

Taking forward the NIACE evaluation recommendations

Conference Report

(London, Birmingham and York March 2004)

Three regional conferences were held during March 2004 in London, Birmingham and York. These conferences were a follow-up to NIACE's evaluation of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded family programmes which found that there was a need to encourage a greater level of communication and partnership working between local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and other providers.

The events enabled key personnel responsible for family learning in LLSCs and LEAs to come together to address key issues and ways of working together. Participants also heard about developments in family learning since the NIACE evaluation of LSC funded family programmes, including the 2004/05 LSC Family Programmes Guidance, developments in the National Family Learning Network and examples of family learning through sport, an LSC priority for 2004/05. Around 170 people attended the events, with the majority of LLSCs sending a delegate.

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1. DEVELOPMENTS IN FAMILY PROGRAMMES 2004/05

Sue Evans (London and York) and Sue Yeomans (Birmingham) from the LSC provided an overview of recent and upcoming developments in family programmes.

Highlights from the LSC presentation:

- The FLLN menu has been extended as a result of the first phase of Skills for Families;
- The LSC would like to see more work at local level on extending the wider family learning curriculum and building on sport in family learning. (The latter was mentioned in the 2004/05 LSC grant letter from the Secretary of State for Education);
- More work needs to be done on linking family literacy language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning by joining up infrastructure, quality assurance, resources and venues at a local level;
- The follow-up to the green paper Every Child Matters has now been published. This can be downloaded from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters/downloads.cfm>;

- Full Service Extended Schools – FLLN and wider family learning are detailed in the specification document;
- It is encouraging to note positive remarks from recent Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections. However, it is important to recognise and record progression and identify progression routes. Both ALI and the LSC would like to see an improvement in this area;
- Following on from this, it is important for national organisations to make stronger links with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and for everyone working within the field of family learning to share good practice;
- Family learning is breaking cycles of deprivation, but we need to show hard evidence to the Government to prove this. It is important to record hard data and impact on people's lives. NIACE is currently undertaking an impact study with Lancashire County Council, part funded by the LSC and the DfES. This will report in July 2004;
- Existing Skills for Families projects have been extended to July. See the website for information and resources. www.skillsforfamilies.org.uk;
- The launch for Skills for Families II takes place on 18th May in London. Prospectuses for Skills for Families II will be available from the LSC from April/May 2004;
- The National Family Learning Network (NFLN) is addressing infrastructure and support issues through the launch of its new website and its work researching local and regional networks. (The NFLN is a partnership between Campaign for Learning, ContinYou and NIACE, funded by the LSC. See notes from Juliette Collier's presentation for further information on the NFLN);
- Due to restructuring at the national LSC office there will no longer be an Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Team. It is not clear at present where family learning will sit within the new structure but the existing ACL team at the LSC are very keen to preserve those services (e.g. the ACL Newsletter) that practitioners find most useful.

2. THE NATIONAL FAMILY LEARNING NETWORK AND REGIONAL AND LOCAL NETWORKS

Juliette Collier is the Manager of the National Family Learning Network, a partnership venture between Campaign for Learning, ContinYou, and NIACE, funded by the LSC. The Network is there to offer free support and information for family learning practitioners. Its website www.familylearningnetwork.com, a central resource for Family Learning, was launched on 1st April 2004.

The main message from Juliette was to work in partnership to resolve issues. The success of the national network depends partly on local partnerships and networks and the effectiveness of strengthening communication and partnership working.

In 2004-2005 the national network proposes to deliver free regional training sessions to assist local groups and networks. The aim of these training events will be to:

- Help groups define their aims and objectives
- Create a membership profile proforma
- Strengthen links with their LLSC
- Develop a recruitment strategy to broaden and increase membership
- Develop effective communication systems
- Develop an infrastructure to provide local support for family learning practitioners
- Identify key tasks which will achieve the agreed aims and objectives
- Create a family learning strategy for their area
- Provide key contacts to link into the National Family Learning Network

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3. TARGET GROUPS AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT: EXAMPLES OF FAMILY SPORT

Each regional conference highlighted different examples of family learning through sport.

A Question of Sport (Portsmouth City Council)

Romy Warren, Family Learning Manager, Portsmouth City Council
(London Event)

- Portsmouth is a Unitary Authority with 2 main areas of deprivation. It is rapidly expanding family learning provision through strong local partnerships;
- Why sport?
 - Sport has been used in family learning by Portsmouth as it has been found to be a powerful motivator, raises self-esteem, improves fitness and increases community involvement. It can contribute to raised achievement and sport has been highlighted as a Government and LSC priority;
 - There are lots of opportunities to embed family numeracy in sport, e.g. pulse and heart rates, studying teams' and players' form, etc.
- The sports chosen have to be popular, feasible, and above all suit the client group, i.e. cricket was used to recruit men from ethnic minorities who would not have chosen to go to football themed courses;
- Incentives and rewards (e.g. free tickets from the local football club) have been used to maintain a high level of interest and attendance in the course. Ensuring participation in family leagues and competitions was also a good way to keep people coming back;

- Family learning courses have been offered in skipping olympics, gymnastics, fitness and fencing. (Fitness activities were offered as taster sessions – a different 1 hour activity each week for 4 weeks.) FLLN and sport courses have been offered as Keeping up with the Children (KUWC), family literacy workshops and sailing run in conjunction with the FE college. Family literacy courses (with a football theme) have been offered through study centres in the local football club. KUWC is easy to adapt, e.g.. numeracy through sport, dance and table football;
- Portsmouth have been advised that they cannot have intergenerational teams playing contact sports, e.g. no mixed age football or rugby teams. This is for health and safety reasons. However, it is still possible to have some physical activities within the context of family learning through football or rugby, e.g. kicking/shooting practice, as well as other activities such as studying team and player form;
- The following partners were found to be invaluable in setting up the courses:
 - Regeneration – Children’s Fund, Sure Start, Local Strategic Partnership;
 - Playing for Success - an initiative by the Department for Education and Skills which has established out of school hours study support centres at football clubs and other sports grounds. There are 83 study centres and 89 sports clubs throughout the UK. The centres use the environment and medium of football, rugby and other sports as motivational tools, and focus on raising literacy, numeracy and ICT standards amongst key stage 2 and key stage 3 pupils. (See website address in resources section at the end of this report);
 - Local sports clubs, such as golf clubs;
 - Specialist schools programmes, sports colleges, schools sport coordinators, Youth Sport Trust, extended schools;
 - Local Authority departments – Community Strategy, Lifelong Learning/Adult Education, Leisure Services – Sports Development Officers, Outdoor Activity Centres, Environmental Health, New Opportunities Fund (NOF) projects;
 - Further Education Colleges;
 - University – volunteer programmes;
 - Agencies and the voluntary and community sector, e.g. Age Concern, YMCA.

Dads and Lads pilot project (Staffordshire)

Janet Poole, Family Education Officer, Staffordshire County Council

Steve Jackson, Family Learning Co-ordinator, Staffordshire County Council

(Birmingham Event)

- Dads and Lads was initially developed by Lancashire County Council to increase the involvement of fathers (and/or male carers) in the education of their sons. There is a particular emphasis on involving fathers in supporting the development of literacy skills through the medium of sports;

- In Staffordshire, the Dads and Lads pilot project involved partnership working between the Adult & Community Learning Service, Schools and Officers from the Schools Effectiveness Unit, Quality Learning Services and the Schools Library Service. The Library Service has had a great impact on the programme and proved invaluable;

- One secondary school and two primary schools took part in the pilot. The secondary school found it more difficult to maintain contact with fathers and there was a high dropout rate of 90%. However, the primary school which maintained regular personal contact with fathers had a 100% retention and completion rate;
- The boys who attended the Dads and Lads project showed improvements in motivation, interest, confidence and self-esteem;
- Lessons to come out of the pilot were that:
 - Commitment is required from the Head and Senior Management Team to ensure the success of the project;
 - Ideally one point of contact within the school is needed to drive the project;
 - The best way to recruit is through face-to-face contact and asking children to speak to their fathers;
 - It may be better to use a non-threatening environment for the course, i.e. not always school premises;
 - Remove barriers for fathers (e.g. timing of courses) and offer support. Have flexible programmes to suit individual needs;¹
- The project has now expanded to 10 further schools in the Burton-on-Trent Area; 2 secondary schools and 8 primary schools;
- Initial schools involved are now launching new projects, i.e. Mums and Lasses, Intergenerational Family Learning;
- Progression from the Dads and Lads courses is still an issue, but one that is being tackled.

Family Learning through Football

(Family Learning in County Durham & Sunderland AFC Foundation)

June Davison, Family Learning in County Durham

Lesley Spuhler, Ian Dipper, Paul Power, Sunderland AFC Foundation

(York event)

- Family Learning in County Durham is a multi-agency partnership funded through SRB6. It is supported with match funding from the LSC and European Social Fund (ESF). The partnership aims to promote links between local and countywide initiatives, develop a strategy for Family Learning in County Durham and help develop a process of identifying and meeting local needs. Sunderland AFC Foundation has been developed from the SAF Community scheme that has been operating in local communities for over 10 years;
- Family Learning through Football has two main strands: education and coaching. There are plans to extend it to cover health, citizenship and environment;
- Family Learning through Football takes the form of an 8 week course, 2 hours per session. It consists of coaching, classroom work and various incentives and is informal and fun;

¹ For further information on best practice in developing family learning programmes for fathers, see Rebecca Goldman's article in the family learning edition of *Adult Learning and Skills*.

- The course is accredited through the Open College of the North (OCN) giving parents the opportunity to receive a certificate;
- Both partners are looking to build upon the pilot programme by extending its geographical spread and increasing the range of activities on offer;
- Also under development is a visually attractive and interactive workbook for parents and children to complete with activities to carry out whilst at home.

4. WORKING TOGETHER SESSIONS

The following summaries are drawn from the points raised during the feedback sessions. They do not necessarily represent the views of the LSC or NIACE.

Scenario 1

Greenbridge LLSC and Orangeshire LEA suspect that there is a significant amount of family learning being provided by local FE colleges and the voluntary sector that they do not know about. This impacts on both the ability of the LLSC and LEA to develop family learning provision in a strategic way.

The LEA has some existing knowledge and relationships with some of the voluntary sector providers. However, neither the LLSC nor LEA are aware of the nature, location or amount of family learning being provided by FE colleges and the voluntary sector.

How should the LEA and LLSC work together to solve the problem?

Issues identified

- There are various sources of funding for family learning, i.e. the LSC is not the sole funder. Furthermore, different people manage the different pots of money and they do not work together in a joined-up way;
- For example, the voluntary sector is accessing pots of money but they do not always realise that they are providing ‘family learning’;
- Target areas attract lots of different funding so providers may be in competition, but in rural areas there is very little provision. The coordinator of a network might have to be involved in tough decisions about limiting activity in some areas in order to increase activity in others;
- The definition of family learning varies from provider to provider;
- The main organisations need to deliver a clearer message. There isn’t a united approach on policy down to those who are delivering. Message is being diluted on the way down;
- Family learning programmes are at different stages of development, i.e. some are starting from cold, others are well established;

Possible solutions

- Steering groups/networks that brought together different boroughs would be useful;
- Mapping exercises in some areas have taken place but it is more complicated in inner city areas;
- Strategic Area Reviews (StARs) are being carried out by each local LSC. These will help address some of the issues identified;
- Learning Partnerships (groups & sub-groups) have a role in helping to solve the problem;
- Develop family learning networks at all levels and a family learning strategy. Necessary to have strategic group in LLSC area. Such a network would need someone to coordinate the group as it is a dedicated task and takes time (practitioners are too busy);

- Tower Hamlets (FLAG) brought partners together and drew up a map of learning. The group now requires good steering. There is a need to establish a joint post (not LEA or FE college) and a bid has been put into the LLSC.

Scenario 2

A local family learning network has been set up by a local LSC, its three LEAs and four FE colleges that fall within the same LLSC area. The network also includes three co-ordinators from the newly established Full Service Extended Schools who are looking to develop family learning as part of their extended services. However, some of the members (one of the LEAs, two of the co-ordinators from the extended schools, and one of the large FE colleges) hardly turn up to meetings and do not contribute to any discussions via e-mail.

How would you deal with the situation? What do you think is best practice in relationships between providers and LLSCs?

Issues identified

- A network requires commitment from the top of each organisation and a clear remit;
- Responsibility lies with LLSCs to take lead but all 3 – LLSC, LEAs & FE colleges need to work together to resolve competition issues. LEA & provider issue. Need to work together;
- In Cumbria, via Learning Partnerships, they produced a plan of programmes which was funded by the LLSC. All partners are now aware of all provision and are not in competition.

Possible solutions – strategic and practical

- Raise awareness of what family learning can offer all partners;
- Make partnerships as wide as possible – Sure Start, health, early years. Make sure right people invited. Relate to other partnerships, e.g. Skills for Life;
- Local learning partnerships could bring people together;
- Audit/map existing provision;
- Develop a clear and agreed definition of what family learning is. For example, is the network just interested in LSC funded provision or is it all types of family learning? Decide on what the objectives of family learning are and match them up to the agendas of the individual organisations in order to make family learning as relevant as possible;
- Coordinator for network (practitioner support);
- Have a time limit on meetings of the network, e.g. once a term, 2 hours only, and have very directive and focused meetings;
- Dissemination/celebration/conferencing/promotional material;
- Promote progression opportunities (IAG).

Scenario 3

A family learning manager and her LLSC are aware that better links could be made between FLLN and wider family learning provision. This relates to the management and co-ordination of FLLN and wider family learning. Issues such as considering the aims and objectives that they share (as well as those that are different) could be better addressed before making changes on the ground. For example, could more be done in relation to developing progression opportunities and signposting from wider family learning to FLLN and vice versa? Could better links also be made in other areas such as quality and training?

How do you think the family learning manager and her LLSC can best tackle these issues?

Issues identified

- One funding stream would make it easier to address these issues;
- Not enough money to deliver family learning. Need formula funding;
- Internal communication in LEAs often poor; sometimes responsibility rests with two different people;
- “It will take a long time to get where we want to go as parents are not banging on our doors to get in”;
- We need to be able to convince schools that family learning has mutual benefits in that if they give rooms, for instance, in turn the children will be more committed to learning;
- Schools do not necessarily believe in family learning. ‘Training’ needed for schools so they appreciate the benefits of family learning;
- Staff training issues, particularly where tutors are part-time/sessional.

Possible solutions - strategic

- FLLN and wider family learning should be promoted in one prospectus;
- Strategic links need to be made with Early Years, Sure Start etc.
- Mapping – not only existing family learning provision, but also mapping progression routes;
- Develop joined up services, knowledge, information, marketing and identity, etc;
- Need to bring family learning into the strategic framework for local authority, including Lifelong Learning Plans;
- Involve lifelong learning forums;
- Develop for family learning forums linked into Children’s Partnerships;
- Develop links between all family learning programmes regardless of provider.

Possible solutions - progression

- There is a need to map *and* track progression routes (most LEAs provide IAG but not necessarily any follow-through or tracking);
- Funding issues relating to progression, e.g. what is a ‘new learner’? ;
- Progression much better on FLLN? People are engaging in formal leaning. Need for more formalised family learning? Some LEAs offer both formal and informal learning opportunities as shorter courses may be more realistic for some learners;
- Partnerships/link with IAG. Progression Officer post? ;
- Resources/staffing issue.

Possible solutions -partnership working

- LLSCs sometimes have incomplete knowledge of family programmes. This hinders getting all relevant providers around the table;
- LLSCs should lead work through partnership working but need to be aware of how long things take;
- In Nottingham, FE, ACL, WEA, community and voluntary sector have developed a group/forum that works. People are now treating each other fairly and are really communicating, e.g. sharing targets;
- If meetings are about good practice and quality, need to include practitioners as well as managers.

5. CONTACTS, WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Contacts

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Websites

Sport

www.dfes.gov.uk/playingforsuccess Go to the Learning FC section of this site for the Key Stage 2 and 3 curriculum resource packs of literacy, numeracy and ICT exercises on the theme of football. Whilst designed mainly with the needs of Playing for Success centres in mind, the pack has also been used by a much wider audience including primary and secondary schools.

www.youthsporttrust.org The Youth Sport Trust is a registered charity established in 1994 to build a brighter future for young people through sport. Their vision is to create opportunities for all young people to receive a quality introduction to physical education (PE) and sport and structured pathways for them to continue participating and progressing.

Financial

www.moneymatterstome.co.uk Financial education website aimed at families with free and comprehensive set of materials including interactive workshops, information and exercises.

General

www.skillsforfamilies.org	Find out about the latest <i>Skills for Families</i> news and events, read case studies, find links to related organisations, share good practice and join in the interactive discussion forum.
www.familyprogrammes.org.uk	Basic Skills Agency family programmes site.
www.surestart.gov.uk	Sure Start is the Government's programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare and health and family support.
www.familylearningnetwork.com	National Family Learning Network – launches on 1 st April 2004.
www.family-learning.org.uk	Family Learning in County Durham.
www.parentsonline.gov.uk	Parents Online has been created by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to promote home school links by helping parents understand the role of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in learning.
www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise	Skillswise aims to help adults improve their reading, writing and maths skills. It is targeted at Level 1 of the Adult Basic Skills Literacy & Numeracy Curricula.
www.boxmind.com	A collection of e-lectures is presented in a unique electronic format comprising full motion video, synchronised slides, a full transcript, web links and reference material for further research.
www.braingym.org	A worldwide network specializing in research and applied programs of physical movement to enhance learning in all areas.

And finally, as suggested by one delegate at the conference visit www.stressbusting.co.uk for a bit of stress management!

Resources

- Please look out for a new NIACE publication, supported by the LSC and DfES, 'Starting points for developing wider family learning' published in late April/early May. FREE to LLSCs and LEAs.
- The Family Learning edition of *Adult Learning and Skills*, an occasional publication by NIACE that is supported by the LSC, has just been published. Three copies have been sent to all ACL Managers and one copy should reach each Family Learning Manager/Coordinator. If you do not receive a copy or would like further copies, please e-mail clare.chisholm@niace.org.uk with your name and postal address.