

The building blocks of quality in family learning

Guidance for planners, managers and practitioners

Jeanne Haggart and Rachel Spacey



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21 De Montfort Street

Leicester

LE1 7GE

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Introduction

What are the aims of *The Building Blocks of Quality*?

In June 2005 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) asked NIACE to consult with stakeholders and practitioners to develop a consensus about 'the building blocks of quality' in family learning as a whole.

Family learning is a varied field of practice developed through a rich history of work in adult literacy, language and numeracy, home-school initiatives, parenting, and adult and community learning. It is unique because it involves learning activities where children and parents, including all those people who act in a parenting role, learn jointly and where there are clear learning outcomes for both children and parents. As a result, the challenge of improving quality is doubly important, to ensure that the learning and teaching for both adults and children are quality experiences.

Recent government policies and initiatives have encouraged the growth of family learning in a wider range of settings, for example, extended and specialist schools, libraries, children's centres, workplaces, museums and prisons. With more partners, more settings and more family learning programmes, the challenge is to ensure that provision, irrespective of setting, programme, and provider, is of a consistently high quality. While the development of family literacy, language and numeracy has done much to drive up the quality of family learning generally, there is still much to do.

The Building Blocks of Quality initiative sought, through research and consultation, to stimulate debate and create a consensus as to what constitutes good quality in family learning.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Stimulate a national discussion, drawing upon practitioner expertise.
- Identify the features of good practice irrespective of setting, programme and provider.
- Develop a model and materials flexible enough to be used by a range of users and in a wide range of settings.
- Ensure a good fit with existing quality frameworks and guidance, while placing no additional burden on practitioners in using the materials.

The model and the materials developed are called *The Building Blocks of Quality in Family Learning*.

What is included in *The Building Blocks of Quality*?

There are seven parts:

- Part 1: deals with the national context for quality improvement in family learning;
- Part 2: considers a learning entitlement for children and parents;
- Part 3: presents the five basic building blocks;
- Part 4: interprets the building blocks for your setting;
- Part 5: looks at embedding the building blocks in practice;
- Part 6: advises on where to look for support for quality improvement;
- Part 7: is a select reading list.

And there is one illustrative case study:

- Annex 1: Cheshire's Family Learning Quality kitemark'.

Who are the materials aimed at?

The materials could have application for a number of users, including:

- learners,
- teachers,
- partners,
- managers,
- planners,
- local LSCs (LLSCs),
- national agencies that support providers,
- other stakeholders with an interest in family learning

However, not all materials will be relevant to all users. The materials, therefore, have been developed in parts that can be used separately and adapted to different settings. Table 1 provides an overview of the parts different users may find most helpful and/or interesting.

Table 1

Sections	Learners	Teachers	Planners & service managers	Partners that make provision	Agencies that provide support	Other stakeholders in quality improvement
1. The national context for quality improvement in family learning			✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Learners' entitlement	✓	✓		✓		
3. The basic building blocks		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Interpreting the building blocks for your setting		✓	✓	✓		✓
5. Embedding the building blocks in practice			✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Support – where to look		✓	✓	✓		
Reading list		✓	✓	✓		

How will the materials support existing quality frameworks?

The Building Blocks of Quality materials were developed to support existing frameworks. The LSC does not require providers to take account of the materials, but rather, wishes to see the guidelines incorporated voluntarily into existing quality-improvement strategies. In particular, the LSC hopes that they will support new partners or provision in new settings. The materials are deliberately kept simple so that they do not create an additional burden on organisations, service managers or practitioners. In addition, Part 4, '*Interpreting the building blocks for your setting*' and Part 5, '*Embedding the building blocks in practice*' show how to use the materials alongside existing quality improvement strategies.

The Building Blocks of Quality can be used to:

- review your practice against commonly recognised criteria;
- underpin staff development and training;
- use with partners who are new to family learning;
- use in discussions with the ALI, OFSTED and your local LSC;
- demonstrate your commitment to good practice and continuous improvement.

How did NIACE develop *The Building Blocks of Quality*?

NIACE was guided by a Steering Group that included representatives from the LSC, DfES and ALI (Adult Learning Inspectorate). From the DfES, both the Skills for Life Strategy Unit and the Skills and Social Inclusion Unit were involved in the project. NIACE was also advised by the Family Education Service of Cheshire County Council, whose approach to developing a set of standards and kitemark was well advanced and respected by colleagues in other services.

After an initial survey of quality frameworks and guidance in specific settings, NIACE developed a consultation document entitled *The Building Blocks of Quality in Family Learning*. During October and November 2005 we held a number of regional events for practitioners to discuss good practice and comment on the materials. At the same time, we disseminated the document through e-networks, inviting responses. In all, we received over 160 individual responses, and a small number of group responses, to the document. Following an analysis of comments from the consultation, the materials were significantly revised taking into account the views of practitioners, the Steering Group and other interested stakeholders.



Part 1

Part 1

How *The Building Blocks of Quality* fits into the national quality-improvement agenda

Why does quality in family learning matter?

Learners, both adults and children, are entitled to provision that is excellent. Indeed, the challenge of transforming public services to ensure that the lives of families and children are improved, demands that services and provision are of highest quality. Funding bodies will increasingly fund only the best-quality provision available.

Who currently assures the quality of family learning?

A key challenge in family learning is that of improving the quality across all types of provision. Because a number of different approaches to family learning have developed, there is no single approach to assuring its quality.

LSC-funded provision is inspected by ALI using *The common inspection framework for education and training from 2005*. In its Annual Report 2004, ALI's Chief Inspector singled out family learning for praise, saying, 'Local education authorities could learn much by looking at the success of their own family learning programmes.'¹

Ofsted's *Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005* (2005) requires that schools have regard to parents' ability to support their children's learning.

The framework for the inspection of children's services (2005) sets out the principles to be applied by an inspectorate or commission assessing children's services, and defines the key judgements which, where appropriate and practical, inspections will seek to make. The framework ensures that all assessments consider the extent to which the service contributes to improving the well-being of children and young people.

1 ALI, 2005, *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector 2004–05*, Coventry: ALI.

The National service framework for children, young people and maternity services (2004) sets out a ten-year programme to stimulate long-term and sustained improvement in children's health and well-being.

Following consultation, the government has decided to create a single enlarged inspectorate with responsibility for the inspection of education, children's services and work-based training. This inspectorate, with its widened remit, will have responsibility for assuring the quality of family learning. One of the advantages for family learning of the widened remit is the opportunity to consider adults' and children's learning together.

The development of National Occupational Standards in Family Learning, approved by QCA in 2005, sets out the knowledge and skills expected of practitioners. The development of the standards recognise that many practitioners come into family learning from related professional fields and therefore bring a body of relevant knowledge and skills. The training model envisaged is one where practitioners can 'fill in the gaps'. The standards give training providers the framework for developing professional programmes and career progression routes. These developments will ensure that practitioners are qualified and working to commonly accepted national standards.

Quality-improvement frameworks and guidance materials are summarised in Table 2.

In addition, the new Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) has responsibility for supporting the post-16 sector in quality improvement.

Finally, some local authorities are developing their own approaches to monitoring and assuring quality. Cheshire's Family Education Service, for example, developed a 'Quality Standards and Kite Mark' for use across the county.

Table 2

Framework/guidance	What it covers
<i>Framework for the inspection of children's services</i>	Services contributing to outcomes for children
<i>National service framework for children, young people and maternity services</i>	National Health Services and local authority services for children and mothers
<i>Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005</i>	Provision in schools in England All education in the schools sector 5–16
<i>The common inspection framework for education and training from 2005</i>	Post-16 education and training All education and training post-16
<i>National occupational standards in family learning</i>	Practitioners in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland who manage or deliver family learning provision
<i>National occupational standards in working with parents</i>	Practitioners in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland who manage or deliver parenting provision
<i>The common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce</i>	Sets out the basic skills and knowledge needed by people (including volunteers) whose work brings them into regular contact with children, young people and families. It will enable multidisciplinary teams to work together more effectively in the interests of the child.

What did practitioners say about the building blocks approach?

When NIACE asked practitioners what they thought about a common set of good-practice descriptors for family learning, they responded enthusiastically. Practitioners overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of a common set of guidelines that could be applied to all family learning, irrespective of setting, programme or provider.

‘Good to see standards/measures specified making expectations clear’

(Family Learning Co-ordinator).

‘Provides a useful reference tool – especially those new to family learning, or not working in sector with existing rigorous quality systems’

(Head of Basic Skills and Foundation Programmes).

‘...they are very useful and in line with good practice identified in ALL inspections’

(Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy and Wider Family Learning Co-ordinator).

‘The building blocks that have been identified are not only useful but vital for development of the service’

(Early Years Transitional Worker).

‘The building blocks will support me in developing a quality service’

(Family Learning Development Worker).

These comments are taken from practitioners who attended the consultation events in autumn 2005.



Part

2

Part 2

An entitlement for learners

What can children and parents expect from a family learning programme?

Children and parents involved in family learning are entitled to receive a quality experience. Below and overleaf are two statements of 'Learners' entitlement' that will tell them what they can expect.

If you are a service manager you can share it with your teachers and your partners. If you are a practitioner you can display it in settings where family learning takes place and discuss it with learners. If you use it you need to be sure you can deliver against what it promises. You may need to adjust it in light of your circumstances, but bear in mind that this is what you should be aiming for.

Learners' entitlement

If you are a child or young person you can expect to:

1. learn in safe and comfortable surroundings;
2. have the skills you have gained at home and school and in your neighbourhood valued and recognised;
3. agree a plan with your teacher about what you want to learn and how you will do it;
4. say what kind of support will help you to reach your goals;
5. have a teacher who is experienced, skilled and qualified;
6. take part, along with other family members, in a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience;
7. watch your parent(s) learn and sometimes help them;
8. receive helpful feedback from your teacher on your progress in learning;
9. have your progress and achievements in learning recognised and recorded;
10. when you are nearing the end, find out what other kinds of learning you can do;
11. say what you think about the programme.

Learners' entitlement

If you are a parent you can expect to:

1. learn in safe and comfortable surroundings;
2. have the skills you have gained through parenting, at work and in the community valued and recognised;
3. agree a plan with your teacher about what you want to learn and how you will do it;
4. have a say in what your children are learning and the way they learn;
5. say what kind of support will help you and your child to reach your goals;
6. have a teacher who is experienced, skilled and qualified;
7. take part, along with other family members, in a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience;
8. receive helpful feedback from your teacher on your progress in learning;
9. have your progress and achievements in learning recognised and recorded;
10. have the opportunity to gain national qualifications if you wish;
11. get impartial information and advice about other learning opportunities in the area;
12. say what you think about the programme.

And, in addition, in family literacy, language and numeracy

For parents and carers on family literacy, language and numeracy programmes, the Skills for Life Strategy Unit sets out what learners can expect.²

What an adult learner can expect

Adult learners receiving tuition in literacy, numeracy and ESOL in the family learning context should expect:

1. good advice on how to improve their skills;
2. a report resulting from their diagnostic assessment;
3. an individual learning plan, setting out learning aims, goals and the smaller steps that the learner will take in order to achieve their goals;
4. a programme of learning relating to the national standards and matching their aims and aspirations;
5. teachers who give regular, positive and recorded feedback and who are able to use a range of teaching approaches;
6. full involvement in planning and reviewing their learning;
7. flexible forms of learning which suit their needs and preferences;
8. a range of opportunities to acquire non-externally accredited achievements as a springboard to nationally recognised qualifications;
9. opportunities to take national qualifications at the appropriate level;
10. expert and impartial advice on progression routes to other education, training or employment opportunities.

² DfES, 2005. *Raising standards: a contextual guide to support success in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision, family learning*. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/>



Part

3

Part 3

The basic building blocks of quality

What are the basic building blocks?

The building blocks describe the essential elements of good practice wherever family learning is offered, irrespective of setting, programme or provider. They are grouped in five sets of descriptors, covering:

- 1 learning and teaching;
- 2 curriculum development and planning;
- 3 working in partnership;
- 4 leadership, management and organisation;
- 5 continuous improvement.

The building blocks apply to all types of family learning. Where there are additional guidelines, standards or criteria relating to family literacy, language and numeracy, they are shown in shaded boxes. There is also space for you to make a note of any other setting-specific guidelines you already use related to each of the building blocks. Setting-specific good practice is explored further in Part 4, 'Interpreting the building blocks for your setting'.

How are the building blocks set out?

Each building block represents an area of practice, summarised by a general aim that identifies the focus of this area of activity. The aim is followed by a small number of descriptors that describe good practice in this aspect of family learning.

Detailed advice on good practice in family literacy, language and numeracy, drawn from the Skills for Life Strategy Unit and the *Skills for families* initiative, has been summarised in a separate box. This is followed by space for you to note additional good practice points relating to your setting or the programme you deliver.

These essential building blocks can be developed to fit your own setting, using the materials in Part 4. Then you can work with partners and other providers to embed the building blocks using the material in Part 5.

Learning and teaching

Aim

Good practice in learning and teaching aims to ensure that both children and parents enjoy and achieve through learning, supported by good quality teaching in a positive learning environment.

Quality in learning and teaching

Learning in which both children and parents:

- Identify their goals, which include goals for the group as well as personal goals. These goals are regularly reviewed throughout the course.
- Discover new aspects of their own, and one another's, capabilities.
- Receive feedback about their progress in learning.
- Have their progress in learning recorded and recognised in an appropriate way.³
- Have opportunities to progress to further learning.
- Have opportunities to gain accreditation.
- Have access to impartial information and advice.

Teaching that:

- Takes account of both children's and parents' learning needs.
- Is undertaken by staff who are appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced.
- Is varied and stimulating.
- Is well planned, with clear aims and objectives for both children and parents.
- Includes regular assessment using a variety of methods that are appropriate to children and parents' needs.
- Incorporates appropriate learning resources for children and parents.
- Actively promotes equality and diversity.
- Draws on good practice within schools and the post-16 sector.

4 Learning and Skills Council, 2005. *Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning*. Available at:
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/quality/performanceachievement/recognising-recording-progress-achievement-july-2005.pdf>

And, in addition, for family literacy, language and numeracy:

- Assesses children and parents in a manner appropriate to their programmes
- Assesses in ways that are fair, reliable and relevant to needs of children and parents
- Assesses children's and parents' progress against clearly defined targets, which are themselves informed by initial assessment
- Monitors, recognises and records all children's and parents' progress through non-externally accredited achievement as well as through national qualifications
- Uses high-quality resources that motivate teachers and the children and parents they teach
- Explores the creative use of ICT to support learning
- Ensures ICT is used as a tool to support children and parents in developing literacy, language and numeracy
- Uses both individualised and group learning methods, as appropriate.

Good practice in my particular setting would also include:

A large, empty yellow rectangular area that serves as a workspace for the user to describe good practice in their setting. The area is completely blank, with no text or markings.

Curriculum development and planning

Aim

Good practice in curriculum development and planning aims to ensure that all programmes are well planned and meet the needs of children and parents and their communities.

Good practice

- Programme development is underpinned by local needs analysis and is responsive to local circumstances.
- The five outcomes for children in *Every child matters* are taken into account in programme planning.
- The role of parents, carers and families in supporting the five outcomes is taken into account in programme planning.
- Children and parents are consulted and involved in decision making about the programme planning.
- Appropriate and adequate resources to support the curriculum (e.g. accommodation, learning resources and equipment, appropriately skilled, experienced and qualified staff) are identified.
- Opportunities for children and parents to progress to further learning are identified.
- A strategy to ensure support for children and parents and equality of access (e.g. study support, crèche/care facilities, disabled access and support equipment) is developed.
- Marketing strategies are tailored to the children and parents that have been targeted.
- Venues are appropriate and accessible for both children and parents.

And, in addition, for family literacy, language and numeracy:

Include elements of the Learning Journey⁴

- The national standards for literacy, numeracy and ESOL.
- The core curricula for literacy, numeracy and ESOL, with a national curriculum framework for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- An appropriate screening tool.
- A common approach to initial assessment.
- Diagnostic assessment.
- Appropriate learning materials.
- Access to national qualifications.
- Guidance on progression.

Plan to extend and widen access to FLLN

- Offer courses in accessible venues and at accessible times.
- Develop a range of publicity and promotional techniques and materials that are disseminated through the local authority.

Plan for learning

- Teachers of adults and children plan jointly and allow sufficient time.
- Set challenging and clear targets for all children and parents.
- Support children to set their own learning goals.
- Set qualification targets for individual programmes.
- Provide accreditation that is challenging and relevant.
- Be clear about the requirements of awarding bodies.
- Relate target setting to local LSC and local authority strategies for raising literacy, language and numeracy achievement for children and adults.
- Improve the availability and accessibility of tests, e.g. by means of mobile or community and school-based test centres.
- Embed literacy, language and numeracy in finance, health and other programmes.

⁴ DfES, 2005. *Raising standards: a contextual guide to support success in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision, family learning* <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/>

Good practice in my particular setting would also include:

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Leadership, management and organisation

Aim

Good practice in leadership, management and organisation aims to ensure that there are appropriate management structures and processes to support the delivery of family learning and leadership is provided to drive the action forward.

Good practice

- There is a Family Learning Policy that all staff understand.
- There is a Strategic Development Plan for family learning. This may be part of a wider plan or plans.
- There is a named individual to consult, plan, co-ordinate and report to a named senior management team or board member.
- There is clarity of roles and responsibilities for staff involved in the planning and delivery of family learning.
- There are regular opportunities for staff to meet to plan and review family learning within the organisation and with appropriate external agencies.
- There is an annual Continuous Professional Development Plan for family learning staff.
- There are regular consultation meetings with partner organisations to plan, determine direction and intent, agree roles and responsibilities.
- Benchmarks are established for the performance of children and parents.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures for family learning are addressed at the planning stage.
- Funding is used effectively and efficiently.
- There are opportunities for exercising effective leadership at all levels in the service.

And, in addition, for family literacy, language and numeracy

Strategic planning:

- Link planning to area-wide plan and to government targets.
- Ensure the strategy is underpinned by local needs analysis.
- Identify a member of the local authority/local LSC to drive the strategy.
- Consult on the strategy and disseminate it widely to ensure commitment to its delivery.
- Identify shared goals with partners.
- Develop capacity to deliver programmes by upskilling local communities and promoting diversity.

Continuing professional development (CPD):

- Raise the level of competence of all teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL by offering opportunities for CPD and access to programmes of training that lead to nationally recognised qualifications.
- Through CPD, build capacity in order to achieve a fully qualified workforce.
- Ensure teachers of children and parents have opportunities for joint CPD and teacher training.

Good practice in my particular setting would also include:

A large, empty yellow rectangular area that serves as a workspace for the user to describe good practice in their setting. It is positioned directly below the text prompt.

Working in partnership

Aim

Good practice in working in partnership aims to ensure that partners develop a shared vision of family learning and its benefits for both children and parents and work collaboratively to achieve it.

Good practice

- Family learning is seen as the shared responsibility of a number of organisations that are committed to a shared strategy.
- There is a designated individual (or more than one) to drive forward and co-ordinate the strategy.
- At both strategic and operational levels, staff groups develop strong working links with their partner organisations to deliver services.
- Staff groups are aware of *The common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce* and its relevance for multi-agency working.
- The plans of partner organisations are cross-referenced to demonstrate synergies across the partnership.
- Regular consultation meetings with partners are convened to plan and review progress
- A programme of CPD opportunities ensures that partners develop mutual understanding of their roles, skills and contributions to family learning.

And, in addition, for family literacy, language and numeracy:

- Include partners who can help you to extend and widen the range of families involved.
- Plan programmes with partners in the voluntary and community sector in a structured process which builds on good practice in one sector or with one target group, and transfers this to others.
- Ensure that where family programmes are managed in partnership with other agencies or services, for example Sure Start, that those partners fully understand the quality, monitoring and reporting obligations of the local authority; equally that the local authority respects the obligations and practices of those agencies, and that both understand each other's terminology, targets and timescales.

Good practice in my particular setting would also include:

A large, empty yellow rectangular area that occupies the majority of the page below the header. It is intended for the user to write or draw their response to the prompt above.

Continuous improvement

Aim

Good practice in continuous improvement aims to ensure that there is a culture of, and process for, improvement and striving for excellence.

Good practice

- Data on children and parents are collected, analysed and used to monitor and improve performance.
- Appropriate quality-assurance and self-assessment systems are in place.
- Development plans are in place to show evidence of intention to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses identified in self-assessment.
- Equality and diversity are actively promoted and discrimination eliminated.
- Procedures are in place for dealing effectively with complaints and appeals.
- Performance management, staff appraisal and review are used to inform both the professional development of the staff and the quality of the learning experience for children and parents.
- All providers are aware of and comply with relevant legislation.
- Systems are in place to monitor outcomes and targets achieved against local and national benchmarks.

And, in addition, for family literacy, language and numeracy:

- Prepare and undertake an annual self-assessment that informs plans to address weaknesses and secure continuous improvement.
- Ensure that all providers, family literacy, language and numeracy managers, key pre- and post-16 managers and advisers, schools and teachers are aware of external requirements and their implications.
- Plan the programmes in such a way as to meet the requirements of both ALI and Ofsted (or the successor joint inspectorate).
- Ensure that family literacy, language and numeracy quality-assurance systems incorporate the needs of schools, the local authority and post-16 providers.

Good practice in my particular setting would also include:

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Part
4

Part 4

Interpreting the building blocks for your setting

What do we mean by ‘setting’ and why is it relevant?

Recent government policies and initiatives have encouraged the growth of family learning in a wide range of settings, for example, extended and specialist schools, libraries, children’s centres, workplaces, museums and prisons – settings where parents and children can experience the pleasure and satisfaction of learning together.

In many of these settings, family learning provision is just one part of the organisation’s broader offer of services. Provision in prisons, extended schools, children’s centres and libraries, for example, adds value to the core activities in these settings. From the point of view of family learning, these settings offer valuable opportunities for reaching and engaging with particular groups of families who would otherwise be harder to reach.

Each of these settings offers a combination of challenges and opportunities in relation to family learning. For example, family learning provision sited in museums offers families exciting opportunities to handle unusual artefacts, while provision sited in primary schools offers unique access to parents at the school gate.

In addition, practice in some family learning programmes, particularly family literacy, language and numeracy, is better developed than in others. Guidelines for family literacy, language and numeracy produced through the Skills for Life Strategy Unit and the *Skills for families* programme must be taken into account in using the building blocks.

The combination of programme, organisational mission, challenges and opportunities makes up what we are calling the ‘setting-specific’ features of family learning provision. This section helps you to explore the specific nature of your setting and the programmes you deliver. Once you have done so, you can customise the five basic building blocks so that they are useful in your setting and for the programme(s) you offer.

The way you use the activities will also depend to some extent on your role.

If you are:	Use the activities in this section to:
A teacher, group worker or facilitator	Interpret the five building blocks for the setting you work in, for the programme you deliver and for children and parents
A family learning Team Leader	Agree with your team what the five building blocks mean in the team's setting(s) and for its programme(s)
A manager of a family learning service	Enable providers from different sectors, e.g. colleges, schools, children's centres, to explain to each other what the five building blocks will mean for their sectors
Working in an organisation in partnership with a family learning service	Explore what the five building blocks will mean in the context of your organisation
Working in an organisation thinking of offering family learning	Explore what the five building blocks and good practice in family learning provision would mean for your organisation

What kind of setting are you working in?

Family learning is now offered in a number of settings and by a number of providers.



Here are some of the settings in which you might be delivering family learning. Identify the one that most matches yours, or describe your setting.

Settings

- An organisation in the voluntary and community sector
- A specialist, extended or other type of school
- A Sure Start Local Programme or a Children's Centre
- A library
- A secure establishment or an organisation working with offenders
- A museum or gallery
- A workplace
- A Health Centre
- A Family Centre
- Others:



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

What is the overall purpose or 'mission' of your organisation?

Where family learning is not the sole business of the organisation, as it is, for example, in a family learning service, the provision will be making a contribution to a broad purpose or mission.

For example, in a public library, the purpose is:

To provide an inclusive library service which provides individuals and communities the opportunity to enhance their lives by providing access to information and learning, advice and guidance.

Describe the broad purpose or mission of your organisation



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

How does offering family learning help you in achieving your main aim?

Your organisation will be offering family learning because it helps to achieve your mission or to meet your targets in relation to children, parents, families and the community.

There is evidence of family learning helping to meet targets across a wide range of policy areas, including, for example:

- raising levels of achievement in school;
- improving levels of pupil attendance at school;
- tackling the number of adults without literacy, language and numeracy;
- tackling disadvantage in deprived neighbourhoods.

For example:

Family learning in our public libraries provides local families with the opportunity to access learning materials and library-based activities in a community setting and to become regular library users. Parents/carers have access to staff that can signpost adults to appropriate further learning opportunities.



Describe how offering family learning in your setting contributes to the achievement of your organisation's purpose and helps it to meet its targets



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

What, if any, are the special opportunities/resources for family learning that are available in your particular setting?

Every setting offers a unique set of opportunities in relation to family learning.

For example, in a public library:

The libraries in our service provide access to a wide range of books and other learning materials designed to stimulate the imagination and celebrate the pleasure of reading and learning. All our libraries provide access to ICT and support from qualified staff. Our libraries are accessible, community venues that are open to everyone.



Describe the unique opportunities and resources your setting offers in engaging families in learning



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

What, if any, are the special constraints/challenges for family learning that are imposed by your particular setting?

Most settings also present some particular challenges or constraints that you will need to take into consideration.

For example, in a public library:

Some of the smaller libraries in our service are limited in terms of the space we can provide for families and accessibility for buggies, baby-changing rooms, for example. A minority of library users and staff are uncomfortable with some of the noisier and messier family learning activities that take place.



Describe any challenges or constraints that you will encounter in making provision in your setting



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

What is good practice for your organisation or for your programme?

In some settings and for some programmes there will be recognised good-practice guidelines or quality frameworks that guide your practice. The criteria or standards set out in these documents need to be taken into account in using the five building blocks.

For example, in a public library:

As a service we are guided by Inspiring Learning for All, a quality framework for the Museums, Libraries and Archives sector. We also have a strategic plan for the library service at local authority level. From 2001, we have had to work towards the national Public Library Standards (which were subsequently revised) that aimed to ensure our service was truly efficient and included opening hours and increase in user satisfaction. Public Library Impact Measures sit alongside standards and include improving the quality of life for children, young people and families.



What, if any, setting- or programme-specific guidelines, quality standards or frameworks do you need to take into account?



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

How will you interpret, or even add to, the descriptors in the five building blocks?

Looking back over the responses you've made in the preceding activities, you may need to interpret some of the descriptors in the light of your particular setting. You may also want to **add** descriptors that are important in your setting or for the programme you are delivering.



In Part 3 there is a blank box at the end of each of the five building blocks. You can use this space to interpret or add to the descriptors for your setting or programme. Additional guidance for good practice in family literacy, language and numeracy has been summarised after each of the five building blocks.

For example, in a public library:

Building block	In a public library we would add ...
Teaching and learning	Generic learning outcomes – <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> Measurement and evaluation - <i>Public Library Impact Measures</i>

Do you need to interpret the language of the five building blocks for your setting?

Most settings have their own professional language. For example, someone who teaches will be known as a 'teacher' in schools and adult learning, but may be a 'facilitator' or 'groupworker' in a community centre. Interpreting the building block descriptors into the language used in your setting can help you to relate family learning to your organisation's other activities and its overall culture.



Look through the building blocks in Part 3 again. Some of the key words used are shown in the table below. Wherever you encounter a word or phrase that is not routinely used in your setting, add it to the list. Make a note of the word or phrase you would use in your setting and/or programme.

When the building blocks refer to	We would use the word/phrase
teacher	e.g. facilitator
learner	
programme	
outcomes	
individual learning plan	
assessment	
feedback	
progression	
accreditation	
others:	



Reminder: Use this information in interpreting the five building blocks.

Where next?

The next part, 'Embedding the building blocks in practice', will show you how you can use the building blocks in your practice, both as an individual and collaboratively, to improve provision for families.



Part

5

Part 5

Embedding the building blocks in practice

This section suggests ways of incorporating the building blocks into your practice. The way you use them will depend on your role and the degree to which your local and regional areas have a strategic approach to quality improvement.

If you are a practitioner delivering family learning

At the individual level you can use the building blocks in:

- planning and evaluating sessions;
- reviewing practice;
- promoting quality with learners and colleagues;
- identifying your training needs.

If you manage a Family Learning Service

At service level you can use the building blocks to:

- Ensure your providers have a common view of good practice.
- Drive up the quality of wider family learning and other programmes where, unlike family literacy, language and numeracy, no contextual guide to raising standards exists.
- Develop a staff development programme.
- Talk to new or potential partners who may not have wide experience in making family learning provision.
- Support a local or regional network in developing a strategic approach to quality.
- Support self-assessment.
- Discuss, plan, monitor progress with your LSC.

If you belong to a local or regional network

Local family learning networks are well developed in most areas now. The National Family Learning Network supports local networks through specially developed materials and through their website. Local networks are a powerful means of sharing good practice and promoting quality.

Local networks can help to embed the building blocks in their existing activities by:

- promoting the building blocks alongside other quality-improvement initiatives;
- gaining the commitment of partners to use the building blocks;
- sharing them with new and potential partners who may be joining the network;
- supporting those partners who would like helping using the building blocks;
- incorporating the building blocks into staff development activities;
- using the building blocks in discussions with LLSCs.

Regional family learning networks are increasingly active and will have an important role as LSC planning and funding activity is regionalised. These networks provide another important means of improving the quality of provision. The joint LSC/DfES programme *Skills for Families* (2003–2005) and achievements in family literacy, language and numeracy did much to strengthen regional networks and promote quality in family learning generally.

Support for regional networks is also available from the National Family Learning Network through its website, materials and officer support.

Regional networks can embed the building blocks into practice by:

- using them with regional LSC officers in planning, monitoring and reviewing provision;
- incorporating them into regional quality improvement strategies.

If you have expertise to share with other providers

At the national level, the National Family Learning Network is developing an 'Expertise Exchange', an on-line reference tool for providers looking for advice and support on any aspect of good practice. The Exchange will use the building blocks as the basis for identifying good practice that providers and individuals wish to locate or share.

If you want to develop the building blocks into a set of standards and a kitemark

The five building blocks, with their descriptors, in *The Building Blocks of Good Practice in Family Learning* drew substantially on the work of Cheshire's Family Education Service, where providers across the county agreed a set of standards and a process for awarding a kitemark to assure the quality of provision across the county.

The process of developing standards and a kitemark through Cheshire's Family Learning Reference Group included the following steps:

- Develop policy and strategy with partners on the Family Learning Reference Group.
- Agree key areas for quality provision with partners.
- Agree standards and criteria for quality delivery against the key areas.
- Work with a range of key providers – schools, colleges, Sure Starts and non-statutory organisations – to pilot the portfolio building process against the standards.
- Develop an evidence trail with explicit suggestions of evidence for key providers.
- Develop material and launch kitemark.

Cheshire's good practice in the development of local standards and a kitemark is described in the case study in Annex 1.

Part 6 lists a number of agencies, organisations and websites that provide you with valuable support in improving the quality of family learning.



Part
6

Part 6

Where to go for further help

All weblinks accessed 23 February 2006

Regional

Regional Children's Officers (based at Government Offices in the regions)

Government Office for the East Midlands	http://www.goem.gov.uk/
Government Office for the East of England	http://www.go-east.gov.uk/
Government Office for London	http://www.gos.gov.uk/gol/
Government Office for the North East	http://www.go-ne.gov.uk/
Government Office for the North West	http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/
Government Office for the South East	http://www.go-se.gov.uk/
Government Office for the South West	http://www.gosw.gov.uk/
Government Office for the West Midlands	http://www.go-wm.gov.uk/
Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber	http://www.goyh.gov.uk/

Regional and local LSC offices

For details see www.lsc.gov.uk

National

Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)	http://www.ali.gov.uk/
Campaign for Learning	http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/
Capacity	http://www.capacity.uk.net/
ContinYou	http://www.continyou.org.uk/
Excalibur	http://www.ali.gov.uk/Quality+improvement/Excalibur/

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	http://www.lsc.gov.uk
Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)	http://www.lstda.org.uk/
will evolve into the Learning and Skills Network (LSN)	http://www.lstda.org.uk/lsn/
and the Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) on April 1 2006.	
Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)	http://www.qia.org.uk/
National Family Learning Network (NFLN)	http://www.lluk.org.uk/
	http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/family-learningnetwork/index.asp
National Remodelling Team (NRT)	http://www.remodelling.org/
Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU)	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/
	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/
Skills for Life Strategy Unit (SFLSU)	http://www.continyou.org.uk/content.php?CategoryID=270
The Extended Schools Support Service (TESSS)	http://www.mla.gov.uk
The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)	http://www.niace.org.uk/
The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)	http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/
Specialist Schools and Academies Trust	http://www.surestart.gov.uk/
Sure Start	



Part
7

Part 7

Reading list

All weblinks accessed 23 February 2006

Quality frameworks

- Adult Learning Inspectorate and Ofsted, 2005. *The common inspection framework for education and training from 2005*. Available at: <http://docs.ali.gov.uk/publications/CIFwebversion.pdf>
- Cheshire County Council, 2004. *Family learning. Quality standards kitemark. Helping families reach for the sky*. Chester: Cheshire County Council.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Strengthening family literacy, language and numeracy: Planning for quality*. Nottingham: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Raising standards: A contextual guide to support success in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision*. Available at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/>
- Ofsted, 2000. *Family learning: A survey of good practice*. London: HMSO.
- Ofsted, 2005. *Every child matters. Framework for the inspection of children's services*. Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3765&type=pdf>
- Ofsted, 2005. *Every child matters. Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005*. Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3861&type=pdf>
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2003. *Inspiring learning for all*. Available at: <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/utilities/references/default.aspx> or <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/default.aspx?flash=true>

Wider reading

Literacy, language and numeracy

Department for Education and Employment, 2001. *Skills for Life. The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy*. Nottingham: DfEE Publications. Available at:

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/ABS_Strategy_Doc_Final.pdf

Department for Education and Employment, 2003. *Skills for Life. The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy. Focus on delivery to 2007*. Nottingham: DfEE Publications. Available at: **<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/SfL%20Document.pdf>**

Department for Education and Skills, 2004. *Delivering Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy a guide for policy makers*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work*. Cm 6483. Available at: **<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon/>**

Family learning

Banbury, M., 2005. *Special relationships: how families learn together*. Leicester: NIACE.

Department for Education and Skills, 2004. *Skills for Families. Strengthening family literacy, language and numeracy: Extending the reach and scope of programmes*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Strengthening family literacy, language and numeracy: Good practice guidance for planning and delivering joint sessions*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Skills for life. Family literacy, language and numeracy a guide for extended schools*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy a guide for Children's Centres*. Nottingham: DfES.

Lochrie, M., 2004. *Family Learning: building all our futures*. Leicester: NIACE.

Children, young people and families

Department for Education and Skills, 2003. *Every Child Matters*. Cm 5860. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills, 2003. *Excellence and enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools*. Available at:

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63553/pns_excell_enjoy037703v2.pdf

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Extended Schools: Access to opportunities and services for all*. Available at: **http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/8509/Extended-schools%20prospectus.pdf**

Department of Health, 2004. *Choosing Health. Making healthy choices easier*. Cm 6374. Available at: **<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/07/92/04120792.pdf>**

Department of Health, 2005. *National Healthy School Status. A Guide for Schools*. London: Department of Health. Available at:

http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/PDF/NHSS_A_Guide_for_Schools_10_05.pdf

Sure Start, 2003. *Birth to three matters. An introduction to the framework*. Available at:

http://www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0000285.pdf

Progression

Greenwood, M. & P. Wilson, 2004. *Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Evaluation report on the pilot projects. April 2003 to March 2004*. Leicester: NIACE.

Learning and Skills Council, 2005. *Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning*. Available at:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/quality/performanceachievement/recognising-recording-progress-achievement-july-2005.pdf>

Workforce development

Lifelong Learning UK, 2005. *Family Learning. National Occupational Standards*. Available at:

http://www.lluk.org.uk/standards/fl_standards.html

Lifelong Learning UK, 2005. *Work with Parents. National Occupational Standards*. Available at:

http://www.lluk.org.uk/standards/wwp_standards.html

Equality and diversity

Learning and Skills Council, 2004. *Equality and Diversity Strategy 2004/7*. Available at:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/e7bhwkpyviscuygafbevfg6246fgusatcjjy5bcnzzbrpwszqrelgoqglh6boshuubw42w4s4exva/FinalEqualityStrategy.pdf>

Annex

The Cheshire Family Learning Quality Kitemark⁵

What is the Kitemark?

The Cheshire Kitemark is a set of professional standards against which the quality of family learning provision is measured. It will help Cheshire as a rural local authority to monitor the four key aims outlined in the *Cheshire policy, strategy and standards*. These four aims meet the seven key questions outlined in the Common Inspection Framework.

The four key aims

- Appropriate management structures and processes to support the delivery of high quality family learning programmes.
- A planned programme with range and breadth available for all families.
- Good-quality teaching for both adults and children, promoting learning in a positive environment.
- Partners working together with a shared vision for family learning.

These have been achieved by:

- using an evidence-based portfolio-building approach;
- working with regional partner organizations;
- providing each key provider with its own set of guidance notes;
- thoroughly trialling the portfolio-building process;
- offering continuing support.

Cheshire Family Learning hopes that the FLIGHT symbol will be recognised by the people of Cheshire and that it will assure them that they will receive quality family learning wherever they see it displayed.

5 www.isc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/SkillsForFamilies/CaseStudies/quality-kite-mark.htm

Launch of Cheshire Quality Kitemark for Family Learning 2004

Cheshire County Council launched its Quality Kitemark for Family Learning on 13 October 2004, midway through Family Learning week:

- 25 schools, two colleges of FE and one children's centre have signed up;
- ten schools are putting their portfolio of evidence together with support from the Cheshire Family Learning team.

How will the Kitemarking process work in practice?

- There are five FE colleges, over 100 schools, five local Sure Starts and a number of voluntary and community sector providers involved in the partnership.
- Each organisation must make a commitment to adopt the *Cheshire policy, strategy and standards*.
- Providers can request a visit from the Cheshire Family Learning team to help them to gauge how far the standards have been met.
- Teaching and learning observations for family learning will be done for providers without their own monitoring system in place.
- Partnership approach to family learning across providers strategically led by Family Learning Reference Group.
- *Policy, strategy and standards* to underpin the kitemarking process.
- Pilot phase of testing against the standards with a range of providers.
- Professionally produced guidance folder.
- High-profile launch.
- Dedicated family learning team with appropriate skills to support partners in developing the portfolio of evidence.

Future developments and mainstreaming of good family learning

Several local information seminars will be organised across the county through the Family Learning and Parenting Networks to maintain interest in the kitemarking process.

In addition, the Cheshire Family Learning team has a system of 'Family learning consultation visits', which will help to steer providers towards the benefits of the Quality Kitemark.

Project name: Cheshire Family Learning: Associate Partners Skills for Families
Contact name: Pauline Kershaw
Contact details: 01244 603078 pauline.kershaw@cheshire.gov.uk

The building blocks of quality in family learning

Recent government policies and initiatives have encouraged the growth of family learning in a wide range of settings, for example, extended and specialist schools, libraries, children's centres, workplaces, museums and prisons. With more partners, more settings and more family learning programmes, the challenge is to ensure that provision, irrespective of setting, programme, and provider, is of a consistently high quality.

The building blocks of quality in family learning is a set of quality descriptors, developed with the support of experienced practitioners and managers, setting out the essential features of excellent provision wherever it is offered. The quality descriptors are set out in terms of five basic 'building blocks', covering teaching and learning, curriculum development, management, partnership and continuous improvement.

These materials, which are intended to support the quality frameworks that organisations are already using, can be adapted to a range of settings and can be developed further by partners working collaboratively.

The building blocks of quality in family learning will be useful for family learning managers and practitioners, staff in Children's Centres and Extended Schools, other organisations interested in offering family learning, LSC and inspectorate staff and other individuals supporting quality improvement in family learning.

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