

NIACE Development and Research



Key Findings



An Evaluation of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders:
A Regional Pilot Project Managed by Read On Write Away!

Abstract

The report provides an overview of some of the challenges encountered by providers and practitioners of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) for Offenders, encountered during the development and delivery of this pilot programme. It makes recommendations to improve the quality of future FLLN activity.

The aims of the project included a reduction in re-offending; breaking inter-generational cycles of underachievement; and improving the physical and mental health of offenders and their families – all through Family Learning. The evaluation findings suggest that these aims are achievable but require evidence drawn from longitudinal tracking of offenders and their families.

The project objectives were in most cases met. The evaluation findings revealed quite clearly that the overwhelming effect of the FLLN sessions and tasters was a strengthening of family relationships. The pilot project provided offenders with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds, and parents were encouraged to support their children's learning development.

Research methodology:

Findings were based on information gathered through consultation with partners and providers, and with feedback from families involved in the pilot. These included a project review, telephone interviews, feedback and evaluation forms and documentation provided by the pilot project managers. The evaluation process commenced in March 2006 and was completed by September 2006.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ The effect of the FLLN sessions and tasters, according to partners, was a strengthening of family relationships. It is hoped that this may, in turn, reduce re-offending rates. The pilot project provided offenders with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds. Parents were encouraged to support their children's learning development, which may break intergenerational cycles of underachievement.

- ❖ The pilot project activities included elements of literacy, language and numeracy and most of the partners interviewed felt that an improvement in these skills was achievable. However, without accurate measurement in the development of such skills before, during and after the pilot project, it was difficult to state that this objective had been met
- ❖ The pilot project successfully engaged a large number of offenders in Family Learning but was less successful in terms of the number of families involved. However, it would be fair to state that the project has made a good start in making contacts with appropriate partners in prisons and the community, in raising awareness of the value of Family Learning and generating willingness amongst staff involved. These foundations can be built on in the future
- ❖ ROWA! assembled a very large number of partners for involvement in the project and it would appear that in the majority of cases, these partnerships worked together successfully. The data suggested that the partnerships with the Probation Service were the weakest and this appeared to negatively impact on the community aspects of the pilot project
- ❖ The evaluation has revealed that the impacts on offenders and their families were often what are considered 'softer outcomes' such as improvements in relationships, a desire to engage in further learning and raised self-esteem. However, these softer outcomes often permit the development of harder outcomes such as improvements in literacy, language and numeracy. A more research-focussed study concentrating on improvements in literacy, language and numeracy in any future offender projects would add to the body of evidence in relation to the positive impacts upon offenders and their families offered by Family Learning.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made in relation to the following:

- ❖ Project Planning, Promotion and Recruitment
- ❖ Pilot Programme Content and Delivery Models
- ❖ Further Research and Evaluation

(please see the report for further details).

Output

- ❖ NIACE, 2006. *Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders: A Regional Pilot Project Managed by Read On Write Away!* Evaluation Report, Leicester: NIACE. Unpublished.

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