

## 5. WHAT DOES EXCELLENT FAMILY LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

'Professionals cannot assume that they know what is important to parents in relation to their child's learning'.

(Mackenzie, 2010)

Defining what excellent family learning is, can be problematic. NIACE (2013) suggests a range of hallmarks of excellent family learning provision across five key principles. These key principles are: engaging families in learning together; empowering families to take control; recognising context and culture; starting from a positive not a deficit model; and that family learning is planned, funded and delivered at a strategic level, whether local or national.

The results of an Ofsted survey (2009) found family learning to be most effective when it was characterised by: good partnerships; team teaching; consultation with parents; a planned approach to learners' development; and a sequenced programme that begins with taster courses and workshops.

In Scotland, 'How Good Is Our School?' (4th edition) (HGIOS4) and 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?' contain a Family Learning Quality Indicator. The indicator focuses on increasing the positive impact of working with families to improve learning and achievement. The emphasis is on establishments working in partnership with others in the community to support families to secure better outcomes through programmes which enable them to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Within the indicator, features of highly-effective practice include:

- creative approaches are used to engage families;
- almost all those engaged in family learning courses are highly-motivated and actively involved in their own learning and development;
- almost all the children and their parents are included, participating, achieving and progressing very well in their learning;
- there is clear evidence that the life chances of those families experiencing particular challenges are being improved as a result of their engagement in family learning;
- almost all learners report improvement in their health and/or wellbeing;
- family learning is responsive to identified needs;
- staff have an appropriate shared understanding of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and use these approaches to meet the needs of families;
- family learning promotes equality, fairness and diversity;
- there is evidence that family learning is supporting families to minimise the impact of poverty on learning and achievement;
- participation in family learning courses are monitored robustly to highlight trends and support effective early intervention strategies;
- families are matched into the right programme which is negotiated and addresses identified needs;
- families know that whatever their needs they will be able to access the right support that will enable them to reach their full potential as individuals and as a family; and
- family learning is leading to stronger home-school links which are improving outcomes for learners.

Previous studies and recommendations consider what effective family learning looks like to practitioners. Furthermore, it is important to remember that effective family learning may look different to families. 'People need time, space and social relationships in order to explore and investigate their world' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXV). There is no 'quick fix' in partnership working with parents and professionals are required to 'invest time to build relationships and to provide space for discussion' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXV). Given the complexities, diversities, cultural differences and varying learning styles amongst families, effective family learning could have different timescales and meanings.

## 5.1 Workforce development

Those delivering family learning programmes are expected to have the appropriate qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience. National Occupational Standards (NOS) for family learning were developed in 2005 along with the standards for working parents (NIACE, 2013). The standards which were revised in 2013, provide 'statements of skills and knowledge needed by the family learning workforce'.

The key purpose of the National Occupational Standards is to 'plan, manage and deliver opportunities to engage adults and children to learn together as and within a family through quality formal or informal programmes' (Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), 2013).

Details about what a person needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job or task in a consistent way and to a nationally recognised level of competence is provided within the National Occupational Standards. It covers the activities a person might undertake in the course of their occupation and considers all the circumstances or contexts that a person is likely to encounter. Skills and knowledge can be transferable to work with families from other professions especially community learning and development and adult learning practitioners who are trained in community and family engagement and the social practice model.

Having the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills is important to safeguard against practitioners 'unwittingly creating distance between home and school' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXVII). Engaging parents who may have barriers to becoming involved for whatever reason, requires a range of interpersonal skills, organisational abilities, joint planning and partnership working across other organisations and agencies (DBIS, 2013). Working across cultural diversities, changing family circumstances, disadvantaged families, families at risk, parents with literacy and/or numeracy needs and language barriers, requires skills, strategies, the ability to develop new and flexible models of delivery as well as having the confidence to motivate and retain learners (DBIS, 2013).

It should be noted that family learning is embedded within a number of qualifications at higher and further education institutions. However, there are limited specific qualifications which would indicate an area for future development and this is recognised in the Scottish Government report 'A Blueprint for Fairness' (2016). The report calls for new models which are more flexible, learner-centred and increase accessibility to a broader range of courses and institutions. This is with a view to addressing the issues of 'supporting improved attainment through new approaches to learning in family homes' (p44).

Practitioners who wish to develop their practice in the area of family learning may wish to consider the following options.

## Professional development opportunities

Various education establishments and organisations are working with local authorities to provide exciting continuous professional development opportunities for professionals who work with families. Engaging families in learning is one example that has been progressed in response to the priority given to family learning within current Scottish Government policy. This initiative was developed in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council Family Learning Team and is delivered in partnership by the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee. Working together, partners have devised a flexible continuous professional development experience which allows practitioners to study at SCQF Level 9 and exit with either 15 credits or 30 credits. Whichever option practitioners choose, and wherever they are based, they will become part of a national learning community connected in a single virtual learning environment. Students undertaking this qualification will have the opportunity to find out how other professionals across Scotland are developing family learning practice and learn from and with others in a range of professional contexts.

The course aims to provide opportunities for participants to develop enhanced critical awareness and understanding of theories, policies and practices which relate to family learning. It is relevant to professionals in a range of contexts, such as education, community learning and development, early years, social work and health. Drawing on the experience which participants will bring from this variety of professional areas, the course explores:

- different conceptualisations and models of family learning;
- the central significance of language;
- social practice theory; and
- issues relating to collaboration and partnership.

Those who wish to achieve 30 credits can go on to undertake their own Action Enquiry into engaging families in learning.

## 5.2 Family learning case studies

The results of the analysis carried out across Scotland highlighted a number of case studies where family learning was effective and having a positive impact. Moving forward, the information obtained through inspection findings from schools and establishments which opt to include the new Family Learning Quality Indicator will assist in gathering further evidence on current practice across Scotland. These findings will complement future data to be gathered at local and national levels. This Review of Family Learning highlights the complexity and diversity of programmes being delivered across Scotland and internationally. It is also reflective of the diversity of families and communities, local assets and partnership approaches.

In order to obtain examples of family learning, a number of case studies have been collated from across Scotland. The sample case studies focus on different themes which helps provide further understanding on the nature of family learning and also the diverse range of programmes being delivered across Scotland.

## Case study 1

### **The Lighthouse Keeper Joint Transition Project – Moffat Early Years Campus/Niddrie Mill Primary School/St Frances RC Primary School – Edinburgh City Council**

#### **Programme overview**

A multi-agency early intervention and prevention family learning programme was developed in response to low attainment figures identified within a specific area. Families were engaged in a series of enjoyable challenges developed around the children's book, 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch', by Ronda and David Armitage. The project offered different learning possibilities and was used both in early learning and childcare and primary 1 as a supported transition project for both child and parent.

#### **Why**

- To increase the confidence of parents to engage in their child's learning.
- To enable parents to familiarise themselves with, and increase their confidence through, using a creative project as a focus for transition.
- To increase parents' confidence to read with their children.
- To offer creative mediums and methodology as a way of attracting parents who would not normally get involved in their children's learning in this way.
- To encourage families to engage with other local educational services, such as the local library.
- To promote health and wellbeing through healthy eating experiences.

#### **Impact**

As a result of implementing the multi-agency partnership programme, led by the Family Learning Worker, the project has shown the following benefits:

- there was an increase in parental engagement in both library attendance and school activities;
- parents' confidence to read with their children has increased;
- families were more aware of health and wellbeing through healthy eating experiences; and
- children developed their listening skills and understanding of the storyline which encouraged them to read more.

For more information go to:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/elc15thelighthousekeepertransitionproject.aspx>

## Case study 2

### Upper Nithsdale Men and their Children (MATCH) – Dumfries and Galloway Council

#### Programme overview

Fathers/male carers are an important part of a child's life and educational development. However, they were underrepresented in their child's life at school. Family learning workers in partnership with schools and Adult Learning needed a powerful incentive to tempt them back into the school environment. The first engagement was an invite to have a free professional father/child(ren) portrait taken. Once the photographs were ready the men were invited back into school to collect their framed portrait, at this point they were invited to join additional programmes. Since then fathers and their children have engaged in a series of intergenerational learning trips including outdoor education activities such as abseiling, kayaking, orienteering and mountain biking.

Family learning sessions in school have included healthy cooking, science fun, storytelling, family quizzes, numeracy games, computing sessions including animation and film making, family first aid and team building games such as photo treasure hunts.

Since its inception this initiative has involved over 200 fathers and over 300 children, from age 3 upwards.

#### Why

Family learning and development workers had been working in partnership with Upper Nithsdale primary schools for many years. Prior to the introduction of MATCH the vast majority of participants in both family learning and local adult learning opportunities were women.

Research at the time of the group's inception stated that father's involvement:

- increased attainment;
- improved behaviour; and
- had a direct impact on children's overall social development and wellbeing.

#### Impact

An independent study by The Linked Work and Training Trust found that the active learning in the MATCH group:

- opened up more opportunities for men to take part in an educational process;
- created more opportunities for parents' own skills and knowledge to be recognised and utilised;
- increased parents' confidence in their ability to contribute to their children's education;
- provided a full range of creative, physical, innovative and enjoyable 'hands on' opportunities that enabled many more parents to become involved;
- helped parents to see the world outside the classroom as a learning resource; and
- built community capacity.

As a result of partnership working between family learning, adult learning and schools, men have taken up many local adult learning opportunities. For example:

- computing classes;
- digital photography;
- mathematics – ‘How to help your child with maths’;
- one to one literacy support;
- storytelling group – the group published their own stories; and
- sTEPS group.

For more information go to:

[https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Evidencing change and the development of personal efficacy in fathers participating in organised Men and their Children family learning groups](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Evidencing%20change%20and%20the%20development%20of%20personal%20efficacy%20in%20fathers%20participating%20in%20organised%20Men%20and%20their%20Children%20family%20learning%20groups)

## Case study 3

### Peers Early Education Partnership (Peep) Learning Together Programme and Peep Progression Pathway

#### Programme overview

The Peep Learning Together Programme is an early intervention/prevention programme to improve life chances and close the attainment gap by working with parents and carers in order to enhance their children's learning and development from birth.

The programme focuses on five areas of learning: early maths; early literacy; health and physical development; personal, social and emotional development; and communication and language, and can be delivered by developmental stage: babies, toddlers, and young children.

The Peep Progression Pathway (PPP) is integrated into the Peep Learning Together Programme. It comprises nine adult learning units, each SCQF credit-rated by SQA at Levels 3, 4 and 5, which formally recognise the parent/carer's increased knowledge and skills. Assessment is entirely by portfolio; recording what the parent does to support their child's learning and development, incorporating their new learning from the Peep sessions and creating a 'keepsake' book for the parent and child. Peep have progression route agreements with several further education institutions guaranteeing interviews for and places on a number of courses to Peep alumni.

The flexible nature of the programme means that the focus of the group can be responsive to localised data, to parental interest and to the setting. Peep Programmes could be a universal offer within a defined geographical area, targeted for families who meet specific criteria such as parental low mood, one-to-one delivery or used to support transitions from home to early learning and childcare or early learning and childcare to school.

#### Why

The programme is based on research, which tells us that the quality of the home learning environment, family relationships and pre-school provision are key to improving life chances and promoting educational equity.

The Learning Together Programme offers an effective way of helping:

- **parents and carers** to improve their children's life chances, by making the most of everyday learning opportunities – listening, talking, playing, singing and sharing books and stories together;
- **parents and carers** to realise and act on their own learning potential, to recognise and build on their achievements, gain qualifications and progress;
- **babies and children** to make the most of their opportunities by becoming confident communicators and active learners; and
- **practitioners** to enhance and develop their work with parents and young children, through accredited training and an evidence-based programme.

The programme starts where parents already are. They build on what parents are **already** doing with their children. By sharing information about child development in an informal, accessible way, parents are encouraged to listen and talk to their children, to share songs, rhymes, books and stories, and just to have fun playing with them.

As Peep practitioners value what parents **already do**, relationships and trust are built which help the parent to learn and do more. Parents don't feel judged, they feel valued. As parents learn why home learning is important, they are empowered to choose to do more. The more they do, the more they will be helping their child to learn, develop and be ready to get the most out of their education.

### **Impact**

Five independent studies by Warwick and Oxford universities show that Peep Programmes:

- engage isolated families;
- increase parents awareness of their child's development and how to foster it;
- help children develop strong foundations for literacy and self-esteem;
- lead to greater engagement in further adult learning; and
- support practitioners to develop fresh skills which can unlock parents potential rather than focus on problems.

The 2015 Peep Progression Pathway pilot evaluation showed that more than half of parents and carers who completed a PPP unit improved their own literacy, group work skills, ability to complete a project and gained confidence to access further education and employment.

'I think the programme has the child and family at the centre and we work with the parent to give them the best possible experience and interactions with their child. We are encouraging, motivating and supporting families through an informal education approach. The parents have the opportunity to gain accreditation and recognition for their learning. They are modelling success with their children'.

(Practitioner)

For more information go to:

<http://www.peeple.org.uk/>

## Case study 4

### Promoting Roles of Father Figures – St John Ogilvie RC High School/Calderside Academy – South Lanarkshire Council

#### Programme overview

The Promoting Roles of Father Figures (PROFF) group was formed after an initial campcraft programme run by South Lanarkshire Council, facilitated by Community Learning and Development and the Home School Partnership Service (CLHSPS).

The group is made up of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, step-fathers, step-grandfathers and older brothers. The group hold meetings on a monthly basis and these are open to any father figure. They have developed their own website and utilise CLHSPS links with schools to promote their programmes.

The group have reached out to encourage more father figures to get involved and work closely with CLHSPS to provide opportunities for more families to join the group. 110 male carers and 170 children have participated in PROFF group activities.

The group have been successful in several fundraising pursuits and by linking with CLHSPS, they have been able to provide free transport and activities for families. This has enabled many families, who are living in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland, to participate in a range of learning experiences that they would otherwise have been unaffordable.

#### Why

Research conducted with the fathers showed that many felt uncomfortable when attending family programmes, as sometimes they would be the only man attending.

The fathers also said they would like support and guidance to help them become more involved in their children's learning. They asked for support from CLHSPS in order to build on their experiences and are now active in supporting their children's learning.

#### Impact

- Children involved have exhibited wider ambitions.
- Some of the children have become part of Rights Respecting Schools committees.
- Fathers have supported children with their reading through the Scotland Reads programme.
- Families have helped to establish and develop Calderside Academy's Orchard.
- Members have taken part in South Lanarkshire Council's planning groups to help engage more male carers.
- Numerous father figures have accessed training and qualifications, which has led to employment for some.
- Absent fathers have been supported to connect with their children and families.
- Fathers have shared their life experiences at school events aimed at challenging the perceptions of young people.

For more information go to:

[www.profatherfigures.com](http://www.profatherfigures.com)

## Case study 5

### Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme – Save the Children

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an early intervention programme for primary school-age pupils which aims to bring parents, children, teachers and the wider community together, to make sure children get the support they need to succeed at school and in life. Save the Children works in partnership with Middlesex University to deliver FAST in areas of deprivation and where high numbers of children receive free school meals. FAST works to improve family relationships, and in turn, children's ability to learn. It achieves this by strengthening their home learning environments as well as encouraging and enabling parents, the wider family and local community to play an active role in their children's education.

#### Why

The impact of growing up in poverty can last a lifetime. It affects children's wellbeing, their health, their life expectancy and it makes them less likely to do well at school than their wealthier peers. Through weekly sessions, FAST helps parents create opportunities for learning and development at home. It ensures children get the support they need to succeed at school and in life.

#### Impact

The National Evaluation of FAST, conducted by Middlesex University, reported a positive impact across a number of indicators reflecting FAST aims and objectives. Qualitative evidence from the Robert Owen Centre's research also indicates that FAST and FASTworks have promoted positive and effective parental involvement in children's learning. In particular, FAST facilitated greater dialogue between teachers, partner organisations and parents regarding their children's learning.

As well as impacting on family life, the FAST approach improved the aspirations and confidence of parents. In some cases the programme had led to them going on to participate in educational opportunities such as further education and university.

The FAST approach also built parents' social capital and capacity to support each other, thus broadening the impact of FAST into the community.

In addition to impacting on families and parents, there was consensus among all stakeholder groups that the FAST model made a valuable contribution to improved family and school relationships.

For more information go to:

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/united-kingdom/fast>

## Case study 6

### Family Clubs – Perth and Kinross Council

#### Programme overview

Family learning in Perth and Kinross is a key method for engagement with children and their families and is an important approach to prevention and early intervention.

Family Clubs offer a multi-agency approach to engagement and learning for the whole family. They provide an environment where parents and carers and children can take part in activities which are designed to enable them to build positive relationships and to learn together. Through a programme of activities, families learn about: healthy lifestyles and eating choices; play and being physically active together; developing more supportive relationships; and spending quality time together. Family Clubs also assist with reducing social isolation. This enables families to develop support networks within their community. Families also develop relationships with local staff who provide them with support, information and signposting to other services and learning opportunities. Many parents and carers go on to access other learning programmes, some which will help them to support their child's learning, including: literacies and core skills groups; Parents groups; PEEP groups; Incredible Years and Strengthening Families programmes; and some will be supported in their journey into volunteering or employment.

#### Why

Family Clubs deliver on a number of outcomes within Perth and Kinross Council's strategic objectives: giving every child the best start in life; Perth and Kinross Council's Community Learning and Development Plan: Improved outcomes for children, young people and adults through prevention and early intervention, and reduction in inequality; and the Parenting Strategy outcome. Families are also part of a wider caring community, with opportunities to engage in learning.

The Family Clubs also respond to needs identified through Evidence2Success, a collaborative project between Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership, and the Dartington Social Research Unit that aims to enhance the safe and healthy development of children and young people in Perth and Kinross. This project included a survey of 8,500 children (9-15 years) and 800 parents. Of the children (9-12 years) that were surveyed, 46.7% reported that they did not have opportunities for positive family involvement. The Family Clubs offer accessible, affordable, local provision which help to address this.

#### Impact

Participant evaluations from several Family Club families reported:

- improved relationships with their children;
- increased opportunities to socialise with other families;
- increased confidence in their parenting skills;
- having learned new activities that could be replicated at home; and
- more knowledge and confidence to access and engage in other community activities and support.

### **Feedback from families**

'We look forward to spending quality time together with lots of nice people too'.

'The art was great, cooking was yummy, and gym hall was fun'.

'He wouldn't normally eat that but I think he is enjoying it more because he made it himself'.

'Trying out new activities and recipes which I have used again at home'.

'Can't wait until it starts again'.

For more information go to:

<https://education.gov.scot/>

<http://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/4513/Finding-out-about-Family-Learning-in-Perth--Kinross>

## Case study 7

### Learning Together Through Play Programme (Prisons) – Early Years Scotland

#### Programme overview

More children in Scotland each year experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce. The breakdown of family relationships when a parent is in prison can lead to a higher risk of reoffending and of children growing up to become offenders themselves.

Early Years Scotland works to protect children under the age of five years from the harm caused by adverse childhood experiences by encouraging and supporting the bond between children and their parents. They are currently working in five prisons within Scotland (HMP Barlinnie, HMP Dumfries, HMP Low Moss, HMP Castle Huntly and HMP Grampian) delivering and facilitating sessions with children affected by imprisonment. Encompassing work with prisoners, partners and children up to the age of five years, the programme covers facilitated pre-visit sessions for visiting families, family 'Stay and Play' sessions, baby massage and a tailored educational Fathers' Programme for prisoners.

#### Why

The project aims to foster stronger family relationships, thus contributing to reducing reoffending and the generational cycle of offending. The specific outcomes for the programme are:

- children will have more secure relationships with fathers/carers and improved levels of wellbeing, confidence and communication;
- children and fathers affected by imprisonment will have improved attachment and relationships; and
- fathers' confidence, knowledge and communication will improve and enable them to be more responsive to their child's needs.

#### Impact

Programmes are evaluated through practitioner observation and surveys of the fathers who participated in the Fathers' Programme as well as parents who participated in the 'Learning Together Through Play' sessions in the prisons. High levels of participation in the programme and high response rates to surveys highlighted that fathers wish to maintain their relationship with their children while they are in prison and that they are willing to learn about child development and how to improve their own skills when engaging with their children.

Evaluation shows that:

- fathers' knowledge and understanding of child development, communication, and confidence in their understanding of their children's needs has improved;
- children and parents have improved attachment through the structured shared play and learning sessions facilitated by an early years practitioner;
- children demonstrate improved attachment and wellbeing, as well as improvements in communication skills; and
- fathers are keen to apply the knowledge acquired in the educational programme and they lead the play activities, putting the child's enjoyment and wellbeing at the centre of the session.

### **Feedback from fathers in prison**

'If I wasn't in here, I would never have found out about the brain development, I just thought that she is young and won't know any different'.

'The programme has helped me to feel closer to my son because I knew what he was learning'.

'I'm seeing a wee attachment happening with the wee one, she is only 15 weeks. It's great having this comfortable time; the music makes the room relaxed and the Mrs loves it!'

For more information go to:

[www.earlyyearsscotland.org](http://www.earlyyearsscotland.org)

## Case study 8

### The impact of family learning approaches on raising children's attainment - Aberdeen City Council

#### Programme overview

Aberdeen City Council has developed a range of family learning programmes that are responsive to the needs of families. These include family transition activities, family engagement, positive parenting, supporting literacy and numeracy in the home, storytelling, confidence building, budgeting and one-to-one home learning support.

It was important for the service to make sure that the interventions that they were putting in place were still having an impact.

Research by Aberdeen City Council in 2005 and 2008 showed that using family learning approaches has had a statistically significant impact on the attainment levels of the children involved.

It is important for the service to look at the longitudinal benefits of family learning. This has resulted in further research and revisiting as many families as possible from the 2005 and 2008 cohorts.

Timeline for research:

- Oct to Dec 2016 – Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data
- Dec to Jan 2017 – Interim report
- March 2017 – Final report

#### Why

Family learning outcomes for Aberdeen City Council include:

- increasing the confidence of parents in supporting their children's learning;
- promoting health and wellbeing through emotional literacy programmes;
- providing opportunities and activities that are engaging and fun to support children's learning and development;
- encouraging parents and carers to utilise further learning opportunities to support their own learning; and
- raising achievement and attainment.

## Impact

Aberdeen City Council family learning workers evaluate each programme to determine impact. Practitioners conduct observations of families and questionnaires that families complete. This can highlight the positive immediate impact on the families, but not future impact like attainment, employability or attitudes towards lifelong learning.

Measuring the longitudinal impact of family learning programmes can be difficult. This is due to factors such as staff movement, families moving away from the area and pressures on staff time and resources. Having this type of data will support Aberdeen City Council and their partner organisations involved in the delivery of family learning programmes. From this, Aberdeen City Council will be able to determine what programmes are making the biggest difference to families in the longer term, the impact this is having, what needs to be improved upon and ideas to take this forward. This in turn will allow the council to effectively manage budgets and resources.

For more information go to:

[http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/education\\_learning/adult\\_community\\_education/family\\_learning.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/education_learning/adult_community_education/family_learning.asp)

## Case study 9

### Royston Library Family ESOL Group – Glasgow Life

#### Programme overview

The Family ESOL Group was developed by Glasgow Life Communities staff to offer parents and carers who could not access mainstream ESOL an opportunity to learn English with their children who had not yet started school. Accessing childcare can be a barrier to learning for many parents and carers of young children and so the model of learning together in an informal setting helps address this.

Delivered over eight weeks, the ESOL Family Programme takes place in Royston Library in a child-friendly space with easy access to other library services. The programme takes a playful approach to language development covering a different theme each week such as colours, food or animals with the learners also learning and singing a new song with their children at each session. In order to broaden opportunities for the families, time is set aside at the end of the session to signpost learners to other appropriate ESOL and family activities.

#### Why

Language development in early years can be greatly enhanced if families are supported to interact with each other through play. The parents were all motivated to learn English with their children and interested in finding out about other services they could engage with.

The programme aims are to:

- increase the confidence of parents and carers to interact in English;
- provide parents and carers with ideas and knowledge of a range of positive play activities using English;
- support parents and carers develop an understanding of learning through play; and
- raise awareness of further ESOL learning opportunities and activities for families, thereby reducing isolation and promoting integration.

#### Impact

The Family ESOL Group made a real difference to the lives of the families, illustrated through feedback from the families.

## Feedback from families

'Before my daughter wouldn't mix, now she does after coming here.'

'At home I used to only play Chinese songs but I now have an app on my phone so that me and my husband can sing English songs to my son'.

'I have learned some nice songs in English which I now sing at home'.

'My English is improving now, I look at CBeebies and I understand Mr Tumble!'

'My husband is pleased I come here because I am meeting other mums'.

'It is nice. I have learned how to teach my daughter some new things, like the colours on traffic lights'.

'On the TV I have heard some songs that we have sung here, I know them now'.

'We talk to each other and it helps my English and me as a mum'.

A number of the group also progressed on to other activities including joining an International Women's Group ESOL class, whilst others are enjoying making use of the library services and other programmes.

For more information go to:

<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/your-local-library/royston-library/Pages/home.aspx>

## Case study 10

### Books for Bairns – Adult Learning – Dundee City Council

#### Programme overview

Books for Bairns is a practical and fun family learning course for families with children aged 2½–4 years old.

The aims of the course were to:

- highlight the parent's role as their child's first educator;
- provide parents with an understanding of their child's experience of new concepts to help them better understand their role; and
- provide ideas for simple things parents can do at home to help their child learn.

The learning for the course was delivered through a series of children's books. This encouraged lots of creativity not only from the children but from the parents themselves.

Funding was secured through the Big Lottery's Child and Family Fund. Families were gifted books and materials which were used in the course and also allowed them to make useful resources at home with their children.

#### Why

The Books for Bairns course was developed as a result of feedback from practitioners and families who had taken part in another family learning project, Learn With Fred. One of the topics in Learn With Fred was 'Using Books' and the experience of taking part in this revealed the potential and scope for using children's books as a focus for using creative practice in family literacies learning in the early years.

#### Impact

- Parents reported increased confidence as their child's first educator.
- Parents reported increased motivation to read and tell stories with their children.
- Introducing parents to experiential learning resulted in increased knowledge and understanding of children's developmental stages.
- Books for Bairns courses continue to be delivered to families in local communities in Dundee.

For more information go to:

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/communities/adultlearning/>

## Case study 11

### **Tel mee met Taal or Count on Skills – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS)**

#### **Programme overview**

Count on Skills is a Dutch literacy project which aims to reduce the number of illiterate native Dutch citizens and promote reading for pleasure amongst young children and adults.

The Count on Skills action programme aims to reach the following quantitative targets:

- a minimum of 45,000 Dutch residents contacted in order to improve their language skills and score better results on language tests and social participation, including employment participation; and
- one million primary school students reached via reading-promotion activities will participate in order to improve their language skills and learn more about the enjoyment of reading.

The programme also seeks to achieve the following:

- long-term regional collaboration in order to reduce illiteracy;
- improvements to the quality and accessibility of both local and regional language education programmes; and
- provision of social participation and integration opportunities to residents of the Netherlands.

Count on Skills invests in experiments which seek to: better serve target groups that are difficult to reach; unite various segments that are affected by illiteracy; and develop instruments for addressing language deficits and illiteracy.

The Art of Reading pilot programme for families with poor language skills was announced as a specific targeted group. This pilot helps parents with poor literacy skills to engage with reading and to read to their children. The experiment is intended to raise awareness and more effectively reach low-literacy parents within BookStart (BoekStart, for children aged 0-4 and their parents) and the Library at School (Bibliotheek op School) in primary schools. This approach encourages the enjoyment of reading and helps to prevent language deficits among children. At the same time parents are encouraged to actively engage in language themselves. The Dutch Reading Foundation and the National Library of the Netherlands are conducting this pilot in collaboration with the Reading and Writing Foundation.

## Why

The approach used for Count on Skills was selected on the basis of various underlying principles and concepts. The decision to include an approach specifically for young families is related to studies that indicate that low levels of education and literacy are often passed on from one generation to the next. Breaking this cycle requires the production of preventive measures for infants and children, including young parents. European and Dutch national policy, also support socio-economic objectives. If Europe and the Netherlands intend to be amongst the best knowledge and service economies, investment to increase the population's level of education is required as 20% of European adults and 13% of Dutch adults do not possess sufficient basic skills. All of this means that the approach to illiteracy and adult education should be seen as an integral part of social policy and economic growth.

## Impact

The Count on Skills project will continue to be monitored and evaluated to enable activities to be modified as necessary. An interim evaluation will be conducted in early 2017 and a final evaluation in late 2018 by an independent research agency.

For more information go to:

<http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/detail/project/tel-mee-met-taal-or-count-on-skills>

## Case study 12

### Family Basic Education (FABE) programme – Literacy and Adult Basic Education Uganda

#### Programme overview

The FABE programme was initiated and implemented by LABE (Literacy and Adult Basic Education), a leading local NGO in the field of basic education. LABE's interest in family education projects began in the mid-1990s as a new dimension to its adult literacy work in rural areas. LABE piloted the programme in the Bugiri district of Eastern Uganda (one of the country's poorest districts) in 2000-2001. By 2005 the programme was active in 18 schools and many adult literacy centres, reaching over 1,400 parents and more than 3,300 children. The programme has now been expanded to northern Uganda, a war-affected region, where it is being implemented in over 600 villages in eight districts.

The programme aims to:

- improve literacy and numeracy skills among rural children and adults;
- improve the educational performance of children through effective parental/family literacy and educational support;
- strengthen parental support for children's educational needs and equip parents with basic knowledge;
- increase parents' inter-communication skills while interacting with children and their teachers;
- develop parenting skills;
- create a broad awareness on family learning;
- promote and strengthen community participation in primary school education and general community development; and
- enrich the abilities of teachers and adult educators in child-adult teaching/learning methods.

#### Why

The Government of Uganda introduced programmes and critical policy instruments that seek to eradicate poverty and illiteracy and thus to promote national development and transformation by making education accessible to all. The Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme as a component of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) endeavored to improve literacy levels among adults as well as to empower people to demand access to quality basic social services. The FAL programme managed to reach only 5% of would-be learners and had therefore not benefited many people. Implementation of the PEAP was hindered by the fact that information on available services is in printed format. Consequently, for citizens to claim their rights, they must master literacy and numeracy – skills which adults do not necessarily possess. The shortcomings in the provision of education to children and basic literacy skills to adults made the implementation of the Family Basic Education programme imperative.

## Impact

### Participants

- A total of around 124,000 children and 76,000 adults have benefited from the programme. Over 95% of the beneficiaries live in rural areas and about 80% are women.
- The Train-the-Trainer programme has facilitated the training of 1,500 literacy trainers and 400 trainers of instructors.

### Family level (household level)

- The number of children reporting domestic violence (especially slaps from their fathers) has dropped by 15%.
- The number of girls married before they are 15 has dropped by 40%.
- The number of women presenting themselves for election in schools, churches and village committees has increased by 65%.
- The number of girls directly supported by their fathers as they attend primary school has increased by 17%.

### School level

- Girls' average school attendance has increased by 67 days each year.
- The drop-out rate for girls has fallen by 15%.
- The number of women in school governance structures has increased by 68%.
- The number of parents who take part in developing school development plans has increased by 65%.

### Community level

- The number of previously non-literate community members who took part in the last national elections by independently selecting a candidate of their choice has increased by 27%.
- The ratio of new community members who have joined local voluntary associations has risen to 3:5 (3 being the new members).
- The number of girls who report being shouted at or mocked as they walk to school has dropped by 32%.

### Improved parental involvement in child learning

- Parents are now consciously interacting with and helping their children to reinforce reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Parents are also increasingly helping their children to do their homework and checking their children's books as their improved literacy skills gives them the confidence to provide such assistance. Some parents are even gathering local learning materials for children, such as bottle tops and counting sticks.
- Improved communication with schools indicates that parents (especially mothers) are becoming increasingly engaged in their children's education. For example, some parents send written notes to school teachers concerning their children's learning progress or the challenges they face.

- Parents are regularly attending school activities, such as meetings and open days, or visiting the school informally to talk to their children's teachers about their educational progress.

### **Adult literacy learning**

- After more than two years of FABE literacy-related work, many parents/adults were able to:
  - correctly read sequences of numbers from 0 to 1,000 and calculate three-digit numbers in writing; and
  - record in writing short messages heard on the radio and copy details from a calendar, notice or other text.
- Men's involvement in and concern for girls' welfare has increased dramatically.
- The number of adult literacy educators has increased and their skills have been enhanced.
- In addition to the improved literacy results, FABE has also produced broader social, economic and political effects. These include:
  - an increased resource allocation to adult learning by local governments;
  - increased donor interest; and
  - community and parental involvement in basic education is now a government policy priority (although the emphasis is still on children's literacy).

For more information go to:

<http://www.unesco.org/ui/litbase/?menu=8&theme=20&programme=9>