

Engaging fathers in family learning

Key messages:

1. The challenge aspect of the programme helped to engage fathers;
2. All family members were encouraged to support each other in the task, including those not able to attend the sessions;
3. The course was developed in consultation with participants.

"More understanding of how maths is taught. Enjoying having more interaction with my children"

This 20 hour National Open College Network accredited course focused on the subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The Family Learning Service worked with schools, the community team and district service managers, who all targeted the families to take part in the programme.

Learners were supplied with a K'nex Discovery Building Set and each week were involved in a building challenge with a mathematical and/or science focus. All family members were encouraged to take part and learners kept a scrap book recording what they had done and who had participated in the challenge. The emphasis on the course was intergenerational learning, with all members of the family supporting each other in each task. The majority of learners were new to accredited courses and 17.5% of all learners were male. Feedback from the scrap books also showed that male family members at home, who were not in a position to attend the sessions, were becoming involved. The course was delivered differently each time it ran, based on consultation with the participants.

One of the fathers was an absentee father, not living with the family and without much access to his son. He asked to be put on the course and attended every week because he enjoyed working with his child. Another father got a job, working a night shift, just as the course started, but he still attended the course regularly. Following the course, some of the fathers were interested in a computer course and approached the head teacher about arranging one.

"Have enjoyed the course enormously, has engaged the whole family in learning."

Sheffield Family Learning