

QUALITY MATTERS : THINK FAMILY



NOTES FROM THE LAUNCH OF QUALITY MATTERS : THINK FAMILY 16TH OCTOBER 2007 LONDON

At the launch of **Quality Matters : think family**, David Lammy, Minister for Skills said:

“We have five key areas of work: Education, Employment, Strong Communities, Culture of aspiration and Parenting. Family Learning cuts across and contributes to all five key areas of work.”

We are delighted to have such high level support and recognition for the strategic importance of our work.

In his speech the Minister stated:

“Every Child Matters and so does every parent. Family Learning contributes to the skills agendas and social justice agenda. Families increasing their skills also has a key effect on the whole family.

Family Learning is a key component to multi agency working. With the launch of Sure Start and Children’s Centres with a focus on children, there has been a real development of families’ skills through adult learning and progression into employment.

‘THIS GUIDE IS A SINGLE REFERENCE POINT TO SUPPORT ALL FAMILIES TO RECEIVE A GOOD QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE’

This Quality guide helps to bring together the agendas with a focus on quality.”

Key points raised from the expert seminar:

- The impact of a learning culture in a family on children’s achievement.
- The need for school settings to be welcoming for parents.
- CPD and initial teacher training needs to include elements on involving and engaging parents.
- The need for adults and children’s agendas to be joined-up, with agencies and professionals working together.
- The need to ensure sufficient capacity at Local Authority level for multi agency working.
- Local authorities are in a state of flux. This mitigates against a joined up strategic approach.
- Front line staff are often working well together. This needs to be supported at all levels to ensure quality.



David Lammy, Minister for Skills and Penny Lamb, Development Officer, Family Learning, NIACE.

Podcast from the launch available at

www.niace.org.uk/qualitymatters

Includes interviews with

- Mary Crowley
Chief Executive,
Parenting UK
- Naomi Eisenstadt
Director: Social Exclusion
Task Force,
Cabinet Office
- Penny Lamb
Development Officer,
NIACE

Quality Matters: think family is available to download or purchase from our website.

THE BACKGROUND TO QUALITY MATTERS

‘Quality Matters : Think Family’ was developed in collaboration with experts from across the family learning and working with parents sectors to link and make sense of the quality agenda in multi-agency settings. It provides a single reference point to support all families to receive a good quality learning experience at every family learning and parenting skills session, irrespective of the location or practitioner group. It links all the frameworks and guidelines to a basic set of building blocks of quality that can be used in any setting.

At the launch Penny Lamb explained that there was a need to bring together the quality agendas from

across the sectors involved in work with families, parenting skills programmes and family learning.

The publication drew together 28 frameworks and guidance documents for different sectors around work with parents and families. It involved a huge task of mapping all the



Pauline Kershaw and Clare Meade

frameworks and documents and identifying the key elements to ensure quality learning session for parents and families. This was made all the more complicated by the fact that agencies often use very different terminology and talk different languages.

It involved testing the material in two case studies at Cheshire County Council and Essex County Council.

Penny thanked the Advisory Group for their support and especially John Gibson from DIUS in championing funding for the publication.

PILOTING THE MATERIAL

Co-author, Pauline Kershaw talked about what the pilot meant for Cheshire County Council.

“It has made a real difference on the ground. The piloting of the material has driven the work forward, particularly through working closely with the parenting commissioner and a range of professionals in health, schools, teachers, social care and other delivery partners. It has helped practitioners identify good practice and highlight areas for improvement. It has identified areas for training and has fed into the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme. On a strategic level it has fed in to three key strategies; the

“ ‘Quality Matters : Think Family’ has struck just the right chord at just the right time”

Literacy Language and Numeracy (LLN) Strategy, the Children and Young People’s (CYP) Strategy and The Parenting Strategy. It has been clearly recognised that it sits both

within adult and children and young peoples’ services.”

“The Parenting and Family Learning

strategy is to be published very shortly and will be launched at the regional launch of the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP). The ‘Quality Matters: Think Family’ guide has fed into and underpins the strategy.”

“Having a National lead from NIACE on the work of quality in work with

parents and family learning has been very helpful in drawing together the agendas. The Local Authority discussion document on the links between family learning and parenting skills¹ and ‘Quality Matters: Think Family’ has struck just the right chord at the right time.”

Chris Kirk from Essex County Council explained that Essex has already developed a Family Learning and Parenting strategic group across the directorates. It will report to the Children & Young Peoples’ board and this will further join up the work at a strategic level.

“The piloting of the self-assessment tool was very helpful and will be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement.”

¹ Available to download at <http://www.niace.org.uk/research/family/family-learning-parenting-progs.pdf>

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Those present joined together for a round table discussion on what needed to happen next to support multi agency working.

- One of the biggest challenges is to make sure strategic working is supported in all Local Authorities. Adult learning is incredibly important in developing social capital.
- Adult services need to “Think Parents”: to think about adults who are in a parenting role - whatever their needs.
- Adult learning needs to be considered in its broadest context.
- Extended services need to draw on good adult learning practices to inform quality.
- Structures can mitigate against a joined up approach.
- Need to realise that both the needs of families and targets can be met more easily by different professionals working together. For this to happen, professionals need to understand each other and learn to speak the same language.
- Need to recognise and identify funding which enables both a universal and targeted approach.
- It isn’t easy to develop a strategic approach. It needs a catalyst or person driving it forward, **and** support from the infrastructure.
- There is a need for a positive approach to parents/carers starting from where they are, not a deficit model.
- We can learn from the private sector - using market segmentation and marketing in creative ways, to attract those most difficult to reach.
- As one family learning learner said, Family Learning in the school was like dropping a pebble into a pond - the ripples spread through the community.
- There is no one answer - all the people and approaches to work with families/parents contribute to the bigger picture.
- Agencies need to come together to plan, and work together. The guide gives a vehicle to bring multi-agency teams together, and to recognise the contribution each partner brings.
- Regional FLLN advisors will have a greater focus of strategic working and could contribute to the quality agenda.



Present at the launch were:

Karen Burnett, Campaign for Learning, Finance Executive
 Julliette Collier, Campaign for Learning, Head of Family Learning
 Carsue Curniffe, Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, Policy Officer
 Naomi Eisenstadt, Cabinet Office, Director: Social Exclusion Task Force
 Karen Fairfax-Chomeley, NIACE, Project Officer
 Trisha Hartley, Campaign for Learning, Joint Chief Executive
 Natasha Innocent Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Senior Policy Adviser Learning
 Chris Kirk, Essex County Council, Family Learning Manager

Pauline Kershaw, Cheshire County Council, Family Learning & Parenting Strategy Manager
 Tim Mann, Cheshire County Council, County Manager Community Wellbeing
 Brenda Neadley, Essex County Council, Family Learning Adviser for Extended Schools
 Anne Page, Family & Parenting Institute, Policy Manager
 Mandy Thomas, NIACE, Projects and Information Manager
 Penny Lamb, NIACE, Development Officer
 Tricia Odell, Quality Improvement Agency, Programme Development Adviser for Lifelong Learning (Strategic Reform and Development)

