

GUIDE
DOGS



Parents as partners in promoting well-being

A short course for
parents on supporting
the well-being of
children with vision
impairment

Course introduction

BOOKLET

1

Contents

	Page
Course introduction	2
Background	2
Course delivery	3
Course materials	5
References	6
Acknowledgments	7

DISCLAIMER

The course materials (©) have been developed by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Registered Office: Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3YG. A company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (291646) and a charity registered in England and Wales (209617) and Scotland (SC038979) Tel: 0118 983 5555 Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association accept no responsibility or liability for its use or application.

Course

introduction

(N.B. The term 'parents' has been used throughout the course documents as shorthand for parents/caregivers/wider family).

Background

The purpose of the *Parents as Partners in Promoting Well-being* course is to support parents of children and young people with vision impairment in promoting the well-being of their children.

The course represents the second phase of a Guide Dogs project, which was established in response to 'Research into the Independence and Functionality of Blind and Partially Sighted Young People' (GDBA, April 2008). This survey highlighted that blind and partially sighted children and young people typically do not perform as well as their peers in terms of confidence, independence, initiative, self-esteem, social skills, mobility and social networks. The initial phase of the project focused on the development of a course *Think Right Feel Good* (ref. CD) for young people with vision impairment, aimed at promoting their well-being.

Course delivery

Like *Think Right Feel Good*, the course for parents has been designed for delivery by Vision Impairment (VI) Services, although there is no reason why colleagues from Educational Psychology and/or Mental Health Services could not be invited to collaborate in the delivery.

The course comprises 3 sessions, each of approximately two hours duration. These can be delivered separately or within a day event. The suggested group size is 5 -12 parents with at least 2 course facilitators. The engagement of a parent facilitator, who will need to be involved in the preparations for the course delivery, is strongly recommended.

Although the course is carefully structured, with detailed programme guidance and additional background notes for the facilitators, it is not intended to be rigidly scripted. Indeed, it is emphasised that facilitators should personalise and adapt their presentations to their audience, taking particular care not to overload with information, and that parent participation should be actively encouraged.

Approximate timings have been

offered for each of the programme elements. These are, again, for guidance only. Similarly, the stage at which breaks are taken and their length are left to the facilitators' discretion.

The course approach is intended to empower parents through the sharing of knowledge and experience and the encouragement of mutual support. The primary role of the course leaders is that of facilitation rather than instruction and provision of advice.

Whilst the approach is parent centred, the course is not intended to address specific issues linked with health or educational provision, such as diagnosis or eye conditions and statutory assessment. It is advised that this matter should be covered when establishing the ground rules at the start of the first session to avoid diversions from the programme, or even in a pre-course introductory session.

Care has been taken to develop non-threatening course activities but, by the very nature of the territory of emotional well-being and self-esteem, there is always the possibility that an emotive or sensitive issue may be triggered with a parent. It will therefore be

important to reassure parents at the outset that it is perfectly acceptable for them to opt out of an activity if they wish. It will also be appropriate for the facilitators to establish contingency plans beforehand to provide support in the event of a parent becoming distressed.

Pilot courses have been delivered with the sessions spread over three evenings and also as a whole day event. These have been helpful in honing the course although the content and approach in the pilots were generally very well received, as reflected in the following comments from parents:

'I found the session really interesting and it was good to share experiences.'

'Very constructive, well structured.'

'It was wonderful, I will recommend it for every family with any form of special need.'

'I very much enjoyed the sessions....I think the course content is good and valid....I also cannot emphasise enough how invaluable it has been to meet other parents....'

From the facilitators perspective, whilst the sessions, as might be anticipated, needed to be well prepared for and called upon the emotional reserves, the overriding response was enthusiastic:

'I enjoyed delivering the sessions – very humbling to listen to all that was being shared.'

'Practical activities worked well....liked the content....'

Course materials

The course materials comprise four booklets:

- Booklet 1 - Course introduction
- Booklet 2 - Session 1: What is well-being? Why is it so important?
- Booklet 3 - Session 2: How can we promote well-being? Part 1
- Booklet 4 - Session 3: How can we promote well-being? Part 2

Each of the three sessions includes:

- Programme guidance
- Handouts
- Facilitators' notes (which supplement the programme guidance - these provide further background information which is not always necessarily for delivery).

There is also:

- a PowerPoint presentation (which the pilots suggested should be made available as an optional resource),
- a video clip (for use in Session 2), and

- a CD, containing all of the above materials and resources plus a sample course invitation flyer and the *Think Right Feel Good* publication. (N.B. For ease of copying course materials, WORD versions of the programme guidance, handouts and facilitators' notes for each session have been separately filed on the CD).

All of the handouts, facilitators' notes, PowerPoint slides and the video clip are cross-referenced within the programme guidance.

An electronic version of the course can also be accessed on either the Guide Dogs or NatSIP web sites (www.guidedogs.org.uk or www.natsip.org.uk).

Finally, it is suggested that a course folder, as well as a pen and a name badge, are provided for each parent with handouts being issued at appropriate stages during each session or as a pack at the beginning of each session.

References

The following publications have been referred to in the preparation of the course materials:

Alexander, T. (ed.). (1997). *The Self-Esteem Directory*. Smallwood Publishing.

Bailey, G. (2009). *What can you see?* RNIB Cymru.

Cresswell C. and Willets L. (2007). *Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries*. Robinson.

Families Survey Report. (2010) www.natsip.org.uk (> Document Library > Outcomes Resources > Participation > Parent Voice > Families Survey Report 2010).

Foresight (Government think-tank) Report: *Mental Capital and Wellbeing*. (2008).

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. (2008). *Research into the Independence and Functionality of Blind and Partially Sighted Young People*.

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. (2011) *Think Right Feel Good – A short course for promoting well-being in young people with vision impairment*. (Can be downloaded from the NatSIP web site:

www.natsip.org.uk (> Document Library) and Guide Dogs

website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

Lawrence, D. (1973). *Improving reading through counselling*. London: Ward Lock.

Nevill, C. (2009). *Feelings Count*. New Philanthropy Capital.

No Health Without Mental Health: A Cross-Government Mental Health Outcomes Strategy for People of All Ages (HMG/DH 02 Feb 2011).

Office of National Statistics. (2008). *Social Trends*.

UNICEF. (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries*, Innocenti Report Card 7. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

Acknowledgements

In developing the course manual for Parents as Partners in Promoting Well-being we are grateful for the input and advice from parents/caregivers and professionals.

The course materials were designed by a planning group comprising:

- Gillian Coles, Head of Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service and Co-chair VIEW
- Bob Denman, Chartered Educational Psychologist, Consultant for the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) and Guide Dogs
- Alison Hood, Head of Research, Guide Dogs
- Julie Jennings, Manager, Children Young People and Families, Evidence and Service Impact, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- Lindsey Rousseau, Facilitator for NatSIP, Consultant for Guide Dogs
- Wendy Sainsbury, Head of Family Support, Early Intervention and Information, National Blind Children's Society (NBCS)

- Judy Sanderson, Strategic Manager, Physical and Sensory Support, Surrey County Council and Co-chair VIEW
- Jude Thompson, Head of Quality Improvement and Residential Services, Royal London Society for Blind People (RLSB)

Amendments were made following peer review by Peter Abbotts and Tessa Horton from Physical and Sensory Support, Surrey County Council.

The manual was finalised following pilot courses led by Gillian Coles from the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service for Berkshire Unitary Authorities, and Jude Thompson from the RLSB.

Guide Dogs is a working name of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Registered Office: Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 3YG.
A company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (291646) and a charity registered in England and Wales (209617) and Scotland (SC038979)

