

## The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage programme on three very vulnerable learners

### Key messages:

1. The confidence gained through the programme enabled one learner to start to tackle the domestic violence she was experiencing;
2. The support and relationships developed by the group were important in enhancing learner confidence;
3. One mother said that she got to know and understand her child better.

The profile of learners on these courses included 2 children who were 'looked after' children. Their grandparents had guardianship as both of the birth mothers were drug users, one was an offender and the other had mental health problems. The two families were supported by the nurseries as part of the 'families in need of additional support or at risk' targeting.

There were many examples of successes to share across the courses. The learning journeys and the enjoyment and achievement for some of the mothers and fathers was remarkable:

### Learner 1

"This mum who for the first few weeks couldn't even face opening the door to the classroom, and managed to escape before we could get to the door, is our alliteration and rhyming queen. Both her and her daughter struggled to face new situations and you could see them both physically shaking when they came into the group. Mum is now talking about feeling confident enough to return to further learning and her little girl ran into the class last week and gave me a big hug." (Family Learning tutor)

### Learner 2

This mother was approached to attend the course after negotiating a parenting support agreement with the nursery. Following concerns and then disclosure about domestic violence, she was offered additional family support. After spending some individual coffee and chat time with the family learning tutor she reluctantly enrolled onto the course. Initially, she said that she could only stay for 5 minutes, but progressed to staying for 3 hours, with good attendance.

The most significant observation made was the change in her relationship with her daughter during family circle time. At the start of the course she would ignore her daughter, and constantly read the text on her mobile phone. However, she started playing more with her and became more relaxed and attentive. There was a real sense of community within the group, and the

other mothers and fathers encouraged and supported her to attend the course.

She continued to grow in confidence in the group and started to disclose some serious concerns about domestic violence. She found the courage to speak out about the abuse that she was experiencing and her little girl was witnessing. The family learning course impacted on her confidence and in her finding a voice to co-operate with other family support agencies following a child action meeting. The head teacher of the nursery school considered the family learning course to be a lifeline for this mum at such a critical time in her life.

### Learner 3

“A mother who told us that since the course she has realised that she has not really been talking to her children about their learning or school life. She shared that she now knows more about her little boys learning in nursery than her other two older children at school. On our outing to a local farm she was absolutely taken back by how confident and loving her son was with the animals and the other children. You could witness a very real turning point for this mother both with her son and her confidence and social skills with the rest of the group. It was really sad to hear her say at the end of the course that she did not feel that she deserved her certificate because she did not ‘get it’ until the end of the course. We assured her that she absolutely did. She is now keen to progress to a school based literacy course.” (Family Learning tutor)

Bolton Family Learning