

CONFERENCE REPORT

Broad, balanced and embedded: Challenges and starting points in developing wider family learning provision

Chichester, 30th September

Liverpool, 7th October

Gateshead, 14th October 2003

Three regional conferences were held to give delegates the opportunity to address the challenge of developing family learning provision that is broad, balanced and embedded in local, regional and national infrastructure. The objectives were to:

- Debate the key issues in developing wider family learning provision and clarify its relationship to family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN).
- Discuss the role of local and regional networks in developing and embedding wider family learning provision.
- Explore, through presentations, a number of starting points and types of partnerships for developing wider family learning provision.
- Identify the kind of support that would help LEAs and their partners to develop and embed wider family learning provision.

Keynote speakers

Penny Lamb and June Cramman, both Inspectors from the Adult Learning Inspectorate, provided an overview of the challenges from research, practitioner and Inspectorate perspectives at both the Liverpool and Gateshead events. Their presentations covered the following points:

- The importance of capturing and evidencing the achievements of wider family learning – anecdotal evidence not enough.
- Funding and progression to ensure effective IAG and progression routes and track learners.
- Taking a strategic view. Which learners are you targeting and why? Why using wider family learning? Measure if succeeding.
- Inspection question: “How effective is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners and why?” Distinguish between learning and social outcomes.
- In recent adult and community learning (ACL) inspections (from October 2002 to June 2003) out of 50 inspections, 35 included family learning. 18 were graded separately, 17 were included with foundation/community learning. There was much satisfactory and good provision (89%).

Veronica McGivney, Principal Research Officer, NIACE considered the rationale for offering a wider family learning curriculum and identified the potential benefits.

Rationale:

- Links with Government agendas, including Widening Participation, Neighbourhood Renewal; Skills Strategy; Progression
- Triggers for learning – the wider the curriculum, the better
- Hindrances to progression – lack of co-ordinated provision, insufficient next-step and bridging courses. Lack of information, guidance, encouragement and preparation, change of learning location.
- Aids to progression – information, guidance and encouragement, provision of short introductory or taster courses, help with transition to a different learning environment, people in connecting or bridging roles.

Key Issues Debated

How do we develop the breadth of the wider family learning curriculum?

- Broaden the debate away from preoccupation with funding streams to one where we talk about the curriculum.
- More flexible funding streams.
- Need to develop strategic partnerships that widen the curriculum.
- Formalise the breadth of family learning – already a very wide range.
- Schools as starting points, not passive recipients.
- Find methods to measure appropriately progression and achievements in learning and value soft outcomes.
- Improve national networking and access to key research to ensure that local energies are not dissipated in re-inventing the wheel.
- Embed basic skills in a wide range of subjects, eg arts.
- Set longer-term targets.
- Strategy for training & developing workforce: recruitment & training, make funding available for good quality staff development & recruitment.

How do we ensure that the wider family learning curriculum is embedded in planning and processes across all relevant sectors?

- Strategic planning at highest level to embed family learning into appropriate strategies and action plans. A designated person is needed to drive this.
- Broaden range of partners, not just schools (more support for voluntary organisations).
- Link family learning to wider opportunities and raise profile to a wider range of organisations, eg regeneration projects, employers, shopping centres, BBC, libraries.
- LEA led planning strategy – mapping of provision in widest sense. Establish possible partnerships & links.
- Include access to IAG.
- Develop child focus, not just adult.
- Embed in each curriculum area.
- Greater clarity on LSC funding and targets.
- Raise awareness of wider family learning in OFSTED.
- Strengthen evidence base on effectiveness.
- Provide flexible funding or one funding stream; funding should allow creative approach and trust in practitioners.
- Improve reporting of outcomes.
- Progression rather than accreditation targets for innovative projects.
- Adequately fund the embedding of wider family learning.
- Staff training and development.
- Male friendly environments.

What does ‘progression’ mean in the context of wider family learning and how do we facilitate it?

- Learner’s progress at different rates with different routes: progression should be learner centred and flexible, with the learner setting the speed.
- Providers’ role to remove barriers to progression, eg improving learners’ confidence, learner knowing what further courses are available, providing progression opportunities in communities.

- Do tutors and learners know enough about IAG and progression routes to see the breadth already available?
- There is a need to better define the relationship between FLLN and wider family learning and FLLN targets. If a learner moves from wider family learning to FLLN, cannot count that learner towards FLLN targets. However, there are no local targets for wider family learning.
- Provide easy progression, ie small as well as large progression steps.
- Support learners – crèche facilities, home visits, consultations & respect and “go through the door together”.
- There is a need to map and communicate the pathways or progression routes already on offer, including the courses that are natural progression routes from others, so that tutors and learners are aware of progression opportunities and routes.
- Build better relationships between partner organisations (eg LEAs and FE colleges) to better facilitate progression.
- Provide range of progression opportunities for groups & individuals from foundation to KS4.
- Evidence IAG & progression, but note there may be difficulties with data protection act and gathering information from different sectors (LEA & colleges).
- Guidance on mapping and tracking learners from ALI, including acknowledging the difficulties of tracking, would be useful. The guidance should also address issues of data protection and costings/resources.

Key points from panel discussions

The main themes raised in the panel discussion were as follows:

- 1 Partnerships
- 2 Diversity of wider family learning
- 3 Re-addressing the funding streams
- 4 Evidence of the benefits of family learning

Evidencing the benefits of family learning

There was discussion on the importance of recording the benefits of family learning, particularly progression.

ROWA are trying to find ways of recording what goes on in family learning and tracking progression. They will possibly create a database that tracks progression.

York Progression Partnership (LEAs/colleges/universities) have produced a curriculum map. Part of this is a new learner tracking system.

It's important to collect evidence on the soft outcomes of family learning. Youth workers have had to address soft learning outcomes and have been collecting evidence for the past few years. Perhaps we can learn from this sector.

Relationship between wider family learning & FLLN

Confusion was expressed over the funding of wider family learning and FLLN. Many LEAs were unaware of the flexibility that is allowed. One LEA in the south west was not able to spend all its FLLN funding. However, it could not fund a highly successful wider family learning course that was feeding into FLLN courses from the FLLN budget. Simon Lindsay from Tyne & Wear LSC explained that both FLLN and wider family learning are part of the ACL budget and that LLSCs have freedom to choose between the budgets in order to purchase the right combination of learning opportunities from LEAs through their Adult Learning Plans. (In the future this will be done through 3-year development plans). A northwest LEA confirmed that they had managed to use this flexibility but the writing of the ALP was crucial. Their WFL sits within the widening participation strategy in the ALP. However, the issue of one single funding source or budget for all family learning was reiterated as an easier solution.

It was also apparent that some LLSC's had been set local targets for wider family learning, despite there being no national office requirement to set local targets. However, it may be that greater clarification is needed on the difference between targets and monitoring of learning numbers.

Current Structures and Systems

Organisational structure is vertical but family learning is horizontal. We are having to convince other people 'silos' of the value of our work. Are there problems communicating from Government to LEA's? Have we got the right structure in place?

Curriculum Issues

Not just broad school curriculum but also whole ACL curriculum that wider family learning could make links to.

Other issues

Lack of representation from black and minority ethnic (BME) families. This was picked up in one LEA's inspection report. This LEA has now started a course specifically to attract BME groups.

ALI responded to the remark made by the Chief Inspector, David Sherlock, at the NIACE/LSDA ACL Quality Support Programme Conference in July 2003, that most family learning provision was 'mediocre'. ALI explained that this comment was made on the basis of a pilot phase of ACL inspections and that the next report of the Chief Inspector would reflect a different picture of family learning. (This report has now been published and is available on the ALI website, www.ali.gov.uk)

The Way Forward

NIACE will be working to take forward the agenda of developing a broad, balanced and embedded family learning curriculum.

- Partly in response to demand and in order to facilitate a greater sharing of information NIACE will be producing a short wider family learning publication featuring a synopsis of each of the workshops. This will be available in the first few months of 2004 and will be posted out to delegates who have registered on previous NIACE family learning conferences.
- NIACE has responded to Every Child Matters, the green paper detailing the Government's proposals for realising the potential of every child and developing services for children, young people and families. NIACE called for family learning to become a universal service with an emphasis on developing the wide range of skills that families need for 21st century living and that children need for adulthood. (See attached copy of the response for more details.)
- Developing a NIACE family learning website <http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/Family/Default.htm> in order to promote and share the benefits of all forms of family learning and to post NIACE policy responses, conference details and reports, family learning award winners, etc. This website will be up and running in the new year and will complement the National Family Learning Network's website which will be launched in April 2004. (The National Family Learning Network is a partnership between the Campaign for Learning, NIACE and ContinYou (formerly CEDC and Education Extra).
- Working with the LSC. (See action plan on NIACE website.) NIACE will also be highlighting the lack of clarity over the flexibility there is between the FLLN, wider family learning and ACL budgets.
- Raising awareness of conference issues with ALI.

ANNEX 1 – Workshops

Building on learning practices in the home

Family Links: The Nurturing Programme

Candida Hunt, Assistant Director,

Family Links, New Marston Centre, 1A Jack Staws Lane, Oxford, OX3 ODL

Tel 01865 454004 Fax 01865 452145

Email familylinksuk@aol.com www.familylinks.org.uk

Research on Texts and Practices in Families

Kate Pahl, Teaching Fellow

Email k.pahl@sheffield.ac.uk

(speech and language)

Partnership project between Bristol Community Education and Knowle Edge Speech and Language project.

Pat Foster, Teamleader – Family Learning, Childcare & Regeneration

Bristol Community Education, The Park, Daventry Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 1WD

Family Learning and neighbourhood renewal agenda

The use of local history as a starting point for family learning as part of the regeneration programme

Ann Braham, Family and Parent Learning Manager, London Borough of Islington's Lifelong Learning (Education and Regeneration)

Laycock Street, London, N1 1TH

Tel: 020 75275856 Email: Ann.Braham@cea.islington.gov.uk

Family Learning through Football and Families First, a family learning outreach initiative

June Davison, Family Learning Co-ordinator, Family Learning in County Durham

Learning Links, Canterbury Road, Newton Hall, Durham, DH1 5QY

Tel: 0191 3706412 Fax: 0191 3869472 Email: family-learning@durham.gov.uk

SRB funded provision; partnerships; SEU PAT reports; extended schools; Sure Start; mother tongue & supplementary schools; Green Paper on proposed children's service.

Dr Chris Jude, Senior Adviser on Widening Participation to NHSU

Tel: 07973 126211 Email: chris.jude@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Linking to National Curriculum areas other than literacy and numeracy

(ICT)

Helping Wales to excel in the 21st Century – an overview of XL Wales Family Technology Centre

Andy Shercliffe, Director, XL Wales

20 Princess Way, Swansea, SA1 3LW

Tel: 01792 610000 Fax: 01972 610001

Email: andy@xlwales.org.uk Website: www.xlwales.org.uk

Family Learning: More than just opening classrooms. Family Learning initiative.

Maggie Barwell, Project Manager for Family Learning, West Walton CP School
School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE14 7HA

Tel: 01945 5839620 Fax: 01945 465573 Email: Maggie.barwell@talk21.com

Reaching families and family members new to learning

Teaching and learning languages: The value of culture, traditions and heritage

Melba Pyne, Curriculum Team Leader and Project Co-ordinator, Southend Adult Community College
Languages Department, Southchurch Centre, Ambleside Drive, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS1 2UP

Tel: 01702 445701 Fax: 01702 445739 Email: melbapyne@southend-adult.ac.uk

Website: www.southend-adult.ac.uk

Outline of the aims of the Socrates 3 project (involving migrant fathers in family learning)

Chris Brownhill, Family Learning Manager, Manchester Adult Education Service

Backhouse Adult Learning Centre, Yarmouth Drive, Northern Moor, Manchester, M23 0BT

Tel: 0161 998 4728 Fax: 0161 254 7428 Email: c.brownhill@notes.manchester.gov.uk

Barbara Crosbie, Lifelong Learning Development Manager,

ContinYou Coventry, Unit C1, Grovelands Court, Grovelands Estate, Longford Road, Exhall,
Coventry CV7 9NE

Tel: 024 7658 8440 Fax: 024 7658 8441 Email: info.coventry@continyou.org.uk