

NIACE Research and Development



Key Findings



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Family Learning Funding: A Scoping Study

Abstract

NIACE, working with *Capacity*¹ explored the funding environment for family learning. They considered how it impacts on local delivery and how different policy initiatives interact at local level and contribute to shaping family learning.

¹ A Research consultancy headed by Margaret Lochrie

Research methodology:

- ❖ A number of approaches were used to try to capture the funding environment and highlight the key issues. These included desk research, focus groups, case studies and telephone and face-to-face interviews. A wide range of policy, planning and guidance documents were examined along with evaluations and research reviews relating to the benefits of family learning.
- ❖ Three focus groups were convened, one for key personnel at a national strategic level, the other for local family learning managers from local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. The representatives were chosen to reflect geographical spread, shire, metropolitan and unitary local authorities, and level of family learning capacity. All attendees were asked to supply information relating to funding their own organisations on a pro-forma. The third meeting was with family learning managers from six local education authorities combined for the purposes of one *Skills for Families* project.
- ❖ Four authorities were profiled in more detail. Telephone and face-to-face interviews were also conducted with individuals having specialist or distinctive knowledge and/or information.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

The policy initiatives and funding sources underpinning family learning activity are complex:

- ❖ Family learning is relevant to a number of policy initiatives; however, it is not always described as such. It also forms an integral thread of other classifications such as Adult and Community Learning, regeneration, or literacy, language and numeracy.

This creates a very diverse landscape of policy perspectives, delivery models and funding sources.

- ❖ More than thirty funding sources were identified, which could be used to support family learning or fund family support.
- ❖ The main responsibility within the post-16 learning and skills sector for funding family learning rests with the Learning and Skills Council through its Family Programmes.
- ❖ The main types of funding come from the Department for Education and Skills through the LSC Family Programmes – Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) and Wider Family Learning (WFL), Skills for Families and Step into Learning; Sure Start Unit; Parenting Fund; and monies in strands from other departments, for example, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), New Deal for Communities (NDC) and European Social Fund (ESF); the Home Office, monies from the National Lottery amongst others.

There was a consensus amongst practitioners and key personnel that more funding was needed, particularly to develop infrastructure. Family learning frequently engages adults and children and is expensive to provide. Extensive development work is required to successfully engage with groups in our communities who have a negative perception of education and learning.

The question of what an adequate level of funding might be was difficult to determine. It was felt that this would hinge on a consensus about a wider strategic vision for family learning, clearer definition of its purpose and the potential for family learning to be offered as a universal, mainstream service.

Recommendations

- ❖ The DfES and the LSC should consider the scope for simplifying the funding environment and reducing the number of separate funding streams for family learning.
- ❖ Consideration given to the feasibility of a single 'pot' for family learning.
- ❖ Development of an overall vision and strategy for family learning.
- ❖ Consultation on the best means of achieving the strategic co-ordination of family learning.

Output

- ❖ Haggart, J., Lochrie, M. and Spacey, R. (2005) *Family Learning Funding: A Scoping Study*. A report for the DfES, NIACE: Leicester. Unpublished.

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