

Learners living in refuges

Key messages:

1. Learners progressed to skills for life courses;
2. Improved confidence and communication skills, gained through the family learning programmes, made a significant difference to learners' lives.

"I can communicate better with my children, I've learned lots of new words and I feel very happy about the work I've done on this course".

Oldham Lifelong Learning Service used the Family Learning Impact Funding to develop their work with parents living in local refuges. The following profiles illustrate changes that have happened over several sessions, of which Family Learning Impact Funded programmes have formed a significant part.

Learner A, a Pakistani woman with minimal English language, had recently arrived at the refuge when she started the Financial Capability course. She was withdrawn and did not communicate with her peers. She did not smile and was extremely unhappy. By the end of the course, she communicated with the tutor and the group and enjoyed taking part in the numeracy activities. She moved on to a language class and health and fitness courses. She felt confident enough to do her own shopping.

Learner N, a 31 year old single mother from Afghanistan, came to England in 2007, having lived in Russia and Holland after leaving Afghanistan at the age of 18. She had qualified to become a dental nurse but had never had a paid job. She had been bringing up a family since her early twenties, and had four children, ranging from 8 months to 16 years old. She lived in a refuge and had little money. She had never controlled any finances or had employment, and she had never gained life experience with maths. When she was living with her husband, she had limited money to buy food and clothing. N completed a Family Financial Capability course and progressed to a Skills for Life numeracy course.

Learner T, a Bangladeshi woman with limited English, was in her early 20s when she joined a course with her two year old daughter. She was very quiet and lacking in confidence. Her confidence grew and she became determined to learn English, taking homework home and sitting in her room in the refuge doing work every night. She passed the City and Guilds Literacy exam at Entry 1 and moved on to an ESOL and a sewing class. She was adamant that she would learn English and find a job despite having no family support (her parents lived in Bangladesh and her husband's family had abused her).

By the end of the course, she was lively, cheerful and spoke clearly in English.

Learner SQ first attended an 'English with Art' course during the summer school holidays in 2006. She then attended numerous language courses with this current year having the themes of Family Finance and Health. She was a teacher in her home country before coming to England, but was unable to obtain her documents from her husband. She has expressed her desire to teach again several times over the years. She is now in a better position with her life and has asked about the route to becoming a classroom assistant with a view to progress towards more formal teaching.

Learner D had very little spoken English and was unable to read or write at all in English. She initially communicated through the outreach worker. Over the two courses she attended, she became more animated and willing to speak in English. Her cheerful personality shone through and added a wonderful spark to the class. She now lives independently, having left the refuge. She has begun to talk to white, British people in the playground and has made friends with her neighbours. She has become a role model for women still in the refuge.

Learner H had mental health issues and was initially supported by an outreach worker who transported her and accompanied her to the first session. In the first session, she was quiet despite having English speaking and listening ability at Entry 3. She was unable to read and write in English at all. In the second session, she took a taxi to the venue and her appearance was much smarter and more confident. She began to join in the lessons verbally and asked for bilingual support in reading and writing. She enjoyed the classes immensely, particularly the arts and crafts within the sessions. She made friends and enjoyed the other women's company. The lesson became the highlight of her week, and she made the following comments:

"I feel confident...I like making friends...I can express my feelings...I've learned how children learn in school."

Oldham Family Learning