



develop *your child*
...unleashing the potential in young people and families

Social Justice Policy Group

Family breakdown working group

Educational working group

Introduction

I'm Alan Wilson of Develop Your Child and I create personal empowerment in children, young people, parents and carers by taking a positive approach and using life coaching and related techniques. We also have a charity, Develop Your Child Foundation to take our work into families and the community. Within each programme a sustainability element is incorporated.

Children are our future.

When I go into schools I don't see happy pupils, particularly in secondary schools, I see frustrated and angry pupils not being heard or listened too.

Young people of today are unable to manage their thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviour and have problems with communication - in too many cases neither can their parents and there are lots of reasons - but that is the past, lets move forward.

What I see in my role as a Family coach and a Parenting tutor is the claim of:

- 1 they don't listen to me
- 2 they don't value me
- 3 they don't respect me

And this is from the parents AND the young people - so we have a communication barrier. But it's not just about communication as espoused by the plethora of Suppernanny programmes it goes much deeper than that.

It needs a different approach, people need to feel good about themselves before they can step out of their comfort zone - when they do incredible things happen - that's what I do, facilitate fulfilling family relationships - it changes relationships and lives.

The problems we are dealing with

The breakdown of family relationships shows in all sorts of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour, poor school attendance/results, bullying and probably is at the root of most problems/issues in our community and society.



There is a great deal of legislation surrounding these circumstances including Every Child Matters, Youth Matters: The Next Step and the Respect Agenda. And now State Super nannies are being trained for families that cannot/don't want to change - Ministers are to send disciplinarians to impose order on chaotic households.

The punitive system is not working despite the majority of Local Authority budgets going towards a very small hard core of people who tend to be in the system from cradle to grave.

There are numerous initiatives for disaffected youth and a variety of parenting classes all short term, operating separately and without any sustainability process incorporated.

There is an enormous undercurrent of unspoken disaffection/disharmony within the majority of families.

Our approach is for the majority of families who would like to change but feel trapped, guilty, don't know who to turn to, are in fear of being stigmatised and or of losing their children

Causes of the problems

The core issue in the family is that both parents and children feel they are not valued, listened too or respected and a communication barrier is created. This stems from a lack of emotional literacy, self worth etc in parents and their children which leads to an inability to communicate or manage their thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviour.

Generally these families are surrounded by negativity, low self-esteem and lacking confidence, therefore leading to a malaise and to an acceptance of a compromise existence. In this position they don't have the ability to see, hear or feel new choices are available to them.

The punitive systems and procedures currently in use are not working.

Parents are being forced to take responsibility for their children's behaviour and rightly so, but they need an integrated and comprehensive support structure. They feel downtrodden and trapped in a circle of behaviours they have no control over. Their children have a circle of influence outside the home – the internet, television, and their peers. Parents are spiralling downwards - they need new skills and techniques to cope. They feel powerless to break free, stigmatised and are therefore not prepared to come forward.

This is not a socio-economic problem, every walk of life is affected by these challenges.



Coming up with solutions to the issue in question

Most importantly, to encourage parents to take responsibility for their children's behaviour would require a high profile campaign to remove the stigma in them asking for help or feeling failures. Parents need to be invited into a successful, integrated and cohesive parental support structure. This would encourage participation and allow them to overcome issues such as:

- They feel guilty that they are not doing the best they can for their children
- They don't know who to turn too or who they can trust
- They are in fear of losing their children if they speak to the wrong person
- They may have had bad experiences at school themselves
- They may be repeating old patterns from their own childhood experiences
- They are made to feel failures as parents by the government and television
- They feel stigmatised that they are the only ones suffering the challenges they do

For us, breaking the communication gap is the first step. By encouraging people to realise that they can feel better about themselves, they can have choices, they can control their feelings and emotions. They can have a different life and it can be just a small change to start with, they suddenly realise they have a different perspective on life and CAN make changes.

Our solution has been to look for the potential in people rather than seeing them as failures and problems we invite their participation, it's amazing what can happen in an interchange when you use a different perspective with someone. We have been utilising this approach with life coaching and related techniques to focus on emotional literacy, building self worth, self-esteem, confidence and creating personal empowerment.

We have just started a Family Coaching project funded by Awards for All (part of The Big Lottery Fund) to take coaching into families and train a support group facilitator through the Breakthrough project www.dycf.org/thebreakthroughproject.htm. A coach works with all members of the family both separately and together to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding for each individual and the family as a whole.

By the second session all the members of a family are acknowledging each others emotional requirements and creating support structures, to continue the respectful relationships they have started to create.



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We have created successful programmes for building personal empowerment in children, young people, parents, carers both separately and together with sustainability built in. Our next step is a pilot programme to take this integrated approach into schools and work with students, teachers and parents to create an ethos of empowerment throughout the whole school.

This links nicely with the plans for Children's Trust schools and extended schools to become the centre of the community.

We believe our solutions address the pathways to poverty.

Alan Wilson

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