projects.

The Chief Executive Officer is a former GP, who fully understands health issues both from the perspective of health practice and health and social service policy.

5.2 Contribution the programme is making to the Departments Policy Objectives

The Departments 2004-2006 Strategy and Business Plans sets out a range of objectives. We believe this project particularly contributes to the stated objective:

"To develop and promote policies and strategies, the efficient, economic and effective implementation of which will lead to good health and well-being, a reduction in preventable diseases and ill health and greater social justice."

Comment: this programme clearly is providing an efficient means by which to address well being of parents and by which to enable the prevention of diseases and ill health in their children.

Additionally we note that programme delivery has been within the Departments policy objectives of equality, human rights and targeting New TSN.

5.3 Measure of Progress

We have observed that the project has progressed in accordance with the first year action plan. This has been noted in the quarterly monitoring reports submitted to the Department. Although participation numbers in some sessions have been lower than anticipated, others have surpassed expectations in terms of attendance and impact.

5.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the project

During the course of our evidence gathering we have noted a range of strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valuable information to parents• Presents the reality of the health issues and choices facing young people today• Enables parents to better communicate and understand the issues their children are experiencing• Educates parents in relation to language and terminology their children use• Has the potential to lead to lasting health and well-being through improved social relationships• Provides support for other professionals within the field• Can enable the development of resources that will be available after funding has ended;• Builds health and social services capacity in the community;• Enables networking of professionals and voluntary agencies.
Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact of the programme is limited by time constraints;• Need for programme to maximise attendance at each session;• Short term nature of funding can be a deterrent to good programming;• Organisation and subject nature can be branded with a "stereotype" image that can make progress slow in some areas;• Lack of co-operation and engagement with some stakeholders within the sector;• Potential to strengthen the structure of evaluation forms completed by beneficiaries

5.5 Financial Position, Sustainability and Scope for Development

We believe that the project has been managed well financially as can be observed from Appendix C which contains information on the financial procedures applied and observed.

It is the view of the evaluator that the project however cannot be sustained without longer term public sector financing. If such can be secured by Love for Love we believe there is indeed much room for project development. We would urge Government to continue to sustain and support this programme in light of the policy objectives relating to parenting recently announced by the Prime Minister, given the potential to mould Love for Life into a leading deliverer of accredited parenting programmes.

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

Love for Life Parenting Project Evaluation Questionnaire

(please tick or circle the appropriate answers)

1. How long have you/your organisation had an association with Love for Life?

Under a year	1-2 years	3-5 years	> 5 years

2. Do you represent a:

Support agency	
Professional health service provider	
Professional social services provider	
School	
Other (please note below)	

-
-
3. What impact, do you think Love for Life's Parenting Programme has on those who attend its presentations/activities? (please rank 1-5 by circling below, where **5 indicates major impact** and **1 indicates no impact**)

- a) Information about issues that could assist with parenting

1 2 3 4 5

- b) Knowledge about relevant initiatives/policies/programmes

1 2 3 4 5

- c) Ability of parents to relate to their children

1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you believe this service:

is provided to a professional standard? Yes No

could be provided by a public sector organisation? Yes No

should be core funded by government? Yes No

5. What do you believe are the most important aspects of the Love for Life Parenting Programme?

6. Can you please identify the strengths of the parenting programme provided by Love for Life?

7. Can you please indicate any aspects where you feel the work of Love for Life's Parenting Programme could be strengthened?

8. Any other comments that would be relevant to the evaluation of Love for Life's Parenting Programme?

Thank You

**Please return in the enclosed freepost envelope
to arrive by Monday 5th December 2005**

APPENDIX B CONTRIBUTORS TO THE EVALUATION

The following organisations were asked to contribute to the evaluation:

Organisation	Name	Position
Homefirst Community Trust	Janice Armstrong	Senior Health Promotion Officer Sexual Health
Down Lisburn Trust	Sarah Liddle	Health Development Specialist (Sexual Health)
SELB	Eileen Donnelly	Personal Social and Health Assistant Advisory Officer
SEELB	Rosie McKenna	Chrysalis Project Manager
Movilla High School (SEELB)	Mrs Wilma McCahon	Teacher
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh	Mrs Katrina Turbit	Teacher
Methodist College, Belfast	Mr Donal Mc Reynolds	Teacher
St. Josephs Grammar School, Donaghmore	Mrs Annette Mc Gleenan	Teacher
Coleraine High School	Mrs Jackie Smith	Teacher
WRDA	Judith Millar	Business Development Worker

APPENDIX C FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Financial Procedures – Parent/Carers Project

Payment of Invoices

- Invoices specifically relating to the project should be separated from any Love for Life invoices when post opened. They should then be filed in the project file.
- A Payment Authorisation Form (APF) needs to be completed and attached to the invoice. This needs to be countersigned by either Janice Barr or Dr R Barr before a cheque can be issued.
- Write the cheque, also completing the cheque details on the APF. Each cheque then needs two signatures, usually Janice Barr and Deryck Harrison.
- Attach a photocopy of the invoice to the cheque and post to the payee.

Percentage Payments

- At the end of each quarter, extract all the common invoices (i.e. utility bills etc) from the Love for Life invoice file leaving a photocopy for record purposes. Calculate the correct percentage to be claimed from the project and issue an invoice from Love for Life to the project for the correct amount. Attach this Love for Life invoice along with original invoice for full amount to an APF and proceed as normal.

Cheques Required for Other Reasons

- If a cheque is required but no invoice is available (e.g. a training course or venue booking) attach a copy of the application form to the APF and also the receipt if and when received.

Bank Reconciliations

- A bank reconciliation must be completed and signed on receipt of bank statement each month. A hard copy to be printed, signed by Dr Barr and kept on file.

Lodgements

- Each lodgement to be documented in back of cheque record book.

Returned Cheques

- Cheque record book to be adjusted along with bank reconciliation.

Cheque Record Book

- All financial transactions must be recorded in the book. There is no petty cash so all cheques must be documented with a paper trail placed in the file.