

Starting Points in developing wider family learning

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promoting adult learning

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Where to start?

For family learning co-ordinators and practitioners wanting to develop their wider family learning provision,¹ this publication suggests a number of 'starting points' grouped under four major themes:

- Building on practices in the home;
- Neighbourhood renewal;
- Linking to National Curriculum areas other than literacy and numeracy;
- Reaching families and family members new to learning.

The case studies and research activities included here can also give you ideas for building partnerships and making links between family literacy, language and numeracy programmes and wider family learning programmes. Each 'starting point' includes the contact details of a family learning colleague who can tell you more about the work and how the provision or activity has been embedded locally.

The examples of wider family learning provision and activities we include here were originally presented as workshops at NIACE's three regional conferences on the theme 'Broad, Balanced and Embedded: the Challenge of Developing Wider Family Learning' in the autumn of 2003. So enthusiastic was the response of delegates attending the workshops that NIACE decided to draw the material together in a short publication to share more widely with family learning colleagues around the country.

4 Where to start?

NIACE wishes to thank workshop presenters for sharing their stories and materials with us, and the LSC and the Department for Education and Skills for funding the publication.

The entire family learning community, NIACE believes, will recognise the creativity and energy in these 'starting points' and find inspiration for developing a broad and balanced curriculum for families.

Jeanne Haggart

Development Officer (family learning) NIACE

1. Family learning' is learning as, or within, a family, though the notion of 'family' encompasses the myriad of forms chosen in contemporary society. It is learning that helps people operate as a family. The term 'wider family learning' is used by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to refer to provision for families where the primary aim is not the development of literacy, language or numeracy skills.

Building on practices in the home

1 The Nurturing Programme

Description of project

Family Links is an Oxford-based charity established to encourage and teach nurturing and relationship skills. Family Links offers training in and provides resources for the use of the Nurturing Programme, an emotional literacy course for children and adults that helps to build strong, healthy relationships in families, schools and communities.

Aims and objectives

Family Links aims to promote the benefits of emotional literacy and emotional health. These help all of us to fulfil our potential, enjoy good physical and mental health, contribute to the community as good citizens, sustain our relationships and be positive parents.

Everyone can learn to enhance their relationships, improve their motivation, cope with challenges, and get the best out of life through the Nurturing Programme's 'four constructs':

- appropriate expectations,
- self-awareness/self-esteem,
- positive approaches to discipline,
- and, above all, empathy.

Target group(s)

- families and those who support them;
- education professionals.

Funding organisations

- charitable trusts (e.g. Sainsburys, Lloyds TSB, Esmée Fairbairn);
- Department of Health;
- Department for Education and Skills;
- Family Support Grant.

Partner organisations

Family Links works in partnership with Local Education Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and schools.

Activities

- national training and consultancy in the Nurturing Programme;
- development of Nurturing Programme resources; promoting parenting education, emotional literacy.

Outcomes

- improved family relationships;
- calmer, more effective teaching/learning environments;
- enhanced emotional health.

Lessons learned

Family Links was established seven years ago, and has grown very fast. We would probably have been wise to set up more evaluation projects in the early days.

Resources available

The book *The Parenting Puzzle – How to Get the Best out of Family Life* by Candida Hunt in association with Annette

Mountford MBE (£14.99) is the course handbook for parents attending the 10-week Nurturing Programme, and is also designed to be read on its own. Easy to read, with more than 200 cartoon illustrations, it is available through bookshops, on-line at **amazon.co.uk** or direct from Family Links either by downloading an order form from our website (**familylinks.org.uk**) or by contacting us direct and requesting an order form.

The following resources based on ideas explored in the Nurturing Programme are now available directly from Family Links:

- *The Nurturing Game* – a colourful board game, £25.00;
- *Ask It / Tell It* – a question-and-answer card game, £12.00;
- *The Nurturing Programme in Action* – available on video and DVD for schools and professionals, £12.00.

All other Nurturing Programme resources are available only to those who receive training with Family Links.

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2 Texts and Practices in Families

Description of the research project

This research project was an ethnographic study of three homes which the researcher visited regularly for two years. The focus was on children's meaning-making in the home, and the way in which families' social practices supported children's meaning-making. The families were selected through involvement in a family literacy programme: they were from a number of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Turkish and Indian heritages.

The researcher investigated how children drew on a number of cultural resources within homes, including Islamic practices, practices such as pet-keeping, visiting museums, telling stories about the past and popular culture such as *PlayStation* and *Pokémon* games. These cultural resources seeped into children's meaning-making and they produced visual and linguistic artefacts, drawings, and stories, in response to these resources.

Aims and objectives

The research looked at a number of key themes:

- children and adults constructing stories, drawings and home videos in response to popular culture, such as *PlayStation* and television;
- the relationship between home and school, and the ways in which children's texts crossed boundaries, taking 'home-stuff' into school domains;
- the relationship between children's and adults' memories and narratives, and the artefacts found within homes;

- the valuing of different kinds of cultural resources in the home and meaning-making;
- the way in which artefacts and texts 'sedimented' into homes and became part of the way life was lived.

The research

The research explored how parents and children co-construct meanings within homes. These meanings often developed out of long-term family narratives. In all the families there was some dislocation between home and school, and in each family there was a boy of 5–7.

The researcher collected the children's drawings and observed practices within the homes. She found that there was a relationship between long-term practices in the home, family narratives and the children's texts.

Methodology

The research used an ethnographic perspective to explore how meanings were created in homes. This meant that the researcher was reflexive about her relationship with the families, and analysed both her interactions with them and the environment in which the children's texts were produced. At first, she visited every two weeks, and the families responded by producing cultural artefacts such as drawings and stories about their lives. After about a year, the families became used to her presence, and she participated in family life. The children continued to draw, and she taped discussions with the children and their parents about the meanings of things, about children's drawings and writing, and about family narratives. She took photographs and collected children's visual texts. She then considered the meanings of the drawings in relation to the families' stories about the drawings, and in relation to the long-term practices in the homes. She was both close to the data, hovering low as she watched and listened, and remote, withdrawing to understand the drawings better.

Findings

- Families carry within them long-term narratives. These are, in the cases of the families studied, narratives of loss, displacement and migration, expressing complex long-term experience.
- Children create texts within families which cross sites, later appearing, for instance, in texts produced in school settings. However, the emotional resonance of these texts was not perceived in the same way in the school setting as in the home setting.
- The home is made up of a series of settled ways of being, called 'habitus' (from Bourdieu, 1990). These are the dispositions of the household, the way the family lives. These ways of being are found in practices, and practices sediment into texts. That is, it can be argued, texts made at home, within families, retain traces of the 'habitus'.

Implications for practice

Families develop narratives which are long-term and can be recognised in relation to the time-scales of the narratives. Artefacts are key triggers and act as a way of remembering family narratives. Children's 'mess' in homes is often part of their text making. Many homes carry within them unrecognised stories, artefacts and ways of being and doing which we can learn from and draw on as family learning practitioners.

Activities

The themes could form the basis for activities, which:

- can be drawn upon by family learning educators;
- value home resources;
- draw on existing activities, artefacts and narratives within the homes.

Publications and references

- Bourdieu, P. (1990) translated by R. Nice, *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Pahl, K. (2002) 'Habitus and the home: Texts and practices in families', *Ways of Knowing Journal*, 2(1) May 2002, pp 45–53.
- Pahl, K. (2002) 'Ephemera, mess and miscellaneous piles: Texts and practices in families', *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 2(2) August 2002, pp 145–66.
- Pahl, K. (2003) 'Children's text making at home: Transforming meaning across modes', in Jewitt, C. and Kress, G. (eds.) *Multimodal Literacy*, New York: Peter Lang Publishers.
- Pahl, K. (2003) 'Challenging family literacy: Pedagogy through linguistic ethnography', BAAL 2003 SIG Colloquium: Linguistic Ethnography at the Interface with Education. This can be accessed at: **www.ling-ethn.org.uk/Pahl_Challenging_family_literacy.rtf**
- Pahl, K. (in press) 'The space of PlayStation : Children's textual explorations of PlayStation games in the home', in Marsh, J. (ed) *Popular Culture, Media and Digital Literacies in Early Childhood*, London: Routledge/Falmer.

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3 Family Talk

Description of project

Family Talk was devised by a group of speech and language therapists, based on their knowledge and experience in the fields of language development and parent–child interaction. The speech and language therapists were employed on the Knowle Edge Speech and Language Project, and they devised the course as a way to encourage parental participation in children’s communication and language development. The Knowle Edge Speech and Language Project worked with Bristol Community Education to develop the course, but, because their funding came to an end, the course has now become part of the programme of family learning offered across the city.

The Family Talk course is not an intervention process to be applied when a problem is identified, but rather has been written to be part of a preventative process designed to eliminate speech and language problems before they are identifiable and fixed. It strives to prevent children’s language and communication skills falling far behind their peers before they start school. It was written in response to a need that members of the project identified within the community to help parents find out how to support their children’s development of language and communication skills.

The years from 3 to 5 are a crucial time for language development: it is often in this period that speech, language and communication difficulties emerge or are recognised. Children in areas of socio-economic deprivation are particularly at risk of falling behind with language development. Family Talk provides support to parents as a

practical way of addressing the imbalance, important because communication skills are a foundation for social and academic success.

The home learning element of the Family Talk course is based on a set of 'Family Talk bags' that learners can take home each week to extend their new knowledge of communication and parent-child interaction. Parents and children choose a bag, each one of which has a theme and contains a book, toy or game or activity, a song-sheet and a tape. The themes we have used are:

- family,
- farm animals,
- hands and feet,
- listening ears,
- out and about,
- shopping,
- transport,
- zoo animals.

We have also designed a bilingual set of Family Talk bags to be used on Family Talk courses with language support. Parents and children use the contents of the bag at home together and when they return the following week we talk to the parents about how they feel about the experience, and, more importantly, how their child reacted.

Parents' encouragement is often the biggest influence on children's learning, for life as well as achievement in school. The three most important things children can learn at home are:

- a sense of self-esteem and self-worth;
- love of learning and the ability to learn;
- relationship and communication skills.

The Family Talk course encourages parents to continue home learning and to improve life at home and learning in school: children learn best at school when they develop a secure foundation of self-esteem and relationships at home.

Family Talk is an accredited Open College Network (OCN) course giving parents the opportunity to achieve at Level 1 and Level 2. The knock-on effect of Family Talk as part of our family learning programme is that parents also rediscover learning, and often progress to other learning opportunities.

Aim of the Family Talk programme

The programme aims to encourage parents to value communication and increase their awareness of ways in which they can contribute to the development of their child's language.

A second aim of the Family Talk programme is to support parents' learning with benefits for both parents and children. Family Talk is designed for all parents, to support them with ways to develop and enjoy communication with their child. Because some parents have had experiences of education that were less than positive, it is designed as a practical, fun course for parents and carers of children aged 3–5. It follows a flexible programme of activities and discussion, exploring ways of making communication and play with children fun and rewarding. It reminds parents that:

- parents are the first educators of their children;
- parents have a unique perspective on their child;
- children usually spend the majority of their time with their parents;
- parents know their children best.

Family Talk sets out key questions and areas for parents to consider together, and encourages the opportunity to share

experiences; it is not prescriptive, it recognises that parenting is something personal and that individuals can differ widely. It aims to be thought-provoking and supportive, valuing individual differences and cultures. It is practical and realistic, encouraging parents to be honest about what does and what does not work for them and their child.

Objectives

- to raise parents' awareness of the ways they can contribute to the development of their child's communication skills;
- to help parents think for themselves about what is good communication, and to reflect on areas for personal improvement;
- to highlight the benefits of good communication for learning, behaviour and well being, and to motivate parents to prioritise communication in the home;
- to develop parents' confidence in applying new communication skills and generalise these to daily life with their child;
- to facilitate parents' progression to further learning opportunities.

Target group(s)

Early Years, nurseries, schools and parents of children aged 3–5.

Funding organisations

Bristol Community Education has funded Family Talk through its LSC Wider Family Learning allocation.

Partner organisations

- Knowle Edge Speech and Language Project – speech therapists;
- Bristol Community Education Family Learning;
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) – for bilingual courses;
- OCN – for accreditation.

Activities

Ten 2-hour sessions, with 'Family Talk bags' to extend activities within the home

Outcomes

The parent should be able to:

- recognise the importance of giving special time to playing with their child as part of daily life;
- be sensitive to non-verbal communication as well as spoken language in interactions with their child;
- acknowledge the value of following their child's focus of attention during play;
- show that listening can be fun and enjoyable;
- recognise the value of basing conversations with their child on what the child is saying / doing;
- recognise the benefits of toys and play activities for their child's learning;
- realise the benefits that the use of positive language can have for their child's feelings and behaviour;
- use language their child can learn from;
- reflect on their own interaction with their child and identify changes;
- identify future language-development goals for their child.

Lessons learned

The first and most important lesson was the benefit of our early partnership with the speech and language therapists: knowing that they had limited time to make a difference they joined with Bristol Community Education to ensure that this course could continue to be delivered under the family learning programme.

This course was delivered by the speech therapists in the first instance, and then delivered with our family learning tutors shadowing the speech therapists to gain experience. Since the

end of the Knowle Edge Speech and Language Project, Family Learning has continued to run Family Talk, with new tutors shadowing experienced ones. In this way we have built up a bank of experienced tutors. The course often uses video clips of parents and children to capture how parents are reacting to their children when they are first playing together. This has been invaluable in showing parents how they acted before and after taking part in Family Talk.

The use of 'Family Talk bags' to enable parents to continue to interact with their children at home is an important aspect of the project. It is vital to explain to parents that we understand and accept that things can and often do get damaged or broken and that this should not deter them from returning the bag – or even returning to the course.

Some children want to take the same bag home time after time, and this can be difficult when sharing the bags around the group: children must be encouraged, sensitively, to try another bag.

We later produced a range of bilingual 'Family Talk bags' to use in the inner city with our bilingual family learning project.

Resources available

Family Talk – a tutor's guide by Rosalind Owen and Lucy French, price £11.00 (including post and packing) can be purchased through:

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Department
United Bristol Healthcare Trust
Directorate of Children's Services
Bristol Royal United Hospital for Children
Upper Maudlin Street
Bristol, BS2 8BJ
Telephone: 0117 342 8298
Fax: 0117 342 8690

Location of project

Bristol Community Education Family Learning

Contact Details

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The Park

Daventry Road

Knowle

Bristol BS4 1QD

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Telephone: 0117 903 9754

Neighbourhood renewal

4 Local History – Regeneration and Family Learning

Description of project

This is a flexible programme in which families produce local history materials for their locality with support and facilitation by specialists. For instance, in one Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) area¹ we are working on a local history trail. This will start as a 'Then & Now' booklet based on old photographs, with thoughts and descriptions written by families with support from the local library, history centre, education library and history inspector. This can then be developed into a local trail either by the production of an accompanying map or a recorded commentary to make an audio trail.

This kind of work can be accredited through the Open College Network (OCN) and supported by local networks – you don't have to be a local historian to make it work! Progression routes are important, as are links to the local schools and the National Curriculum. Doing your own research alongside the families provides a good model and is fun.

Aims and objectives

- to show that learning is enjoyable; to empower parents and children by facilitating them, not doing it for them;
- to encourage the development of interest and pride in the local area;
- to make links to the National Curriculum; to provide progression into other learning;
- to produce local history materials.

Target group(s)

Local families – all are welcome but the project can be targeted, e.g. at recent arrivals.

Funding organisations

Depends on the individual centre chosen for the project.

Partner organisations

Local networks are the foundation of the work and will vary in available resources and commitment.

- local libraries;
- local history centre/museum;
- local history/archaeology societies;
- local LEA advisers/ Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS);
- local college/adult education providers;
- local planning department/conservation areas;
- Age Concern/older learners/centres for older people;
- Ukonline/learning centres;
- leisure services;
- parks/open space services;
- community centres;
- faith groups.

Useful sources

- Survey of local buildings – ‘Pevsner’ (Pevsner Buildings of England series, published by Penguin and now Yale University Press);
- Victoria County Histories;
- Local history section of libraries;
- Historic maps/Ordnance survey reproductions (published by Godfrey, 57–8 Spoor Street, Dunston, Gateshead, NE11 9BD);
- *Riches Beyond Price: Making the most of family learning*, Titus Alexander and Peter Clyne, NIACE, 1995.

Websites

- www.english-heritage.org.uk/education (*Heritage Learning* magazine)
- www.clmg.org.uk (Learning Through Museums and Galleries)
- www.oralhistory.org.uk/ (Oral History Society – practical support on reminiscences)
- www.nocn.org.uk (OCN for accreditation)
- www.wea.org.uk Workers’ Educational Association
- www.groundwork.org.uk (Environmental regeneration charity)

Activities

- exploring the area;
- researching and working with specialists;
- taking photographs;
- writing booklets;
- working on portfolios;
- presenting the work to other families.

Outcomes

- an interest in the area;
- a booklet or trail;
- development of local networks;
- progression to other learning;

- involvement in local centre or school;
- accreditation of learning;
- development of basic skills if needed.

Lessons learned

It often takes time to consult and recruit families – although not always! One centre already has old photos on its walls, which are an excellent starting point. Sorting the OCN accreditation well ahead is also important.

Resources available

Starter questions and network check-list are available.

Location of project

London Borough of Islington.

Contact details

Ann Braham
Lifelong Learning
Regeneration & Education
Laycock Street
London N1 1TH

Email: ann.braham.cea@islington.gov.uk

Telephone: 0207 527 5856

1. 'The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) supports activities which aim to make a real and sustainable difference in deprived areas.' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

5 Family Learning Through Football and Families First

Description of project

Family Learning in County Durham brings together a wide range of partners to promote and deliver learning within the context of the family.

Family learning is 'as varied as families themselves. It involves intergenerational learning based on kinship, however defined.' (Alexander and Clyne, *Riches Beyond Price: Making the most of family learning*, NIACE, 1995). Our definition of family learning is inclusive, recognising that self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment of learning have an effect on achievement of both children and adults. The breadth and range of family learning activities offered by our partner organisations reflect this.

Aims and objectives

Family Learning in County Durham will:

- develop a strategy for family learning;
- promote links between local and countrywide initiatives and ensure complementarities of projects involving family learning;
- help to develop a process by which the County Durham Learning Partnership is able to identify and meet local needs and inform the County Durham LSC about learning wants and needs.

In order to:

- increase the capability of parents to support their children's learning and through this raise their own skills levels, aspirations, expectations and confidence;
- increase the capacity of local families to take up education and training provision and to progress to higher levels;
- improve the performance of children through parents and children working together.

Target group(s)

The partnership covers the whole of County Durham. SRB 6 wards are targeted.

Funding organisations

- Single Regeneration Budget, round 6 (SRB 6),
- European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3;
- Partners also provide match funding both 'in kind' and for delivery, largely through the LSC.

Partner organisations

The partnership includes:

- Durham LEA;
- four FE colleges;
- the Workers' Educational Association;
- five Primary Care Trusts;
- Social Services;
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership;
- Connexions;
- IAG;
- the seven district councils.

Activities

A wide range of family learning, focused on basic skills and more widely is delivered through our partner providers. Staff and volunteer training and development have included

Dyslexia Awareness, Share, Men Friendly Organisations and Welcoming Schools.

We also undertake project and curriculum development. This has included the development of Family Learning Through Football and Families First.

Family learning Through Football

Family Learning Through Football is an exciting educational idea promoted by Sunderland AFC Foundation and Durham Family Learning that builds upon the basic family learning concept to give children and their parents the opportunity to improve communication, learn together, improve skills levels and inspire one another to achieve, using football as the hook to encourage participation. The project aims to increase the capability of the most disadvantaged families by helping parents support their children's development whilst raising their own skill levels and confidence. It also increases the capacity of local families to take up education and training and improves the educational attainment of children often classed as marginalised.

Why there is a need for help and what football can offer

It is widely accepted that adult learners in deprived communities are often unwilling to engage in learning because of their long-held negative attitudes to the process. If parents are experiencing difficulties themselves, it is no surprise that their children often follow the culture pattern and, lacking help at home, struggle to acquire or apply educational and social skills – leading to a lack of aspirations and a path of underachievement. Football is one way to remove barriers and engage people from all backgrounds: using football as the hook in deprived communities, other issues (including accessibility and stereotyping) can be tackled.

Background

In May 2001, Greenland Community Infant School held the first Family Learning Through Football course funded via Family Learning and under the guidance of Return to Learn Co-ordinator John French and SAFC Community Area Coach Ian Dipper. Twelve parents whose children attended the school participated in the course. One of the problems primary schools and family learning both have to deal with is the low participation of men in curriculum subjects. It was hoped that this course would be more attractive to them, owing to the North East's affinity with football.

Of the 12 parents who took part there was one couple, five were women and five were men, of whom two were employed but had arranged time away from work to take part in the course.

This pilot proved extremely successful and an independent report was compiled by a Durham University researcher (copy available on request from Learning Links – see 'Contact details', p. 32). As a result, the course was accredited through the Open College Network (OCN), giving parents the opportunity to receive certification.

The first module written is called 'Family Learning Through Football and Coaching'. It is anticipated that further modules will be written in health, citizenship, environment and basic skills – all using football as the key theme.

The Family Learning Through Football and Coaching programme

Family Learning Through Football and Coaching is an exciting and innovative set of ten weekly informal education sessions, each of two and a half hours, that involve up to 12 parents and their children at any one time. Children develop

physical and fine motor skills, concentration, cooperation and self-confidence, which ties into the National Curriculum, and parents find out about how their children learn and how to coach their children positively in other areas of their lives. Programmes cover issues including 'Why exercise is important', 'Children's developmental stages and behaviour patterns', 'How parents influence children' and 'Setting realistic goals'. Parents are given the option of completing a portfolio of evidence which can be accredited through the OCN at Levels 1 and 2, and children are given a certificate of achievement. Motivators, including branded goodies, a loyalty scheme, player appearances and activities in the Stadium of Light, the home of Sunderland Football Club, are attached to the programme.

Sunderland AFC Foundation, in collaboration with Durham Local Education Authority, Education in the Community and Family Learning in County Durham, are currently looking to build upon this pilot 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 details of activities to carry out whilst at home.

One of the most important aspects of the programme is identifying other needs, particularly basic skills, both in children and their parents, and going on to direct them to other relevant agencies who can provide support. Improving communication within the family is a vital aspect of the programme, as is enabling children to have the right knowledge to inform the key decisions they have to make.

A spin-off of this project is 'Active Dads', which encourages dads to undertake activities with their children, and to begin to address the problems of social exclusion recognised to be

more common amongst those with poor relationships with their fathers.

Families First

In 2002 Family Learning in County Durham obtained ESF Objective 3 funding. Of this sum, £25,000 was allocated to a one-year family learning outreach pilot.

Families First recognises the impact of positive parental involvement in raising the achievement of children. In light of the acknowledged difficulties in engaging adults in school-based family learning opportunities we thought that a friendly person approaching carers through schools might make a difference.

The pilot project aimed to develop a model which would be suitable for implementation in other schools across the county that are experiencing similar difficulties. Four pilot schools were approached and began the project in January 2003. Quick positive outcomes from the pilot schools led to four further schools being invited to join in the summer 2003 term. Peterlee Education Action Zone (EAZ) funded this extension to the original project. Families First now involves eight schools: two Infant, two Junior and four Primary. The schools were chosen initially for their level of commitment and ability to deliver the project.

Headteachers from the four original schools had visited a similar project in Leicester and returned enthused and keen to establish family learning outreach posts in their own schools. Two schools had on-site parent and child pre-school activity; one had recently released a member of staff to develop parent support and play sessions. All four schools had already been positive about community involvement and family learning, and all are good at supporting external initiatives and developing new projects – good ‘soil’ in which

to grow a young project, and schools which would willingly learn and share their experiences. The next group of four were chosen because they connected with the first group, creating support and geographical links across school communities. The schools had also expressed interest in extending community services on-site, e.g. Sure Start, family learning.

How was the pilot model arrived at?

Restrictions imposed by the funding time-scale required the project to use existing staff. This had the advantage of enabling an early start to the project and giving a full 12 months' running time as, it was correctly anticipated, existing staff would already be familiar with the school and the local community. A further advantage was that workers who had acquired training and expertise in recruiting and engaging families would remain in the school beyond the life-span of the pilot. During the pilot, members of staff were released for two days per week during the Spring term and one day per week during the Summer and Autumn terms. This reflected the need for an effective induction and training period, and provided additional time for information-gathering and developing networks. However, family learning leaders advised that one and a half days per week consistently through the year is a better model, possibly in the form of three half-days, and preferably with some release time in common amongst the team members to facilitate meeting together and joint activity.

Who is involved in managing the project?

The pilot has a multi-agency steering group made up of staff from Peterlee EAZ, Cultural Services, family learning in County Durham, Durham LEA Education in the Community, East Durham and Houghall College and Aim High (a local initiative to facilitate increased engagement of adults in

learning and skills, employment and community involvement). Headteachers manage the project and the family learning leaders on a day-to-day basis, but refer to the steering group for advice and support. The steering group oversees the strategic development of the whole project, seeking funding, reviewing and monitoring, and keeping an eye on the wider picture and context of family learning.

What changes came with Team Two?

Either Classroom Assistants or Nursery Nurses were invited to undertake the role. The two teachers from the pilot, although able professionals who enjoyed the new avenue of work, found it difficult to be flexible enough to meet the demands of family work when they had a class to teach, and other responsibilities. Although they may also have teaching commitments, other staff can more readily share their role with another colleague. Forty-five days' cover was offered rather than the rigid structure of weekly release days, providing flexibility within the projects to use cover when it was most needed, allowing space to accommodate the uneven patterns of training opportunities, the shape of the school year, and so on.

What do family learning leaders do?

Leaders develop knowledge of local providers and models of family learning, consult, respond, support and encourage. This can include action planning, research, coffee mornings and one-to-one support for parents, taster sessions and liaison with a wide range of agencies.

Benefits of Families First

As a result of the pilot schemes, family learning has become embedded in School Improvement Plans and in the community through active involvement of parents. Benefits to providers have included engaging with people previously

thought to be inaccessible, attracting new learners in greater numbers, an increase in the number of courses, tasters, workshops and people accessing services, and the establishment of new venues for adult learning.

Future Plans

Two secondary and linked feeder primary schools may be piloting a Key Stage 2/3 transition project in Families First, developing family learning activity with a cohort of carers and pupils. Funding is being sought for additional schools to come into the project, perhaps from outside the EAZ to begin disseminating the scheme across the county. Existing schools may want to continue the project beyond its first year. Funding is being sought for the pilot team to continue into 2004. A Families First Toolkit document is being devised for publication and distribution to all Easington schools. Project schools are to be invited to become Aim High 'satellites' offering IAG – there may be posters, leaflets, a directory, or perhaps a trained person in IAG doing surgery sessions.

Outcomes

Family Learning through Football and Families First are two successful initiatives supported through County Durham's Family Learning Partnership. Other developments include the establishment of area family learning operational groups and the Including Men forum. Family Learning Through Football has now obtained further funding and has recruited two professional football coaches to deliver and develop the programme.

Families First is in the process of obtaining funding to extend family learning outreach to other parts of the county.

Lessons learned

In County Durham we are fortunate to have the established framework of our Family Learning Partnership. This has provided us with a structure which supports the development of new and innovative projects. We can call on the support of a number of partners to offer their expertise and time in creating project steering groups. The reporting mechanism enables us to share good practice and to learn from one another both within the LEA through the Family Learning Action Group and in a wider context through the partnership steering group.

Resources available

Family Learning Through Football and Coaching is available as an accredited course through the OCN. Please contact Lesley Spuhler at Sunderland AFC (0191 551 5126) if you would like to purchase supporting materials.

We aim to make our web-site a resource for learners and practitioners as well as a source of information about family learning in County Durham. Please visit and let us have your comments – www.family-learning.org.uk

Location of project

County Durham

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Linking to National Curriculum areas other than literacy and numeracy

6 XLWales Family Technology Centre

Description of project

XLWales is an educational charity based in Swansea. We work with children aged 3 to 14, together with their parents, grandparents, teachers and group leaders, to develop the enterprise and innovation skills listed below in 'Aims and objectives'. We help the children and adults to develop these skills by providing a wide range of invention and discovery challenges, developed in-house. The challenges include Invention Challenges based on construction kits such as K'NEX, and Discovery Challenges based on computers.

Our educational services comprise:

- The XLWales Family Technology Centre in Swansea, which families, primary schools and children's groups visit to carry out their Invention and Discovery challenges. In the 2002/3 school year, 15,000 children and 7,000 adults visited the centre;

- The XLWales Invention & Discovery Roadshow, which takes Invention and Discovery challenges into Primary schools, community groups and family venues across Wales. In the 2002/3 school year, 44,000 children and 2,400 adults benefited from Roadshow visits;
- Training and consultancy for schools, community groups and family learning practitioners.

Family Technology Centre

The Family Technology Centre is situated in Swansea city centre, in a building that used to be a large shop. The centre is open 363 days a year, until 7pm every day. Facilities in the centre include a Challenge Desk and Reception, Invention Zone, Discovery Zone, Under-4s play area, Club Room, Training Room, a toy shop, and the Inventors' Café. The Discovery Zone comprises a network of twenty computers, which are used for software challenges, internet challenges and robotics challenges. The Invention Zone is a large area equipped solely with tables and chairs, which is used for invention challenges based on the K'NEX, Lego and Zoob construction kits.

The centre provides a unique pattern of operation for *accredited* family learning, as follows:

- Children may only visit the centre with their parents, grandparents, or other family members. Neither unaccompanied children nor unaccompanied adults are permitted entry;
- On their first visit, visitors receive a 'Passport' listing the 80 challenges available. They bring this back each time they return;
- Families are encouraged to complete all challenges as a team, with help as required from XLWales staff;
- Each challenge lasts about an hour, and has three levels of

difficulty, so that it can be carried out successfully by different ages and abilities;

- The completion of each challenge for every family member who has participated is recorded on a computerised record of achievement.

Whilst adults and children alike greatly enjoy working on their challenges, there is also a serious underlying educational purpose to family learning in the centre. This is that most adults and children visiting the centre sign up for our 'Invention Qualification', which for the adults participating is a Level 2 learning unit accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). To complete the qualification, adults and children have to complete 30 challenges (or 16 challenges plus a 'Home Invention') over a two-year period. Since June 2002, 1100 adults and 1500 children have signed up.

The centre also provides many parents and grandparents with their first learning experience since leaving school, and we find that family learning is particularly effective in giving such adults the confidence and motivation to progress to more traditional forms of training. We facilitate this process by 'signposting' parents and grandparents on to ICT courses held by local training providers.

Admission fees for family visitors vary from £1 to £2.50 per person per visit.

Aims and objectives

The aim of XLWales is to help children and adults to develop enterprise and innovation skills, including:

Subject skills:

- science;
- design;
- technology;

- maths;
- ICT.

Life skills:

- innovation skills,
- problem-solving skills,
- team-working skills,
- communication skills,
- investigation skills,
- a 'Can-Do' approach.

Target group(s)

- families,
- community groups,
- primary schools.

Funding organisations

- Community Fund,
- New Opportunities Fund,
- European Social Fund.

Partner organisations

There are no formal partners, but many informal partners in the public sector, private sector and voluntary sector.

Activities

- invention challenges;
- discovery challenges.

Outcomes

Some statistics for the XLWales Family Technology Centre in the calendar year 2002 are as follows:

- 14,000 visits from families;
- 61 per cent of the adults were mothers or grandmothers;
- 39 per cent fathers or grandfathers;
- 60 per cent of the child visitors were boys, 40 per cent girls;

- 40 per cent of visitors live in deprived communities;
- 42,000 challenges were completed;
- average length of stay was 2 hours;
- over 50 per cent of visits were repeat visits.

Lessons learned

Our experience is that family learning is an excellent way of developing enterprise and innovation skills, because:

- learning takes place out of school hours and out of working hours;
- childcare commitments stop being a barrier to learning;
- parents and grandparents pass on their skills to their children and grandchildren;
- children pass on their skills to their parents and grandparents;
- families are encouraged to continue learning together at home;
- family learning is good fun!

We have also learned that the best method of attracting thousands of parents and grandparents into family learning is to provide activities for tens of thousands of children in their primary schools each year. The children will then bring their parents and grandparents along to the family learning sessions, and after a few enjoyable visits the whole family will be participating regularly.

Resources available

We have developed extensive resources in-house for family learning, including:

- 'Challenge Cards' for 500 invention and discovery challenges;
- equipment;
- educational software;
- training courses;

- written procedures;
- database systems for accreditation, beneficiary recording and grant accounting;
- marketing materials.

We would be pleased to hear from family learning practitioners who might be interested in sharing our resources.

Location of Project

Swansea

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7 The Pupil–Parent Partnership Project

Description of project

This family learning project is in its fourth year, offering some 30 after-school activities during the year. Non-threatening activities such as family cookery, Scalextric car racing, family crafts and drop-in clubs have successfully drawn in families. The community curriculum is broad, providing opportunities for children and parents to identify latent strengths and to find a positive sense of identity within the school community. Our research has shown the importance of family learning as a precursor to learning for parents who feel that education has failed them or for whom it has no relevance. Parents come to learning incognito, ostensibly to support their children’s learning, gradually building the trust and confidence to identify themselves as a learner. Here, relationships are everything; teachers, including the headteacher, attend activities as participants, learning alongside children and parents as an equal. Some activities are run by parents or a grandparent, a learning support assistant, the caretaker or a teacher.

At 3.15 p.m.. when the school day finishes, our school is buzzing with families full of optimism and purpose, attending activities together – family choir, a parent-with-child funsplash, a storysack or family cricket. Parents come in to improve their French, to run a cookery evening or maybe to gain a GCSE or a workplace qualification. A crèche is provided for very young children and babies.

This is a very ordinary primary school which has become the first point of trust for its families. It has taken on the

identity of comfortable friend. The headteacher points to a new trend: improving baseline assessment scores on entry into school and, for the last three years, a steady rise in Key Stage Two results. OFSTED praised the after-school provision, acknowledging the importance and value of curriculum breadth. A strong philosophy of equity underlies this successful learning community, where the learning ethic is caught rather than taught.

The headteacher has noticed that parents are more likely to want to see him for help with their GCSE or to offer a new skill for the after-school programme. Mutual trust and respect flourishes where before there might have been disparity. It is here that a seamless learning journey is becoming a reality. Entry-level qualifications for careers are being offered on site at the family centre during the school day along with a crèche. Career advice, qualification routes and learning for pleasure are all part of an average school day at this primary school, where learners are aged between 1 and 82.

Young mums arrive to study a computer module whilst the local history group meet next door to work on their village history archive for publication by the Pupil–Parent Partnership. A young girl, excluded from school and currently working for a gangmaster, arrives to see the family worker, eager to find a place to learn and some support to move on. Babysitting courses for teenagers help us to provide a better-quality babysitting service, which can be booked from the family centre and includes the use of a responsible adult who is on call for babysitters to contact. Driving theory helps 16-year-olds to work at their literacy skills and to access learning on their own terms and their own turf.

Aims and objectives

- to break down barriers to learning and to enable parents to know that they make a valued contribution to their child's learning;
- to foster a love of learning through an enriched and informal curriculum, and to provide regular opportunities for members of the school community to come together to learn as equals;
- to build effective relationships, not from a position of school as superior model, but in genuine partnership where open dialogue enabled teachers to have authentic knowledge of children and their families;
- to develop shared values which recognised cultural diversity.

We wanted the school to become a place where everyone felt they had a positive sense of identity and where everyone had a voice – children, parents and staff – in deciding how the family learning project developed.

Target group(s)

Everyone in the school community

Funding organisations

- Education Extra;
- Kings Lynn Borough Council;
- Norfolk County Council;
- Norfolk Children's Fund;
- Sure Start.

Partner organisations

- Norfolk Music Works;
- Basic Skills Agency;
- Adult Education.

Activities

Badminton, football, cricket, netball, table tennis, swimming, dance, choir, ceilidh band, steel pans, African drumming, African chants, drop-in club, family crafts, family cookery, family French, family storybooks, making friendship bracelets, making a birdbox, world cookery, editorial team, child research team, infant singing, making maths games, making Christmas decorations, contemporary dance, making birthday cards, maypole dancing, Spanish, pre-school music, French café, computer hardware club (build / mend your own), calligraphy, signing choir, watercolours, sculpture, board games club, beginner chess, intermediate chess.

Outcomes

The Child Research Team reports that 97 per cent of children prefer after-school learning to classroom learning, and feel that their learning is better supported by having a parent or sibling with them. They enjoy learning as a family, feel it is more successful and that the activities are more interesting. They ask a critical question: 'What is learning?' They make a strong case validating the value of activities which are not literacy or numeracy because time is spent learning to learn. But they warn that family learning needs to be handled carefully – children should not become pawns in this partnership.

Parents say that family learning has built important relationships, has given them a sense of belonging and enabled them to become a learner themselves. As a first point of trust and as a place where parents want to be, there is great potential in encouraging parents to move on to qualification courses. Classroom assistant training, CLAIT computer courses, Basic Skills and GCSEs are some of the qualification routes offered.

Staff have gradually become more knowledgeable about parents and children, seeing how they work together, understanding more of their background. Many parents help in classrooms in a variety of ways.

The School Community has produced its own resources, such as bedtime boxes for use by the children. These contain a book, written and illustrated by parents, a song composed by a parent, sung by the choir, recorded by another parent and cut on to CD, and a game devised and trialled by Class 1. In all, 120 people were involved in producing this resource, the most frequently borrowed book in the library – we are all loyal to the Pupil–Parent Partnership brand name.

Lessons learned

We started humbly with a family choir and family cookery, experimenting and being responsive to the views of parents and children. This made the project manageable as we learnt the ropes and tried not to take advantage of goodwill. We are very fortunate, as we have many Learning Support Assistants who run courses, as well as parents and grandparents, and this means that teachers are not overloaded. Many activities just run for six weeks so that organising and delivering an after-school club does not become a life sentence.

School is central and accessible: staying for an hour after picking a child up from the classroom is the most convenient time for most parents and carers. Activities are free, and a crèche for babies and other siblings is provided. This has all helped to make it genuinely inclusive.

Resources available

Barwell, M. (2003), *Hearing the Voice of the Learner*, published by the Pupil–Parent Partnership.

Brown *et al* (2003), *Child Research Team Report on family learning*, published by the Pupil–Parent Partnership.

Location of project

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Reaching families and family members new to learning

8 Keeping Your Language Alive

Description of project

The Keeping Your Language Alive project was developed between Southend Adult Community College (Languages Department) and the South East Essex Chinese School after observing that parents were very keen to encourage and support their children to learn Mandarin and Cantonese.

The main component of the project is the course entitled 'Teaching your children basic (language)' written by Melba Pyne, the curriculum team leader and project's coordinator. It is accredited by NCFE. During the course parents learn general, basic techniques on how to teach their children their own language.

Parents are asked to integrate songs, rhymes, games and stories that are traditionally learned by children back in their country of origin into their work.

Initially, the course was delivered at the college, where the Chinese community already gathered every Sunday. However, other courses have since been offered in local primary schools to all parents whose first language is not English.

One of the key strengths of the project is that it has brought parents and children from around the world together to explore, exchange and celebrate the value of language, traditions and heritage from their own cultures.

Aims and objectives

- to support parents wanting to teach their children their own language;
- to help parents who wish to keep their culture and traditions alive;
- to involve parents in their children's education;
- to raise awareness of the educational system in the UK, i.e. use of English in a different context (education);
- to raise confidence and self-esteem;
- to help parents cross barriers and encourage them to start/continue with their own education;
- to motivate parents to start a career in education by introducing them gently to the education systems, awarding bodies procedures, the concepts of building up a portfolio, the specialised vocabulary used in course specifications and record keeping;
- to bring parents from different backgrounds and cultures together, linked by a common interest of taking part in their children's education;
- to help parents make new friends and share their experiences as parents.

Target group(s)

- all parents with children aged up to 7;
- parents wishing to learn how to teach their children their own language.

The project has been offered to parents whose first language is not English. From April 2004 it has been open to all parents interested in teaching their children any subject, including languages, maths and science.

Funding organisations

Adult and Community Learning Fund.

Partner organisations

- Initially: South East Essex Chinese School;
- extended to: local primary schools;
- extended option: other communities.

Activities

The course

'Teaching your children basic (language)' is an innovative course that introduces adults to the basic principles of teaching children. Parents explore issues such as planning sessions, monitoring progress, selecting and adapting resources and presenting materials using ICT. Throughout the course they build up a portfolio of work as evidence required to gain the NCFE level 1 certificate. There is time allocated for parents to work with their children and to put into practice what they have learned in the course.

Delivery

Activities in the classroom are closely linked to issues that are familiar to both parents and children to create a learning atmosphere that is relevant, friendly and comfortable. Parents are encouraged to take part in informal discussions and to share their experiences as parents.

The team of teachers developed and produced specific materials to assist parents to complete their portfolios, thereby ensuring that NCFE requirements were met effectively and efficiently at all times.

Upon completion of the course parents will have acquired a

portfolio of work with valuable information and knowledge that can be used in the future.

Engaging individuals, families and communities

A key characteristic of the project and the course is its flexibility in content and modes of delivery. It is possible to adapt the course without losing its fundamental principles, aims and objectives. This has been of particular importance when approaching local communities and schools. Initial contact with individuals, community leaders and headteachers to establish specific needs is followed by talks on how the project can be modified to meet those needs. At the schools, participants have come from various countries including Morocco, Russia, Kenya and Angola.

Partnerships

Two types of partnerships have been established. First, an internal partnership between the Languages Department and other departments of the College, including Information and Advice, Essential Skills, Information Technology and Learning Support.

Second, external partnerships. The relationships between the college and both the South East Essex Chinese School and local schools already involved in the college's family learning programme have been strengthened.

A more complex and slow process applies to contacting and engaging other communities in the area. However, the Zimbabwean, Albanian and Polish communities are interested in taking part in the near future.

Support

- Volunteers are available to support parents during the class; parents can attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes at the college;

- There is the facility to set up a crèche with qualified staff at local schools;
- The group of Chinese parents initially had the help of a translator (Cantonese, Mandarin and English).

Advice and progression

- At recruitment events, advice is given regarding the course, the support and the progression routes available;
- Local schools welcome parents joining in teaching activities;
- Students can choose to continue with their learning by progressing on to level 2 in various related fields, or taking part in advanced ESOL classes and ICT.

For many, this course can be the starting point of what can be a productive and successful future.

Outcomes

It doesn't stop here. The hard work of setting up the course has been done and the result is the Teaching Your Children Tool Box. This is a learning package that contains all the items needed to continue delivering the course after the funding finished in March 2004. The course specifications, a set of handouts, clear delivery instructions and resources are all included. As the course is generic it would be suitable for the teaching and learning of not just languages but maths, science, art, etc.

The Keeping Your Language Alive project was an essential part of the successful application for the Beacon Award, which we are proud to hold.

Lessons learned

Reaching and engaging communities is a process that requires time, as it is vital to get to know how the communities are organised and how the individuals work, study and learn.

As a result and because this was the first project of its kind, realistic outcomes in terms of number of participants were difficult to predict.

Location of project

Southend on Sea, Essex

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9 Working with Migrant Fathers

Description of project

The family learning team in Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) is a partner in an EU-funded Socrates project Working with Migrant Fathers. This is a trans-national project involving seven European countries and 10 organisations; the partners represent a variety of agencies, such as health workers, refugee support and adult education. Each organisation aims to develop strategies or activities to increase the involvement of bilingual fathers within the context in which they work.

We are using the project as a framework with which to consolidate and further develop our programme, particularly in relation to the family learning team's links with some key partners and with other curriculum teams within our own organisation. The project does not involve a large amount of extra funding, so we have looked at ways that we can change our existing programme content and delivery style in order to make it more appropriate and attractive to fathers and male carers, particularly bilingual men.

We have set up a steering group to guide the project, which initially included MAES staff from family learning and other curriculum areas and representatives from other agencies we have worked with. The steering group has given the project a sense of joint ownership from the start, with members contributing ideas, sharing opportunities for joint work, and pooling their contacts and expertise. It has been a successful mechanism for the organisations involved to look at ways they can change and adapt their current practice in order to

reach a specific target group, without involving a large amount of extra, external funding. In this way, we hope that the lessons we learn can become embedded in our practice and therefore sustainable in the longer term.

Aims and objectives

A Socrates project (a European project involving nine EU countries) about involving migrant fathers in family learning. The project will:

- increase the participation of fathers, particularly bilingual fathers, in a wide range of family learning provision;
- offer learning opportunities using alternative strategies (e.g. novel timing, length, content, venue);
- develop partnership work, both within the adult service and with other organisations, to bring in new learners who have previously not attended family learning provision in high numbers;
- disseminate practical strategies for working in partnership;
- disseminate practical strategies for engaging parents who are new to learning.

Target group(s)

Male carers (fathers, uncles, grandfathers), particularly those from minority ethnic backgrounds

Funding organisations

EU funding helps to pay for staff time to co-ordinate the project (20 days over a two-year period) and also for the work to be evaluated by an external researcher as well as costs of travel and subsistence for trans-national working parties. The EU funds 70 per cent of the costs and MAES 30 per cent.

Partner organisations

- The City Learning Centre (CLC) at Abraham Moss High School (ICT facilities and staff – steering group);
- Diversity and Inclusion team (EMA – link between Adult

Education and Supplementary schools – also on steering group);

- supplementary schools (volunteer-run schools run on evenings and Saturdays, focusing on mother tongue and cultural activities – links with fathers);
- others – the project is on-going.

Activities

- Family learning Robot days: Supported by the BBC, robot-making kits and on-line learning materials are provided for one or more family learning sessions. We offered a series of Saturday sessions, linking in with Vietnamese and Malaysian supplementary schools at the City Learning Centre. Family learning tutors and the ICT manager at the CLC jointly staffed the sessions. We also worked with the supplementary schools co-ordinator to ensure this attracted a majority of fathers. The practical sessions went very well – some of the fathers have continued using the centre. Key focus: partnership work.
- We work in Cheetham with an existing Sure Start project: the family learning tutor runs short courses for parents and under-5s. We linked in with a Sure Start and libraries project, whose aim was to create multi-lingual CD recording of stories for young children. The CD is included in a story-bag on loan from libraries. The tutor used her local contacts to bring in a group of fathers who agreed to read children's stories; we put on a separate after-work session for fathers, so that the CD contained male voices. Key focus: times of sessions.
- We have designed and delivered a Family Literacy course, based around a weekend visit to an outdoor education centre in the Lake District. The pilot courses attracted about 40 per cent male carers. Key focus: *practical activities*.

We have other plans – the project is on-going – but we are learning to think about partnership, timing, venue, and content of sessions.

Outcomes

- developing a more responsive curriculum by offering more weekend and evening provision;
- family learning content being delivered through other curriculum areas, e.g. ESOL evening classes;
- the design and delivery of short, intensive courses;
- embedding family literacy and learning within practical subjects, e.g. outdoor education;
- intensive partnership work both in the delivery and planning of the project.

Lessons learned

- Be very clear from the start what resources each organisation can offer to the project;
- Make sure that everyone involved is very clear about the aims and limits of the project.

Resources available

A CD-ROM of the Socrates Project is available.

Location of project

Manchester Adult Education Service, Manchester

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Family learning is moving from the margins to the mainstream, addressing many of the government's social and lifelong learning priorities. The best family learning provision includes opportunities across the curriculum, encompassing subjects as varied as sport, local history and music.

This handy collection of case studies shows how family learning provision can be developed from a variety of 'starting points' in homes, schools and neighbourhoods. Written by experienced practitioners, the case studies offer insights into the process of needs analysis, programme development and partnership working. Each includes valuable details of practical resources and further contacts so that readers can follow up the ideas offered.

This book will be of interest to managers and practitioners in a wide range of sectors working with families, including children's centres, schools, museums and other neighbourhood settings.

Clare Chisholm, Jeanne Haggart and Jackie Horne are members of the NIACE Family Learning Team



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NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

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