



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

**Recommendation Rec(2006)19
of the Committee of Ministers to member states
on policy to support positive parenting**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 December 2006
at the 983rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its member states, *inter alia*, by promoting the adoption of common rules;

Referring to the work of the Council of Europe in the field of children and families and reaffirming in general the following legal instruments:

- the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5), which protects the rights of everyone, including children;
- the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35) and revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), stating that “the family as a fundamental unit of society has the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection to ensure its full development” (Article 16);
- the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights (ETS No. 160);
- the Convention on Contacts concerning children (ETS No. 192);
- the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member states: No. R (84) 4 on parental responsibilities; No. R (85) 4 on violence in the family; No. R (87) 6 on foster families; No. R (94) 14 on coherent and integrated family policies; No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life; No. R (97) 4 on securing and promoting the health of single parent families; No. R (98) 8 on children’s participation in family and social life; Rec(2005)5 on the rights of children living in residential institutions and Rec(2006)5 on the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015;

Bearing in mind the Revised Social Strategy for Social Cohesion for which families are the place where social cohesion is first experienced and learnt and that a social cohesion strategy, while fully respecting the autonomy of the private sphere and of civil society, must seek to be supportive of families;

Recalling the Parliamentary Assembly’s Recommendations 751 (1975) on the position and responsibility of parents in the modern family and their support by society; 1074 (1988) on family policy; 1121 (1990) on the rights of children; 1443 (2000) on international adoption: respecting children’s rights; 1501 (2001) on parents’ and teachers’ responsibilities in children’s education; 1551 (2002) on building a 21st-century society with and for children: follow-up to the European strategy for children (Recommendation 1286 (1996)); 1639 (2003) on family mediation and equality of sexes; 1666 (2004) on a Europe-wide ban on corporal punishment of children; 1698 (2005) on the rights of children in institutions: follow-up to Recommendation 1601 (2003) of the Parliamentary Assembly;

Stressing the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all the member states of the Council of Europe are Parties, and the basic principles of which should always underlie the rearing of children;

Recalling the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government (Warsaw, Poland, May 2005) and the commitment made there to fully comply with the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to effectively promote the rights of the child and to take specific action to eradicate all forms of violence against children, and the ensuing programme “Building a Europe for and with children”, officially launched in Monaco, on 4 and 5 April 2006;

Referring to the Final Communiqué and Political Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs at their 28th session (Lisbon, Portugal, 16-17 May 2006), particularly:

- recognising that parenting, though linked to family intimacy, should be designated as a domain of public policy and all the necessary measures should be adopted for supporting parenting and creating the conditions necessary for positive parenting;
- recalling their commitment to promote and pursue a common European policy in the field of family affairs and the rights of the child within the framework of the Council of Europe;

Recognising the child as a person with rights, including the right to be protected and to participate, to express her/his views, to be heard and be heeded;

Recalling that public authorities have a vital role to play in supporting families in general and parents in particular, which is expressed through three core elements of family policy: public transfers and taxation, measures to balance work and family life, childcare provision and other services;

Considering that the family is a primary unit of society and that parenting plays a fundamental role in society and for its future;

Conscious of the many changes and challenges facing families today which require parenthood to be given greater prominence and better support, considering that such support is essential for children, parents and society as a whole;

Recognising that all levels of society have a role to play in supporting children, parents and families;

Considering that public authorities in conjunction with the economic and social sectors and civil society can, in taking action in support of parenting, help strive for a healthier and more prosperous future for society, as well as an improvement in the quality of family life;

Noting the need for a cross-sectoral and co-ordinated approach;

Keen to promote positive parenting as an essential part of the support provided for parenting, and as a means of ensuring respect for and implementation of children's rights,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

- acknowledge the essential nature of families and of the parental role and create the necessary conditions for positive parenting in the best interests of the child;
- take all appropriate legislative, administrative, financial and other measures adhering to the principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation.

Appendix to the Recommendation Rec(2006)19

1. Definitions

For the purpose of this recommendation, the term:

“Parents”: refers to persons with parental authority or responsibility;

“Parenting”: refers to all the roles falling to parents in order to care for and bring up children. Parenting is centred on parent-children interaction and entails rights and duties for the child's development and self-fulfilment;

“Positive parenting”: refers to parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child.

2. Fundamental principles of policies and measures

Policies and measures in the field of support for parenting should:

- i. adopt a rights-based approach: this means treating children and parents as holders of rights and obligations;
- ii. be based on a voluntary choice by the individuals concerned, except when public authorities have to intervene to protect the child;
- iii. acknowledge that parents have the prime responsibility for their child, subject to the child's best interests;
- iv. consider parents and children as partners sharing, as appropriate, the setting up and implementation of the measures relating to them;
- v. be based on the equal involvement of parents and respect for their complementarity;
- vi. guarantee equal opportunities for children irrespective of their gender, status, abilities or family situation;
- vii. take into account the importance of a sufficient standard of living to engage in positive parenting;
- viii. be based on a clearly expressed concept of positive parenting;
- ix. address parents and key players having childcare, health and educational and social responsibilities towards the child and who should also respect the principles of positive parenting;
- x. recognise the diverse types of parenting and parental situations through adopting a pluralistic approach;
- xi. adopt a positive approach to parents' potential, particularly through placing priority on incentives;
- xii. be long-term in order to guarantee stability and continuity of policy;
- xiii. ensure that the number of common rules of principle at national or federal level are kept to a minimum to promote equal standards at local level and that there is a local network of services providing parenting support measures;
- xiv. ensure inter-ministerial co-operation, encouraging and co-ordinating the action(s) in this field of the different ministries, departments and agencies concerned in order to implement policy that is coherent and comprehensive;
- xv. be co-ordinated at international level, through facilitating exchanges of knowledge, experience and good practice in the application of the guidelines on positive parenting.

3. Objectives

Governments should organise their policies and programmes on positive parenting with a view to achieving the following three types of objectives:

- i. the creation of the conditions for positive parenting, by ensuring that all those rearing children have access to an appropriate level and diversity of resources (material, psychological, social and cultural) and that broad social attitudes and patterns of prevailing life are receptive to the needs of families with children and also those of parents;
- ii. the removal of barriers to positive parenting, whatever their origin. Employment policy, in particular, should allow a better reconciliation of family and working life;
- iii. the promotion of positive parenting by developing awareness of it and taking all the necessary measures to make it a reality. In order to have efficient policies to support parenting, public authorities should promote initiatives aiming to make people aware of the value and importance of positive parenting. Governments should take a pro-active approach to promoting awareness of parenting issues and to normalising participation in parenting programmes. Information should present different images of parenting in order to avoid stigmatising differences.

The goal of policy and measures should be the harmonious development (in all its dimensions) and proper treatment of children, with due regard for their fundamental rights and dignity. As a priority, measures should be taken to eliminate all child neglect and abuse and physical or psychological violence (including humiliation, degrading treatment and corporal punishment).

It is also essential to implement and further develop a suitable policy to bring about a change in social attitudes and patterns of life in order to accommodate more effectively the needs of children, parents and families and in particular to promote family-friendly working environments and services.

4. Incorporating children's rights in public policies

Public policies on support for parenting should incorporate childhood-related issues, acknowledging the needs and interests of all children and paying attention to their varying needs depending on their age, capacity, and level of maturity. For this purpose, the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be respected by all, regardless of context, and particularly guide the activities of all bodies working in the field, both public and private, especially for the following rights and general principles:

- i. the right to non-discrimination;
- ii. the best interests of the child should be of primary consideration;
- iii. the child's right to life and development;
- ix. the child's right to participation, to express her/his views, to be heard and be heeded, to receive information and to join associations and other organisations;
- x. the right to protection and care.

For this purpose, it is important for the child to grow up in a favourable family environment and in a positive atmosphere.

5. Considering parents' responsibilities, rights and obligations

In the best interests of the child, the rights of parents, such as entitlement to appropriate support from public authorities in fulfilling their parental functions, must also be given prominence. The exercise by parents of equal and shared responsibility for their children makes a major contribution to the harmonious development of the child's personality.

Particular attention should be paid to the important role of fathers in the care and rearing of their children, taking into account in particular the principle of gender equality, the impact on families of the reconciliation of work and family life and family breakdown, which can often result in fathers living apart from their children.

6. Core components of policies and measures

Policies to promote and encourage positive parenting will work best if they are based on consultation and dialogue with parents and on their voluntary involvement and participation, in order to reach a real partnership. In addition to the essential elements at point 4 and 5 of this recommendation, core components include the following:

6.1. Supporting parents

- i. alongside the measures proposed by public authorities to afford and improve support for parents, support from other agencies (such as municipalities, social security and associations) should also be acknowledged and encouraged;
- ii. policies should be geared to engendering support for parenting at the following three levels:
 - informal: creating and strengthening existing social bonds and encouraging new links between parents and their family, neighbours and friends;
 - semi-formal: empowering parents' and children's associations and NGOs and activating a range of self-help and other community-based groups and services;
 - formal: facilitating access to public services.

6.2. Promoting education in children's rights and positive parenting

- i. parents should be encouraged to become more aware of the nature of their role (and how it is changing), children's rights, the responsibilities and obligations that derive from these and their own rights;
- ii. governments should also arrange for comprehensive guidelines and specific programmes to assist them in challenging life situations, conflict resolution, anger management through non-violent approaches and mediation techniques;
- iii. prevention programmes regarding the different forms of ill-treatment of children should be promoted and parents made aware of this serious problem and of its consequences on the child's development;
- iv. children should also be taught about their rights and duties in order to make them aware of the concept of positive parenting and what this means for them.

6.3. Reconciling family and working life

- i. public authorities should create the necessary conditions – and employers should be encouraged – to implement a better reconciliation of family and working life through legal and other provisions (such as flexible working arrangements, adjustment of working and school hours, leave policies, various types of good quality childcare services, provisions for looking after children with disabilities as well as sick children, etc.);
- ii. the social partners should be encouraged to negotiate and develop tailor-made policies adapted to the specific needs of each company and of their employees;
- iii. good practices make it clear to employers that a comprehensive work/life balance policy creates a win-win situation within companies.

6.4. Policies at local level

The action taken at local level is particularly important in providing a response tailored more closely to the needs and characteristics of the populations concerned. Co-operation and co-ordination at national or federal and local levels and between these levels are necessary in order to offer families better service and optimise available resources and the use made of them. Administrative procedures should allow for an appropriate level of flexibility in service provision, consistent with ensuring equitable treatment of all families.

7. Targeting of policies and measures

Particular attention should be paid to difficult social and economic circumstances and to crises within families, which require more specific support.

It is also essential to supplement general policies with a more targeted approach. Parenting in certain situations and at certain periods in the life cycle is by its nature more challenging. Despite the variations from country to country, the needs of the following groups should be especially attended to:

- i. first-time parents;
- ii. teenage parents;
- iii. families with particular needs;
- iv. families in difficult socio-economic circumstances.

In the case of separated parents, support policies should be aimed in particular at maintaining links between children and both their parents, unless this is contrary to the child's best interests. Access to professional counselling should be provided and attention should be paid to cases where the parents have different cultural backgrounds or are of different nationalities.

Public authorities should stimulate and facilitate the creation of networks of mutual assistance associations between families and make available places where parents could meet to discuss – with professionals, if necessary – on issues relating to parenting, and provide parents with adequate support services like free help lines and counselling services.

8. Parenting in situations of social exclusion

Parenting in situations of social exclusion or at risk of social exclusion can be particularly difficult and special attention should be paid to the needs of children and families in this situation, with reference in particular to the following:

- i. providing long-term support, as appropriate, to help them achieve the same results as other children and families; this support should include reaching out to them in their homes or in the places they frequent, and take into consideration the possible fear of parents in a situation of social exclusion towards social services, particularly of having their children taken away;
- ii. giving sufficient means to support parents and to allow them to acquire the necessary competence to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children;
- iii. guaranteeing access to social rights (including the right to adequate income, health, education, housing and employment) and the same quality targeted services as those enjoyed by other families;
- iv. ensuring that families and children suffering exclusion are considered in their social context (including the extended family, the community and their relational networks) and enjoy the same quality services, including local ones, as those enjoyed by other families, in accordance with their needs;

- v. building a trustworthy relationship with the families and enabling parents to regain control of their own lives;
- vi. organising training for professionals and parents together in order to achieve better mutual knowledge and understanding, to build a common project in the best interests of the child and enabling professionals to learn about what these families are experiencing and to better know their family project, with a view to focusing their practice on it;
- vii. ensuring personal and collective support for professionals in order to raise their level of competence in working with people in very difficult situations and take the necessary steps to create new approaches;
- viii. taking ad hoc measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of migrant families;
- ix. avoiding measures and administrative practice that stigmatise children and parents by treating them differently because their families are less well-off than others;
- x. introducing measures to prevent dropout from school as an efficient means to counteract family distress.

9. Qualitative guidelines for professionals

In order for the above rights and principles to be applied, benchmarks and standards must be set. Guidelines on the focus of their services – such as the Council of Europe guidelines on positive parenting – should be given to professionals and practitioners (including those not directly involved with children but whose work could have an impact on their rights), with particular emphasis on:

- i. the principle of equity and accessibility, which should underlie all action taken;
- ii. the principle of becoming partners with and empowering parents. Partnership presupposes recognition of parents' own experience and their knowledge of their own children;
- iii. application of the concept of partnership to co-operation and interdisciplinary co-ordination between agencies, specifying the particular areas of activity of each department, providing for a sharing of facilities and working in a cross-curricular network;
- iv. ensuring that the application of comprehensive services is conceived in terms of support and assistance, encouraging family initiative without creating excessive dependency. Accordingly, strengths and resources of families should be supported. This also means that professionals should act as support for parents, in ways that are non-judgmental and non-stigmatising;
- v. building up parents' self-confidence, enhancing their competencies and potential and motivating parents to be informed and trained;
- vi. enabling children to communicate their feelings and needs, in particular very young children and children with communication impairments;
- vii. the importance of service provision and professional practices by ensuring that the emphasis is placed on:
 - thorough training of the professionals concerned;
 - ongoing evaluation, both external and internal (self-evaluation);
 - continuity of action;
 - responses based on the understanding of the child and families in their context;
- viii. devising methods to identify risk factors regarding failure to provide parental care to be disseminated among social services, health-care professionals, those dealing with young people, teachers and childcare staff to train them in identifying families with problems in this respect and offer support. A better co-ordination among the services working to support a family should constantly be sought;
- ix. co-ordinating the implementation of measures to separate children from their parents, when this is necessary, with work with the family of origin (particularly in partnership with the parents) in order to enable them to prepare or better prepare for and accept this step as a means of ensuring the best interests of the child. The aim of any such measure should be the return, if possible, of the child in the family environment.

10. School and childcare environment

An integrated approach to the provision of assistance with schooling and support for parenting should be encouraged (especially where children lack stable roots or a permanent home – for example children with a Roma or Gypsy background, children of migrants); childcare and school integration as well as dialogue between these service providers and parents should be encouraged, with special attention to families in difficult situations and to those with particular needs.

11. Key messages for parents and all those having responsibilities for children and their rearing

Key messages on positive parenting should be issued to all parents and persons providing care and involved in the rearing of a child on a daily basis (such as childminders or school staff). These messages should make clear how the child is to be respected as a person and how his/her participation should be promoted, and that parents have rights as well as responsibilities. Key messages should be drawn up on the basis of consultation with all the stakeholders involved, especially parents, service providers and children, and be monitored to ensure that they are effective and are being adhered to.

12. International co-operation

Measures should be put in place to improve international co-operation and exchange of best practice in relation to parenting.

983 Meeting, 13 December 2006

6 Social cohesion

6.2 European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) –

b. Draft recommendation Rec(2006)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on policy to support positive parenting

EXPLANATORY REPORT

Item to be prepared by the Rapporteur Group for Social and Health Questions (GR-SOC) at its meeting on 30 November 2006

1. Aims and definitions

The aim of the Recommendation is to make states recognize the importance of parental responsibilities and the necessity of providing the parents with sufficient support in meeting their responsibilities in bringing up their children. The Recommendation aims to improving the quality and conditions of parenting in European societies and must be seen in relation with the report "Parenting in Contemporary Europe: A positive approach"², Keys for parents, Guidelines for professionals and Principles and Guidelines for providing support in parenting for families at risk of Social Exclusion.

In almost 50 years, since its first conference of Ministers responsible for Family Affairs held in Vienna in 1959, family policy has been on the agenda of the Council of Europe. The conferences have not only identified current matters of importance for families across Europe, but also addressed necessary actions to be taken.

The importance that the Council of Europe attaches to families is also reflected in the Organisation's legal instruments, (like the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Social Charter and the Revised European Social Charter) and in the Revised Strategy for Social cohesion. While fully respecting the autonomy of the private sphere, the family is described as a fundamental unit in the society with the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection to ensure its full development. The Council of Europe has been at the forefront in progressing knowledge and understanding of childhood and family life as well as in working for the improvement of the lives of vulnerable and excluded individuals.

¹ This document has been classified restricted at the date of issue. Unless the Committee of Ministers decides otherwise, it will be declassified according to the rules set up in Resolution Res(2001)6 on access to Council of Europe documents.

² Council of Europe 2006. The report edited by Prof. Mary Daly contains contributions from several European experts.

Even though family policy is not a new topic, the content of positive parenting has not yet been put on the political agenda. There is a shift from parental authority to parental responsibility and children are nowadays seen as valuable members of society as children, not only as future adults. There is a more obvious recognition of the value of the childhood in itself. The role of the child within the family and the society is given increased attention. The Council of Europe recognises that the balance between children's rights and parental responsibility and resources needs to be further developed, and that the present situation calls for renewed attention.

Families in Europe are faced with numerous economic, social, cultural and political challenges, such as population decline and ageing, increased variety of family arrangements and the impact of new gender roles on family life and higher work participation of women. As most changes, these also carry with them positive as well as negative aspects. The present demographic trends can signify that values of duty and responsibility have been replaced by individualism and social instability, but new trends can also be seen as contributing to the democratisation of the relations between children and parents as well as between parents themselves.

However, the rapid and profound social changes carry with them growing demands on the family, from the employers, the public authorities, the media as well as family members themselves. Many of these demands are historically new and those involved in parenting today need information, support and skills to enable them realise their children's and their own potential. For this and other reasons, public policy must take a pro active role in the matter of parenting and give parenthood greater prominence and better support.

Parenting is a stage of family life taking place within a precise family context with ties binding family members to each other. There is a strong 'social' component to parenting. While it is in many respects private, it is also shaped by society's understanding and expectations of appropriate parental behaviour and how the state and the public authorities frame and construct public policy. Parenting is a gendered activity in that the experiences and approaches of mothers and fathers often differ, as those of girls and boys.

Positive parenting can be described as promoting development of positive parent-child relationships and optimising the child's developmental potential.

The term 'parents' refers not only to biological parents but also to those who are involved in caring for and raising children

When dealing with the issues of supporting parents it is important to underline the complexity involved in parenting as well as in supporting parents. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as Council of Europe's legal instruments which have already been mentioned, give some guidance as to what should be emphasised in these important tasks . All levels of society have a role to play.

Public authorities can, in conjunction with the civil society and NGOs take action to support parents and children and improve the quality of family life, in cross-sectoral and co-ordinated approaches. It is also up to the public authorities to implement and adapt the provision of this Recommendation accordingly to the situation of their country and to deliver the message in the most appropriate - and varied - manner according to the target group.

2. Basic principles

Policies and measures in the field of support for parenting should adopt a rights-based approach, treating children and parents as holders of rights and obligations. It should be acknowledged that parents have the prime responsibility for their child, with the exception when the State has to intervene to protect the child. The diverse types of parenting and parental situations must be recognised through adopting a pluralistic approach, and the importance of an appropriate standard of living in order to ensure positive parenting must be taken into account. Parents and children should be considered as partners, and efforts should be made to ensure an equal involvement of parents. Children and young people should be guaranteed equal opportunities irrespective of their gender, status, abilities or family situation.

The policies and measures should also be long-term in order to guarantee stability and continuity of policy. Efforts should be made to avoid severe difference at local levels and to coordinate services at local and national level. Exchanges of knowledge and good practice in the field of parenting should be encouraged.

3. Core elements

Member states should consolidate and develop their support for families through the following core elements of family policy: (1) general policy measures, (2) positive parenting, (3) services to support parents, (4) services for parents at risk of social exclusion and (5) principles guiding the professionals. This support is highly important also for the implementation of positive parenting.

3.1 Policies to support families

Public authorities have a vital role to play in ensuring that all those bringing up children have access to an appropriate level and diversity of material, social, psychological and cultural resources. They should strive to remove barriers that hinder people from accessing these resources. Access to the five main social rights such as employment, housing, health, education and social protection are not dealt with in depth in this recommendation, but we must bear in mind their fundamental impact on family life. The following elements seem to be fairly common in the social policy landscape in addressing the situation of families and children directly:

- Public transfers and taxation are important to secure the living standards of families with children and enhance social security. Child benefits or family allowances are the primary form of such transfers. They exist in almost all countries, although they are universal in some countries and means-tested in others. In countries where the allowances are generous, they may contribute to considerably lower the child poverty rate. There has also been an increasing interest in exploring the experience of poverty seen from children's own perspectives. In their reports to the 28th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Family Affairs, taking place in Lisbon in May 2006, several countries mentioned their special measures to reduce child poverty. Actions taken in order to improve the situation of single mothers are often seen as a part of fighting child poverty.
- Work-family balance is another common focus of family policy having a great impact on the quality of parenting. For this purpose, a number of measures are being put into practice, such as flexible working hours and part-time work, paid parental leaves and allowances and the right to take time off when children or other family members are ill. Some countries have also introduced a father's quota of leave – a period of family leave reserved solely for the father - in order to encourage fathers to participate more actively in the care of younger children.
- An infrastructure of child care provision is a third axis of family policy. High quality day-care is an increasing degree seen as a way of ensuring children's well-being. In its Recommendations [Rec(2002)8] on day-care, the Council of Europe describes good quality child day-care as an important contribution to social cohesion, insofar as it serves to foster the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of all children and creates possibilities for children to make their opinions heard on matters concerning them.

Even though all countries describe ongoing activities in these areas, the gap is still wide between what governments can offer and what families and children need in order to organise their everyday life in an appropriate way.

Paid work is important from many perspectives, but there seems to be an increasing understanding of the fact that principles of care to inform policy are needed alongside principles of work. Care should not only be fitted in with the requirements of work but be seen as having value in itself. Societies need to address fundamental questions such as what people need in order to provide proper care and support for close kin and friends and for themselves.

3.2 The content of positive parenting

Today children are recognised as active, creative citizens and social actors. They are granted rights as individuals by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as by the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and of member states. Information about the content of positive parenting must therefore highlight children's rights. However, the rights of parents must also be given attention. Not least the entitlement to appropriate support from the state in fulfilling the parental functions. Efforts must also be made to involve fathers more in the care and upbringing of their children.

In short, 'parenting in the best interests of the child' means that parents must have the child's well-being and development as their main concern and bring up children in ways that enables them to achieve their best at

home, in school, with friends and in community. Children do best when their parents are warm and supportive, spend generous amounts of time with them, understand their life and behaviour, expect them to follow rules, encourage open communication and react to misbehaviour by providing appropriate consequences and explanations rather than with harsh punishment.

The UNCRC includes the child's right to protection (e.g. to be treated non-violently) and the child's right to participation (e.g. respect for the child's views). Further, parents should provide their children with:

- Nurture - which means responding to the child's need for love, warmth and security.
- Structure and guidance - which implies providing the child with a sense of security and predictability, regularity and yet the necessary flexibility.
- Recognition – which refers to each child's need to be seen, heard and valued as a person.
- Empowerment - which aims to enhance the child's sense of competence and personal control.

Corporal punishment breaches the human rights of the child, being an assault on their dignity and physical integrity. It should not be allowed in Europe according to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Revised European Social Charter (article 17) and to the UNCRC.

The negative effects of this punishment can be physically dangerous for the child (for instance slapping, shaken baby syndrome) and have consequences, particularly at a psychological level, which may last for life.

Promoting the use of non-violent upbringing, does not mean to encourage a permissive parenting style. Parents who are convinced that corporal punishment of children is both ineffective and humiliating for the child are finding other more efficient non-violent ways to resolve conflicts and ensure compliance with their standards of behaviour. The already mentioned report "Parenting in Contemporary Europe: a positive approach" and the Keys for parents (the latter are included in Appendix I), provide further details about the alternatives that can be applied.

3.3 Services to support parents

While the family policy measures (described under 3.1) aim at providing the necessary material conditions for families, such as preventing poverty and reconciling work and family life, there is also a need to support the qualitative aspects of parenting and for that purpose provide parents with access to a set of services and programmes focusing on the content of the parental tasks.

Particular attention should be given to what kind of information and support parents need at the different stages of their children's lives, like first-time and teen-age parents, parents of young children and teen-agers. Families where the parents or the child are suffering from diseases, disabilities, drug addictions or other problems do also need special attention. Families in difficult socio-economic circumstances, a group where low-income, lone-parent and migrant families are over-represented, should receive measures addressing their situation.

Recent contributions provided by the member states, indicate that six main trends characterise the development of services for families and children:

- *Local centres and services* providing universal or preventive measures to inform parents about parenting and good marital practices and to offer counselling or programmes;
- *Help lines* which are another valuable way of reaching out to parents and children;
- *Educational and supporting programmes for parents*, for example during pregnancy or at different stages in the child's development;
- *Initiatives to support children's development and education*, which can be divided into three broad categories: (1) programmes directed towards children themselves to enhance their school performance and prevent school drop out, (2) programmes with parents as target group, aiming at enabling them to support their children's education, and (3) programmes focusing on the cooperation between schools and parents;

- *Services and programmes targeting populations at risk* such as health and educational services for migrant and Roma children, services for adults as well as children with disabilities, programmes for teen age parents or parents in difficult socio-economic circumstances;

- *Child protection services* which are becoming more wide-spread as well as institutions to safeguard and promote children's rights, such as *Children's Ombudsman*.

Even though these are general trends, the development of services aimed at supporting parents in their role as carers/educators of their children is a relatively recent phenomenon in many states and needs to be considerably improved. Governments and local authorities should also facilitate parents' opportunities to come together and discuss and support each other in promoting a positive and non-violent upbringing.

In the further development of services for parents two core principles should be taken into consideration: (1) the necessity of reducing the impact of risk factors and increasing the likelihood that protective factors will come into play and (2) the necessity of ensuring that parents and children are treated as agents in their own lives.

3.4 Services for parents in risk of social exclusion

The general principles outlined in this Recommendation are relevant to all parents, but supporting parents and children at risk of social exclusion is a challenging endeavour and may need some additional consideration. Sufficient means should be provided to support these parents and to allow them to acquire the necessary skills to fulfil their responsibilities (for instance through family workers, help at home, open environment educational activities,...).

A partnership between professionals and parents and their children is an essential way of working both at policy level as well as at grass-root level. Stigmatisation must be avoided so that parents and children do not feel different because they are from a family suffering from exclusion. They need to feel recognised, valued and enabled to participate fully in the activities which concern them. Material aspects such as economy, housing and medical needs must be given priority in order to enable them to parent adequately for their children, in addition to legal and psychological assistance, if needed. Professionals must reach out to adults in their homes or in the places they frequent, if necessary, and support them in accessing the appropriate services.

The contribution of informal resources, traditional networks and community solidarity to bringing up children must be encouraged. Projects which allow the involvement of parents and families in new relationship networks (family connections, supporting families, sponsorship...) must be considered as important, as well as to create places and networks that support parents to exchange opinions and experiences with other parents in similar situations.

If all children have access to high quality day-care and after school facilities, free access to education facilities as well as leisure activities, this is supportive also to children in families at risk and avoids stigmatising children with special needs. Further school curricula should be designed with a view of reducing social inequalities and school failure. Children, who do not receive enough support from their families concerning their education, should be provided with assistance.

In order to meet these needs and deal with parents and children in situation of social exclusion in a constructive way, professionals should be provided with education and training. The Principles and Guidelines for providing support in parenting for families at risk of Social Exclusion develop these aspects.

3.5 Guidelines for professionals

In order to strengthen parental skills, professionals are recommended to focus on understanding the developmental needs of the child, the responsibilities and capacities of their parents to respond to these needs, the relationships and interactions between family members and the needs of the family as a basic unit of society. The child should be the focus of their work and the child's rights and needs should be given priority.

Parents want to be treated with respect for their life experiences and to take on roles as subjects and contributors and not only as objects and recipients. For instances, schools should enhance a positive communication with children as well as parents and ensure that their views are taken into account.

Professionals should play a critical role in facilitating parents understanding of child development and assisting them to use this information to parent their children. This requires that each professional maintain their professional knowledge base so that they are able to assist parents.

Professionals further play a vital role in facilitating parents' access to services – informing parents about services is not sufficient. They should speak “with” parents not ‘to’ them. A range of programmes needs to be provided which are sufficiently broad and flexible to be applicable across the cultural spectrum in each community. Each programme should take efforts to be non-judgemental and non-stigmatising, to avoid creating dependency by parents on professionals and to develop these programmes in ways that include input from parents themselves in order to positively address the parents' issues and the context in which they are parenting their children. Services should be multifocused and flexible in order to deal with the uniqueness of each family and the complexity of the problems that they face. It is further important that programmes are inclusive of ethnic and other minority ethnic groups and that procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are integrated into each programme.

In order to support professionals in this task it is important that each service provider operates on the principle that its staff will be partners with parents and empower them so that they are able to bring up their children successfully. Guidelines for professionals in Appendix 2 provide further details.

Positive parenting in contemporary Europe Key messages for parents: “growing up together”

Today’s children are living in a different world from the one in which their mothers and fathers grew up. This presents parents with some challenges both to reconsider and in some situations to relearn how to bring up their children. This leaflet is intended to provide parents with guidance in understanding their responsibilities as parents in the 21st century. It is based on a Council of Europe report ‘Positive parenting in contemporary Europe’ published in 2006.

Parenting is about learning to cooperate, through give and take between the child and the parent and about making sure parents respect their child’s and their own integrity. We know that some parental behaviours are good for children. They, just like the adults, cooperate best with people who treat them with kindness, respect, understanding and recognition that they also are individuals.

View of the child and the role of parents

Today, children are seen as persons with their own rights, not as their parents’ property. Children are competent and capable, but do also need protection and guidance in order to enjoy their childhood and become adults who can function well in society. It is considered as the most important that parents are able to provide their children with the following:

- *Basic care*
Making sure that the child’s physical needs are met, for example for food, warmth, shelter, hygiene, appropriate clothing and medical care;
- *Ensuring safety*
Ensuring that the child is safe by protecting him or her from harm or danger both in the home and outside it;
- *Emotional warmth*
Ensuring that the child receives emotional support and feels valued;
- *Stimulation*
Stimulating the child’s learning and intellectual development through talking with the child, encouraging and joining the child’s play, and promoting his or her educational opportunities;
- *Guidance and boundaries*
Providing guidance and boundaries and showing the child how to behave appropriately;
- *Stability*
Consistently providing emotional warmth, responding to the child and ensuring he or she has contact with people who are important to him or her.

The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – a tool for children and parents

The Council of Europe is promoting the rights of the child (Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter and the revised European Social Charter) and do fully comply with the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which all its member States are parties.

The UNCRC:

- Sees the child as a subject of rights and sets standards for states i.e. countries, about the rights that they should assure to all children aged under 18 years. Some obligations fall directly on states, while others are addressed to the child’s parents or legal guardians;

- Allocates to parents or the child's legal guardian the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child, and states that the best interests of the child should be their main concern. This means that in parenting parents need to have their child's well-being and development as their priority
- Requires states to recognize the responsibilities of parents and to support parents bringing up their children.
- Requires states to intervene to protect the child if you neglect or abuse him or her.

The UNCRC and the vision of parenting

The UNCRC includes the child's right to protection (e.g. to be treated non-violently) and the child's right to participation (e.g. respect for the child's views). It also emphasises the importance of each child achieving his or her developmental potential, i.e. doing as well as he or she can, and recognises that children develop over time and have different needs at different stages in their life. The different aspects of the UNCRC mean that parents should provide their children with nurture, structure and recognise them as people in their own right and empower them to act as individuals.

Positive Parenting includes the following parental behaviours and values:

- *Nurturing behaviour* means responding to the child's need for love and security. The child needs acceptance, sensitivity, responsiveness, involvement and support. The parent can show the child affection and joy, comfort him or her when in distress, talk about what he or she is concerned with, maintain a positive emotional tone in the home as well as providing basic care and safety. This enables the child to explore the world and come back to the parents when he or she feels anxious or distressed.
- *Structure and guidance* provides the child with a sense of security and predictability. It helps the child to accept responsibility for his or her own behaviour, become aware of the needs of others and develop self-control. To achieve this, the parent needs to help the child to understand what the standards are, set reasonable and appropriate limits and take account of the child's views and reactions. The parent also needs to have an orderly (but not rigid) schedule to each day with regular times and patterns for family activities. It is important to be flexible, and to talk and negotiate with your child as she or he grows older.
- *Recognition* refers to each child's need to be seen, heard and valued as a person. It requires the parents to show an interest in their child's daily experiences as well as listening to him or her, trying to understand his or her point of view and helping him or her to express feelings. It also means allowing the child to have a say and to play an active part in your family's life and decision-making.
- *Empowerment* refers to enhancing your child's sense of competence, of personal control and ability to affect the attitudes and behaviours of others. Parents can focus on the child's strengths and express belief in his or her potential. Further parents can create opportunities for him or her to learn, have new experiences and social relationships. All children have times when they are more grown up, and others when they go back to behaving as a younger child. During these times it is important for parents to support the child and help him or her to grow into the next stage of development.

In short, "parenting in the best interests of the child" means bringing up children in ways that mean they achieve their best at home, in school, with friends and in your community. We know that children do best when their mothers and fathers are warm and supportive, spend generous amounts of time with them, understand their life and behaviour, expect them to follow rules, encourage open communication and react to misbehaviour by talking rather than with harsh punishment.

Reasons for a non-violent upbringing of children

Corporal punishment breaches the human rights of the child victim, being an assault on their dignity and physical integrity. It is not allowed in Europe according to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and article 17 of the revised European Social Charter.

Still, some parents believe that corporal punishment (i.e. hitting children with the hand or an implement such as a stick or a belt) is an effective way of getting children to do what they are told. Although these children

may do what you want them to at that moment in time, the negative effects of this punishment may last for life.

We know children who have experienced corporal punishment tend to have:

- poorer mental health (e.g. less self-confidence, more depression),
- poorer relationships with their parents (i.e. violence does not teach them to respect their parents but to fear them, and it pushes children towards resisting and retaliating towards their parents, and/or withdrawing from them)
- less developed self-control and weaker moral standards (i.e. violence does not teach children the reasons for or ways of behaving correctly.)
- increased aggression and anti-social behaviour (i.e. corporal punishment gives children the impression that aggression might be normal, acceptable and effective).

We also know that adults who experienced corporal punishment as children tend to have more mental health problems and higher levels of criminal and antisocial behaviour, including family violence than adults who did not experience corporal punishment as children.

Corporal punishment is, however, not the only behaviour having a severe impact on children's health. It is also important to avoid other degrading or humiliating behaviour towards children including ridiculing, making your child feel worthless, unloved or inadequate and causing the child to frequently feel frightened.

Practical guidelines for a non-violent upbringing

Bringing up children in a non-violent way is far from encouraging a permissive parenting style. Parents who are convinced that corporal punishment of children is both ineffective and humiliating for the child are finding other ways to resolve conflicts and ensure compliance with their standards of behaviour.

Non-violent ways of responding to your child's erroneous, hurtful, dangerous or antisocial behaviour can include:

- with younger children – using distraction before a problem develops; calming your child down by practicing alternative ways of doing something together; getting him or her to listen and point out what is wrong; taking a break from the situation and discussing it later when emotions have subsided; time-out;
- with older children – having a discussion about behaviours parents do not want to see, having the child, eventually together with the parent, repair any damage she or he may have caused and make amends for any wrongdoing, or restricting privileges (e.g. watching TV, or meeting friends).

In these situations it is always important to avoid insulting the child's sense of self and his or her dignity – it is the undesirable behaviour that should be disapproved of, not the child. The parent should also think about the child's capacity to understand and follow the rules, the circumstances and the seriousness of the behaviour. When setting limits, the parent should consider what is right for the child in view of it's age and stage of development, and think about the reasons for setting them.

A lot of parents find they can avoid coercing their children if they have engaged in sensitive, mutually respectful and rewarding relationships with them from birth. The key to be effective in teaching children to regulate their own behaviours is establishing mutual respect and expecting cooperation from the child from a young age. Children respond to respect and positive expectations. This means that parents should expect good behaviour and focus on it rather than poor behaviour, and make sure the child understands what is expected of her/him and is capable of doing it.

In order to help children learn positive behaviours, parents can:

- Provide regular positive attention and communicate this to the child no matter what their age. As the child grows older this includes being aware of and interested in peer relationships and their school performance;
- Listen carefully to their children and help them express their feelings;
- Help them to understand the potential consequences of their choices;
- Encourage their emerging desirable behaviours by providing attention and praise, and ignoring minor undesirable behaviours;

- Behave as parents want their child to behave, communicate with him/her in a respectful manner, and demonstrate how to resolve conflicts (constructively).

Supporting desirable behaviours and reducing undesirable ones is best done by parents who are respected by their children. This requires that parents recognise and acknowledge that they also make mistakes, whilst taking responsibility for their parenting behaviour and the quality of the relationship with their child (rather than blaming the child).

Resources for parenting

All parents want to be a good mother or a good father to their child. This is sometimes difficult to achieve. Parenting, besides being a joyous and pleasurable experience, can also be a stressful one.

Many parents divide their time and energy between different commitments (e.g. employment, caring for children, caring for elderly family members). Time with children is very precious - it passes quickly and will not come back. Positive parenting does require time to enable parents and children to be together. Whilst this is especially important in the earliest years of the child's life, we should not forget that teenagers also need their parents to be available to them.

It is also vital that parents find time to take care of themselves as adults, to pay attention to their own needs for intimacy, companionship and recreation. In order to be able to parent effectively, to provide contact, support and guidance to children, parents need resources and support.

Parents can learn a great deal from discussing their experiences with other parents, friends and family. Parents can also use professional services that directly (e.g. parenting education) and indirectly (e.g. couple therapy) support them in their parenting role. Asking for help is a sign of responsibility, not of weakness.

REMEMBER THAT PARENTS ARE REALLY IMPORTANT TO THEIR CHILDREN, NO MATTER HOW YOUNG OR OLD THEY ARE!

(Here member States can fill in information for parents, particularly where parents can seek help!)

Positive parenting in contemporary Europe Guidelines for professionals

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROFESSIONALS

1. Introduction

This document is intended for all professionals who are working with children and families, or with adults who have parenting responsibilities for children aged under 18 years. Its purpose is to provide professionals with guidelines on how to support positive parenting. Positive parenting is defined as parental behaviour and values, based on the best interests of the child, which involves setting boundaries using non-violent methods to enable each child to achieve their full developmental potential.

In order to strengthen parental skills, professionals are recommended to focus on understanding the developmental needs of the child, the responsibilities and capacities of their parents to respond to these needs, the relationships and interactions between family members and the needs of the family as a basic unit of society. The child should be the focus of interventions - the child's rights and needs as embodied in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in Council of Europe main legal instruments (like the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, European Social Charter and the revised European Social Charter).

Information about the developmental needs of the child and the responsibilities of parents is set out in section 2, whilst section 3 contains guidelines for professionals when working with parents. An interdisciplinary approach of the work of services is particularly important and their "compartmentalisation" should be avoided or broken.

In order to support professionals in this task it is important that each service provider operates on the principle that its staff will be partners with parents and empower them in exercising their parental responsibilities and capacities. This means service providers' policies on positive parenting should include the following four core components:

- Promotion of parental learning about how to parent their children in a positive way, to enhance that each child's developmental potential is reached
- Provision of support for parents to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities to the best of their capacities, and
- Where appropriate, facilitating and encouraging changes in parental behaviour, so that their behaviour enhances the developmental outcomes of their children.

Managers/administrators who consider the three core components of positive parenting set out above to be part of the professional roles and responsibilities of their employees will play an important role in enabling their staff to support mothers and fathers in bringing up their children.

2. Keys for parents: children's needs and parental responsibilities

1. The Child focus: the child as a subject of rights

The rights defined in the UNCRC include the right to protection and the right to participation. To this should be added the emphasis given to the child's development i.e. supporting the evolving capacities of the child. Good parenting in line with these basic UNCRC principles, together with established knowledge through research, includes:

Providing a safe environment and meeting the child's basic needs, including those for shelter, food, water and medical and dental care.

Nurturing behaviour that responds to the child's need for emotional nourishment, security, belonging and secure attachment. The parents should meet the child needs for warmth, acceptance, sensitivity, responsiveness, involvement and support.

Structure which refers to setting out and adhering to standards of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and role models provided by parents. Each child's needs limits and guidance for his or her physical and psychological security, and the development of his or her own values and sense of personal and social responsibility.

Recognition which refers to the child's need to be acknowledged and have his/her personal experiences responded to and confirmed by his/her parents. Acknowledging and respecting the child's experience and views contributes to enhancing the child's personal development to its full potential.

Empowerment refers to combining a sense of personal control and self-discipline with the ability to affect the attitudes and behaviours of others. It implies a focus on enhancing existing strengths in a child, and reflects a belief that power can be generated and regenerated. Thus parents should respect the evolving capacity of a child by accommodating to their behaviour and ideas through involvement and discussion.

II. Parental responsibilities

The UNCRC emphasizes that parents should be supported in exercising their responsibilities towards their children. Parents should be able to:

- provide their children with basic care such as providing for their physical needs and appropriate medical and dental care, including nutrition, warmth, shelter and clothing;
- ensure their safety by protecting the child from harm in the home or elsewhere;
- ensure the child's emotional needs are met, the child has a positive sense of being specially valued and a positive sense of his or her own ethnic and cultural identity;
- stimulate the child by promoting learning and intellectual development through encouragement, cognitive stimulation and promoting social opportunities;
- provide guidance and boundaries, enabling the child to regulate their own emotions and behaviour using non-violent methods; and
- provide the child with a stable family environment which enables the child to maintain a secure attachment to their primary caregiver(s).

In terms of the resources needed for parenting, they can usefully be thought of in terms of three levels or sources:

- Internal to the parent – such as using their knowledge and skills (for example, of child development), and having good physical/mental health and problem solving skills;
- Internal to the family – models of good parenting, inter-personal household relationships;
- External to the household – support from wider family and friends, neighbourhood, community, economic resources, employment, welfare, child-care, education.

III. Parental capacities

Resources internal to the parent can be enhanced by empowering parental capacities, i.e. by educational measures. The following issues should be addressed:

- The child's uniqueness and changing developmental needs from early childhood to adolescence;
- The importance of attachment to a primary caregiver in the child's development;
- Parent's self confidence and skills in utilizing positive parent management strategies;
- Competence in enhancing children's pro-social skills;
- Limit setting techniques used in non-violent ways;
- Understanding the significance of the child's spirituality and moral development;
- The parent's self care as a prerequisite for managing the demands of life, interpersonal relationships and understanding the lives of each person within the family;
- The factors that impair parenting capacities, such as domestic violence, substance abuse and other mental health issues, disorganized lifestyles, emotional problems, critical attitudes and insensitivity towards children's needs.

IV. *Interpersonal relationships*

The quality of interpersonal relationships within the family is a basic resource for healthy parenting. The following aspects are of special significance:

- The significance of parental respect for the child, and sensitivity and responsiveness to his or her needs;
- Behaving with dignity, talking to and involving the child and providing adult leadership;
- The quality of relationships between adults who have parenting responsibilities, irrespective of the configuration of the family;
- The quality of the relationships between siblings and other children in the household;
- The importance of non-violent conflict solving and methods of discipline in the family.

V. *The extended family and informal support systems*

The extended family and informal social networks can be valuable resources for parents and children. Work with children and families should, wherever possible, seek to identify:

- The quality of relationships with members of the extended family or in the neighbourhood or community;
- The extent to which family, friends and the local community support both the parents and child;
- The significance and quality of relationships between the child and his or her peer group.

3. *Guidelines for professionals*

I. *Principles underpinning professionals work with children and families*

The role of professional should be underpinned by clear values, ethics, knowledge and skills. The following are significant when working to enhance and support positive parenting:

- Building trust based on empathy and respect for the human dignity of all members of the family and significant others;
- All interventions and their outcomes are child focused having addressed the rights, developmental needs and uniqueness of each child
- The language and approach used is user friendly and supportive;
- The principles of equity and accessibility underpin all interventions ;
- Professionals and parents work together collaboratively so that parents are empowered to bring up their children.
- A comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach is taken when working with children and families
- The strengths of parents, actual and potential, are identified and built on when intervening in family life in order to maximise their capacities;
- Parents capacities are not judged on the basis of one harmful event, but in any case the safety of the child is the primary concern and should not be compromised;
- Professional advice is addressed to both mothers and father or other caregivers of both genders. The importance of the father's parenting role is recognized.
- The provision of services which are responsive to the diverse needs of parents from minority ethnic groups.

II. *Facilitating access to services*

In facilitating access to services, professionals assume an active role in identifying and providing parents with access to the types of support and services necessary to enhance their parental capacity to bring up their children, starting with the least interventionist type of service being offered first:

- informal support (i.e. strengthening parents' existing social bonds and encouraging new links with family, friends, neighbours, and other people based locally),
- semi-formal support (i.e. empowering parents' (including through the use of advocates) and children's NGOs and activating a range of self-help and other community-based groups and services), and then
- formal support (i.e. professional services)

It is further important that professionals

- ensure that parents are in receipt of their “state” benefits, for example, finance, or other entitlements i.e. they have access to their social rights;
- where necessary, appoint an advocate for parent;
- give priority to services that have been evaluated with appropriate methods and demonstrated to be effective at achieving the goals of positive parenting.

III. Parental Programmes

Parental programmes can have different goals and characteristics. The range of programmes provided should be sufficiently broad and flexible to be applicable across the cultural spectrum in each community. Categories of parental programmes include those:

- designed to meet parents’ needs and interest for general knowledge on the roles of parents and how to bring up children so that they achieve their developmental potential;
- addressing specific issues which parents may have to address with their children such as anti-social behaviour, preventing substance abuse and enhancing self confidence;
- focusing on targeted groups of parents or of children with special needs. These may include single parents, separated parents, socially excluded and vulnerable parents, parents or children with disabilities or age specific programmes.

IV. Recommended delivery of parenting programmes

When providing parental programmes to support positive parenting, professionals should aim to:

- Have a primary focus on the principle of the “best interests of the child” and on achieving the best developmental outcomes for each child;
- Be relevant to the needs of children, parents and families;
- Be non-judgmental and non-stigmatising;
- Avoid creating dependency by parents on professionals;
- Address the complexity of family life and be responsive to the needs of each child and family;
- Be sensitive to the local community context;
- Develop these programmes from the bottom-up in order to positively address the parents’ issues and the context in which they are parenting their children;
- Recognise the importance of families sharing experiences with each other and the role of self-help groups;
- Be inclusive of ethnic and other minority groups;
- Integrate into each programme appropriate procedures for evaluating its effectiveness.

V. Providing information on and facilitating understanding of positive parenting

Professional knowledge and skills should be applied and developed in a dynamic manner, in particular in the following areas:

- be able to help both parents understand children’s development and support them in their parenting roles;
- Providing fathers and mothers with information on children’s rights;
- Facilitating an understanding of the consequences of children’s rights not being upheld.

VI. Professional knowledge

It is the responsibility of each professional to:

- know which organisation/agency has a responsibility to provide which types of services, and which has specific statutory duties;
- keep up to date with knowledge on child development and how to support positive parenting and use this knowledge in their work
- be skilled in working with both mothers and fathers as well as children and families;

- be knowledgeable about the UNCRC and the Council of Europe's respective parenting policies, and understand the implications for practice;
- create 'space' to be able to reflect on their work and its impact on children and parents, as well as on the developmental outcomes of children in receipt of their services;
- evaluate their own practice, including by the use of peer evaluation and feedback from children and parents.