



Home Office PSA Target

'Objective V: Citizens, communities and the voluntary sector are more fully engaged in tackling social problems and there is more equality of opportunity and respect for people of all races and religions.'

6. Increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion.

7. Reduce race inequalities and build community cohesion.

Evidence from research

Positive consequences on community life were rated highly by approximately 80 per cent of respondents to a postal learners' survey complemented by interviews and focus groups involved in a family learning project (mostly females aged 26–40).

Andover Community Partnership, 2003. *Andover Family Learning Project – final evaluation report*. Andover: Andover Community Partnership

Community-based case studies revealed that family learning stimulated the development of relationships, friendships and communities. Social contact was made amongst families with people from different backgrounds, different ethnic groups and ages.

Eldred, J. & J. Haggart, 2002. *The Generation Game*. Leicester: NIACE.

Evidence from inspection

Family learning delivered by the Partnership Education Service in Rochdale was judged outstanding by Adult Learning Inspectorate inspectors in 2005. During 2003–04 there were approximately 400 enrolments and at the time of inspection 65 per cent of the learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Inspectors noted that the teaching was very good and teachers were able to integrate learners from a wide variety of backgrounds. Furthermore, the materials used in family learning lessons value this multiplicity of backgrounds.

ALI, 2005. *Rochdale Work-Based and Community Learning Service. Inspection Report*. Available at: <http://docs.ali.gov.uk/Inspreps/26/6570DET.PDF> (accessed 6 April 2006)



Evidence from practitioners

Family learning positively affects communities in a number of ways. It helps to improve relationships between family and community members, which impacts upon people's perception of their community. Tension and conflict within communities reduces as adults are better able to communicate with one another:

'Better communication lessens tension and misunderstanding.'
(Senior Policy Manager, Widening Adult Participation)

Similarly, greater understanding of families from different ethnic groups and social backgrounds can also help foster better community relations

'Celebrates community diversity.'
(Head of Children and Family Education Service)

Accessing family learning through museums, libraries and archives, for example, can contribute to the development of community cohesion and sense of place. Similarly, family learning in extended schools helps to break down the barriers between home and school and foster community cohesion. As adults develop confidence and other skills in family learning sessions, the simple act of families meeting other families is important in promoting cohesion:

'Groups become established within the groups, confidence to participate in community activity.'
(Curriculum Manager, Community Learning)

What it looks like in practice

A collection of six modular programmes, *Being Together*, *Being Ourselves*, linked to the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, have been developed for Warwickshire County Council's Adult and Community Learning Service. The programme is designed to explore values and issues in the lives of individuals, families and communities, with themes including 'Being an Active Citizen', 'Being Confident', 'Being Together', 'Being Ourselves', 'Being Healthy' and 'Being Safe'. For example, 'Being an Active Citizen' considers how to be part of positive, supportive communities. Each module is an accredited 10-hour unit of learning by the Open College Network (OCN).

Most of the pilots were undertaken in school settings with a number in community venues. The family learning team worked closely with a number of partners to facilitate the programmes, including community health teams, voluntary and community organisations, local councillors, volunteer bureaux, leisure services and the careers service. Participants have included those in priority target areas across Warwickshire, including a small number of hard-to-reach learners. It is hoped that the pilot will be extended to black and minority ethnic communities, amongst other groups.

Source: with thanks to Debbie McLeod, Family Learning Curriculum Co-ordinator, Warwickshire County Council.

