

# **Families, Learning, Impact and the National Agenda**

Research, policy and practice

A research and professional development opportunity linking theory and practice.

**Thursday 22 January – Friday 23 January 2009**

Holiday Inn Royal Victoria, Victoria Station Road, Sheffield S4 7YE



**Presentation Session  
Overview Papers**

NIACE and the Family Learning Local Authority Group are delighted to welcome you to the Families, Learning, Impact and the National Agenda conference. This is the opportunity for us to link theory with policy and practice, and debate the impact of learning in a family context.

We have a number of presentations from colleagues across the country and this booklet provides an overview of the presentations.

The Family Learning Local Authority Group (FLLAG) is a consortium of Local Authority Family Learning Officers/Providers working to keep family learning at the heart of policy, planning and practice throughout England and beyond. It meets three times a year to share and disseminate information, identify and respond to national, regional and local agendas and create a powerful voice to influence policy.

NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources. The family learning team at NIACE works to support the development of a broad vision of intergenerational learning opportunities for all families.

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## Intervention and Disadvantage: A Life Course Approach

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### Abstract

Family disadvantage can lay the foundation for poor literacy skills, limited educational opportunities and restricted adult life chances, often manifested in social exclusion. Using evidence from the large scale 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies that follow individuals from birth to adult life, the talk identifies the main antecedents and consequences of such a “trajectory of disadvantage” and their implications for effective educational interventions to “reverse the trend”. In terms of a “life course” approach embracing generation, geographical location, linked lives, timing of critical events and personal agency, understanding the history and context of adult lives is seen as critical to effective intervention, making the case for “embedded” curriculum approaches. The family is identified as critical to the strategy, not only in a direct sense through family learning programmes, but also more generally in providing the support and motivation needed to succeed. National policy as embodied in the *Skills for Life* strategy initially tended to be ‘top down’ and to disregard the life course component of effective adult educational provision. The research evidence from both survey and ethnographic studies has played an important part in shifting perceptions.

## Research methodologies – using family stories to create family learning materials

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### Abstract

In this paper I argue that neighbourhoods are spaces that people can transform, and that family learning is a key site for this transformation. These transformations happen in interactions, often between parents and children, or parents and grandchildren, as stories are passed down and heard. These interactions involve stories, of migration and of identity and can be sad, painful, empowering and sometimes transformational. Stories are often tied to the material, and can be linked to everyday objects in the home. Drawing on recent research and practice, from both the United States and the United Kingdom, I argue that by hearing each other's stories, communities can change. Family learning is a key site where that change can take place within neighbourhoods. Using recent examples of practice I illustrate this in relation to cultural diversity, social inclusion and family learning.

### Family learning as a site for change

How can family learning be an effective site for social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal? How can family learning provision bridge the public spaces of school and community and the private spaces of home and everyday life? Families are shaped by cultural patterns and practices (Rogoff 2003). These patterns and practices vary, and patterns and practices associated with parenting in the West which are taken for granted may not be the same in other cultural spaces. In a recent lecture in New York, for the American Educational Research Association conference, Kris Gutierrez argued that non-dominant communities' socio-cultural practices are less understood within education. In this paper I argue that we as practitioners and researchers need to understand families' ecologies, that is, their ways of being and doing within the home. Drawing on a tradition from Heath (1983) and Street (1993), who researched literacy practices within homes, communities and schools, and found that these varied in the different locations, Gutierrez suggested that the practices and discourses visible within schools are often not the same as the practices found within homes. She argued that cultural and iterative patterns within these families are important resources for learning and that these cultural stories can then move across sites to become educational resources (Gutierrez and Rogoff 2003). I am interested in that movement, that translation across sites, from the everyday life of the home, to the world of education as a model for social transformation. In this paper, I argue that family learning is a key site where this transformation can take place. Family learning acts as a 'third space' between home and school

(Pahl and Kelly 2005). It can be a place where families are listened to and where their stories are heard.

### **Challenges**

There are many challenges that face communities in poverty neighbourhoods where transport links are low and access to green spaces and fresh food is limited. I would argue that neoliberal and individualistic models of identity means that a focus on the ties of community sometimes gets left behind in urban planning regimes. An insistence on an audit culture can mean individual stories get lost. Sociologists have considered ways in which this neo-liberal agenda has shaped identities. Giddens (1991) argues that post-modern identities have become more reflexive, as people are able to navigate new spaces in new ways. However, it could be argued that these reflexive identities, which offer a multiplicity of choices as to which identities are possible, are only realisable in spaces where there are ways of experiencing choice. In poverty neighbourhoods it is hard to have a choice when there is little to choose from. 'Knowing your place' is still a condition of inequality. Grunewald (2003) and Comber (forthcoming) explore how place-based pedagogies that draw on the experiences children have of their environment can take account of these inequalities. Through a critical pedagogy of place, that listens to children's experience of place and space, change is possible. However, the constraints of place, the difficulties of poor transport links and inadequate access to key resources, hold back possibilities for change. Giddens' vision of reflexive identities that enable new ways of being and doing is only possible when you have transport systems to get you out of where you are. Here, the sociology of Richard Sennett, who with Jonathon Cobb described the 'hidden injuries of class' (1972) is useful in analysing how it is possible for people to carry the traces of their experience of social class within them. These discussions have subsequently been taken up by Reay (1998) and others in articulating the experiences of working class families. The voices of excluded and marginalised communities can get lost.

In today's world, migration is both a survival mechanism and a global necessity. Appadurai (1996) argues that these migratory experiences shape people's identities, enabling both transformation of their everyday practice, and new adaptations to be made possible. When families migrate, they carry with them the identity narratives that shaped their lives in their former country. Here, I would propose a theory of identity that both acknowledges the past, the 'sedimented identities' (Holland et al 1998; Rowsell and Pahl 2007) that people carry with them, but offers a potential for transformation, which can then enable families to move across diasporas into new spaces. A Somali mother who has migrated to Sheffield, who finds herself in a Westernized culture, needs to both cherish her Islamic cultural heritage, but to be able to support her children to learn in the schools where they are registered. She needs to navigate the new school system and find out how this system works and how she can enable them to succeed in this new space. How can the

children of this woman learn to read and write in a way that both acknowledges their cultural heritage, and then supports their identities in this new space for learning? It is that challenge that family learning educators often face.

### **Listening methodologies**

In this paper, I argue that a *listening methodology* can be used successfully within a family learning context. I would suggest a way forward that draws on Luis Moll and colleagues' concept of listening to 'funds of knowledge' within families (Gonzalez et al 2005). They researched how families that were Spanish speaking in the Southern states of the United States held everyday skills and knowledge that were unrecognised within schooling. Barbara Comber and colleagues in the University of South Australia focus on children's local knowledge of space and place and their *repertoires of literacy* that they bring to schooling (Comber forthcoming). This might involve listening to local knowledge of spaces and asking children to map their neighbourhoods using disposable cameras and maps. As part of a Women's art group for the Ferham families project, a community project that listened to the stories of Pakistani families and exhibited these in a museum, the group went out and took photographs of the local area. These were creatively turned into a collage which became a piece of art that was displayed in the museum exhibition. In the process of doing this, we were able to listen to narratives about the community's past. In another project that I was involved with called 'Their Lives, our History' granddaughters of women who migrated to Rotherham from Pakistan interviewed their grandmothers and were amazed at the hardships they had experienced. I am also interested in the role of public spaces to provide listening opportunities for communities who may be marginalised. In the Ferham Families project the presence of the racist British National Party recruiting at the local school gates galvanized the project's website developer, Zahir Rafiq, into working to create an inclusive exhibition that told the stories of the people who migrated to Rotherham from Pakistan in the 1950's. I would argue that family learning can create listening spaces for communities where family stories can be told.

This kind of work can also lead to social change. Grunewald argues for the importance of,

Focusing on the importance of people telling their own stories ...in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society. (Grunewald 2003:4)

This articulation can be helpful in situating people in a wider context of resistance and change. In some of the projects I mention in this paper, there was a shift in community understanding as a result of the project. For example, the young girls in the 'Their Lives Our History' project realised how much their grandmothers had gone through but the grand daughters equally were

appreciated by their grand mothers for the skills with which they navigated across the sites of home and school. The stories we collected from the 'Ferham Families' project also illuminated our understanding of the local area, for example, a home-made cinema was set up in the 1960's,

.. .. He actually I believe, I'm told by others that he got up at what is now the Adelphi Theatre in Attercliffe and actually announced it 'cos they used to gather there every Sunday to watch a film, all the men in the communities, including the Arabs, the Yemenis and the Pakistani Muslim Kashmiri people, they used to gather there every Sunday and watch (Informant, Ferham families)

The past history of an area can come alive through this kind of intergenerational research, which listens to family members across generations and makes sense of place and space in new ways.

### **Meaningful family learning**

I would argue that in order for learning to be meaningful, family learning needs to take place in a context that is informed and takes into consideration the practices and routines of family life. As Carol Lee argues,

- Context matters: contexts help to shape people and people shape contexts
- Routine practices count
- The cognitive, social, physical and biological dimensions of both individuals and contexts interact in important ways. (Lee 2008:268)

Lee argued that we need to take account of *cultural repertoires of practice* (Gutierrez and Rogoff 2003). These are the everyday ways that people live their lives and this includes their knowledge and understanding of the world. Lee argued that by recognising different kinds of content knowledge – that is that content knowledge derived from home and community contexts and the content knowledge derived from pedagogical contexts, a bridge can be created that acknowledges both. Educators need to recognise and interpret the links between everyday experience and subject matter learning (Gutierrez and Rogoff 2003, Lee 2007). A framework for learning which Lee called 'cultural modelling' can be created that acknowledges both domains. This approach relies on an ability to model and translate with students the paths across the domains. However, it is important not to assume communities have shared meanings and values. This means, argues Lee, that there needs to be a focus both on the communities and their characteristics, but also on the variations within communities.

Cultural communities are communities precisely because of what they share, but at the same time there is always significant variation within communities. Thus what we need

is...a binocular vision, with one lens focused on what makes communities culturally distinct and a second lens focused on the variations within communities (Lee 2008: 273)

Lee's focus on a 'binocular vision' reminds us of the need to value diversity within our classrooms and that our role is to provide a bridge across experiences within the classroom. Learning resources that do this attend to the specificities of experience – the need for a sewing machine when a woman moved from Pakistan to Rotherham and found no clothes shops – for example, together with the variations within the group. Textiles, weddings, gold and other themes were explored within the exhibition, and this approach acknowledged the ways in which former experiences had changed and become different in the new context of South Yorkshire (Pahl and Pollard 2008).

### **Creating community cohesion**

In this final part of this paper I suggest some ways forward for family learning educators. I suggest a methodology which draws uses the possibilities of public spaces to articulate and provide accounts of new identities. Included in this analysis are projects such as 'Burngreave Voices' which promoted an account of the diverse communities of Burngreave through stories and projects that brought different ethnic minority communities together. 'Collective conversations' involved a group of Somali women who came to the Manchester museum to talk about the objects within the museum. Their experience was valued and appreciated and their stories were heard within that space. Projects such as the 'Belonging' project based at the Museum of London drew on the expertise of community researchers to create learning resources for teachers about the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees who came to London. 'Every object tells a story' was a family learning project funded by MLA Yorkshire which drew on the stories of the families in the 'Ferham Families' project but turned these stories into learning resources for other families. These projects employed a method that Gruenewald called 'critical narratology' which stressed the importance of creating, 'public spaces where communities can analyse, envision, and construct the meaning of development for themselves.' (Gruenewald 2003:4). In many of the projects the researchers came from the communities that were focused upon and this created new kinds of public discourses and spaces.

Different kinds of stories are opened up through artefacts, particularly intergenerational ones. Artefacts are found in many places including schools, local community arts projects, libraries and museums, as well as homes. Artefacts have a powerful role in motivating young people at risk of under-achievement in literacy. Building inclusion is about valuing identities. Family learning can be seen as a site of possibility, where methodologies such as an ethnographic approach can be used to research home cultures. Methodologies such as the use of disposable cameras, asking students to record and describe everyday objects and stories, can then be used within the

classroom. By focusing on listening as a methodology both in the classroom and in the community, students' out of school experiences become important currency within the classroom. Small scale research such as taking disposable cameras into communities and homes and recording experiences, or using FLIP video cameras to take videos of key experiences, and to tell family stories, are powerful methodologies for creating resources for learning. In a recent project children and their parents created story boxes called 'All about me' as part of a partnership project funded by MLA Yorkshire with The World of James Herriot museum. The parents and children then collected images of their favourite objects and took them into the group, and then devised and created a film of their favourite objects and stories to be shown in the museum and the school. This way of working, which is steeped in the material culture of the home, is powerful in encouraging children and parents to tell stories and share experiences. In a new book (Pahl and Rowsell forthcoming) we hope to write about these methodologies as ways into literacy learning for children and families from diverse cultures and communities. **References**

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The Belonging project

[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/EventsExhibitions/Community/Belonging/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/EventsExhibitions/Community/Belonging/)

Burngreave voices

[www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/coresite/burngreave\\_html/](http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/coresite/burngreave_html/)

Every Object Tells a Story

[www.everyobjecttellsastory.org.uk](http://www.everyobjecttellsastory.org.uk)

### **More information**

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If you are interested in pursuing these ideas further, why not take the **MA in Working with Communities: Identities, Regeneration and Change**

This is held at the Department of Educational Studies, University of Sheffield.

For more information:

[www.shef.ac.uk/education/courses/masters/wrkcommunities/index.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/education/courses/masters/wrkcommunities/index.html)

## Conducting qualitative research with families in informal learning environments

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### Abstract

This paper will discuss how qualitative methodologies can contribute to our understanding of family motivations for visiting informal learning environments, and of the individual and shared meanings that family members make during their visit. It will also present findings from two research studies to illustrate what type of findings qualitative methods can produce.

Visits to informal learning environments such as museums play an important role in the social and cultural life of the family, and meet specific family needs through the use of a variety of resources and media as well as through mediating social behaviours and learning. Our research has shown that families visit museums for a wide variety of reasons. Adult family members, in particular, are often motivated by their desire to introduce children to the practices and values of their community. Children on the other hand, wish to share the museum visit experience with their family and follow up their personal interests. The museum context can also provide the setting where families construct and/or refine their identity and the social reality in which family members live through their engagement in conversations. Family conversations are the means through which both adult and child family members construct and appropriate (new) knowledge. Hence, these social interactions are as important for making meaning in the museum as the interactions between family members and the museum resources are. Conversations mediate not only content knowledge related to the objects but also what roles these objects play today as material evidence of the past and the roles objects play in the socio-cultural life of the family.

Museum researchers conducting family research need to be able to describe and understand the role informal learning environments play in the socio-cultural life of the family and how the specific activities that family members engage with in the museum affect their meaning making. This paper argues that, in order to do that, we need to develop methodologies that are sensitive to the physical and social context of the museum. Furthermore, our methodologies need to be able to capture a range of family motivations or goals and to analyse the activities family members engage with, both individually and as a group. We will use two research studies conducted in four

different museums to present examples of research strategies that can be used to capture what families do in museums and for what purpose.

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## Linking theory to policy agendas

Tom Schuller

Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning

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### **Aims of this session:**

- 1 To introduce the Inquiry, and relate its work to Family Learning
- 2 To raise 2-3 'theoretical' issues and discuss how they can be related to practice
- 3 To encourage active discussion of and feedback on how the Inquiry should include Family Learning issues

### **Key issues to be covered:**

- 1 Scope of the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning
- 2 Issues to do with estimating the impact of Lifelong Learning and Family Learning
- 3 Social mobility and the potential contribution of Lifelong Learning

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**Same Texts, Different Understandings:  
a cross-cultural comparison of a mother-child activity at home**

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**Abstract**

The importance of parental involvement in children's education has been highly emphasised and providing information to parents has become essential in government policy. In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (now Department for Children, Schools and Families) published three *Learning Journey* guides for parents. The guides cover the national curriculum from Key Stages 1 to 3 and are designed to give parents information on subjects covered. There were English and Chinese versions of *Learning Journey* guides when hard copies were available. The contents of the *Learning Journey* guides are now only available in English on the Parents Centre website (<http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/>).

The *Learning Journey* guides for parents of pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 include activities for parents to do with their children. Using an activity called 'Stick to the rules' in the English subject of the *Learning Journey: Key Stage 2* (pupils aged 7-11) as an example, this presentation shows what happened when mothers and children actually undertook a given activity at home, and what they thought of the activity. Observations and interviews were undertaken with mothers and children from white English and Chinese ethnic origin in England, using a two-group sample which also mixes gender and socio-economic status.

The findings reveal that there are different understandings regarding both the nature of the activity and the content of the activity across the ethnic groups and socio-economic status. Family values were passed on from mother to child while undertaking the activity. There was a question of appropriateness of the activity for different families. Drawing from the findings, it is recommended that an English writing activity should have taken into account cultural sensitivities and could have been more valuable to both the English and Chinese parents if a more neutral and objective activity had been designed for families to do at home.

## Managing and delivering Family Learning in a rural county

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### Discussion session

There is a need for colleagues in rural counties to interpret national policy and Family Learning Guidance to address local priorities. There are particular challenges to overcome to ensure quality provision is delivered to targeted learners whilst achieving value for money. Although some of these challenges are also faced by colleagues in urban areas, managing and delivering Family Learning in rural counties presents different issues to be addressed.

### Hypothesis:

You are managing Family Learning in rural county with several large towns (densely populated) and areas of significant rural isolation. You receive LSC funding to deliver FLLN & WFL and for 2008/09 you have been successful in securing FLIF funding.

What are your key issues in managing FL?

Identify the similarities and differences with urban areas/settings.

### Discussion points:

- How do you achieve value for money?
- What networks/partnerships do you need to make?
- What marketing strategies do you need to have in place?
- How do you recruit eligible learners?
- How do you fulfil the requirements of FLIF- *managing the balance between achieving targets and recruiting hard to reach learners.*
- Define a hard to reach learner in a rural setting - *rural isolation: what does it mean/what problems does it pose/solutions?*
- Taking risks to do something different in FLIF – *how far do you go?*
- Recruiting & retaining experienced, qualified staff
- Maintaining quality assurance

Using real life scenarios, the group identifies the similarities and differences between managing and delivering family learning in a rural and an urban setting.

**Local linking: working across social and geographical boundaries to engage parents and families: Lessons learned from a national action research project**

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**Abstract:**

The approach of developing links or exchanges between local areas has been shown to help improve cultural awareness and raise aspirations, whilst overcoming many of the barriers to joint working that are posed by geographical distance. Government has already invested in a national linking programme for schools (DCSF) and, more recently, whole communities (DFID). With a growing recognition of the importance of families within social capital, there is arguably a priority to strengthen the focus of these activities on parents and families, and the professionals that support them.

The discussion session will draw upon the findings from a national action research project, which has been funded by the DCSF over the past two years to examine the benefits of schools and local authorities collaborating to exchange good practice around parental engagement and family learning.

A short presentation of the findings from the research will be followed by discussion. The facilitator will present the following hypotheses:

- that local authorities and schools have much to gain from working with their counterparts from across the country, when developing appropriate strategies for parental engagement; and,
- that this type of knowledge exchange is an effective way to nurture and disseminate 'home grown' good practice for working with parents and families, and therefore to overcome many of the limitations of time-bound initiative funding.

The workshop will seek to build consensus around what might be the characteristics of an effective local linking model; including the most appropriate funding and information-sharing arrangements. The outcomes from the discussion will inform the final report of the action research project.

**How higher education becomes an expectation and not a hope: the impact of an HEI's involvement with families with no prior experience of HE and how this relates to the national agendas.**

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*'I've found a massive impact on my family, my youngest son is eight years old and he constantly says to me; "when I go to University, when I go to University I'm going to be a teacher," and I find that absolutely amazing because it's an expectation rather than an "If I go".'*

*'It's not only for me it's for my family, because my family now, like they will hopefully go on to get a degree themselves. That means that their families, when they are all grown up, are going to go on to get a degree and are going to go into higher education and it is going to become the norm, rather than what mine is, which is not the norm.'*

(Comments from two mature students on the difference their going to university has made to their children's expectations of themselves. Both parents are currently studying at the University of Leeds and had previously studied within FE and participated in the West Yorkshire Aimhigher Realise project)

## **Introduction**

It has become widely accepted that parents and carers are the most important role models and key influencers of their children, particularly during the years before children enter high school. Schools regularly emphasise the extent to which participation in higher education is dependent on the support and encouragement of families. A parent who participates in higher education as a mature student may act as a particularly influential role model and thereby encourage their children to consider entering HE. This influence may be especially pronounced in the case of parents from families that have no prior experience of HE.

Two linked questions can be asked: first, to what extent can universities raise the aspirations of parents, both in relation to their own education and that of their children; and second, to what extent does a parent's participation in learning influence a family's propensity to aspire to become

involved in HE? This paper will then examine in what ways this work relates to national agendas on learning and education and, more broadly, to issues around social cohesion and inclusion.

### **The University of Leeds and ‘hard to reach’ groups**

The University of Leeds has been involved in the delivery of adult learning with groups under-represented in higher education for over 25 years. The Communities and Partnerships section of the Lifelong Learning Centre is continuing this commitment, working with communities across the sub-region which are economically and /or socially deprived. We seek to ensure that that our engagement is sustained and responds to the various community needs. In order to work with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups we have developed an array of partnerships, from strategic to community-based and involving various sectors including, education, regeneration, health, social services, work and pensions. The constituencies we work with include: minority ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers, lone parents and carers. We have also started working with the employers of small to medium-sized enterprises.

This is a critical moment in the continuance of funded adult education in England. Not only do we, like many other countries, have an instrumental focus on employability and basic skills, but a Labour government has put the mechanisms in place for two-tier provision. The poor can access basic skills, narrowly defined workforce skills and a modicum of personal development, whilst those that can pay have access to traditional evening class fayre – this provision varies greatly in different local authority areas. According to the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), ‘55,000 adult learners have been lost to publicly funded safeguarded adult learning in the last year. This now means that in just three years there has been a fall of 184,600 adult learners in programmes for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development. This fall is on top of the 1.4 million adult learning places which have been lost from all publicly-funded adult learning over the last two years’ (Tuckett, 2008). Loss of provision means not only, loss of jobs and expertise, but also loss of adult learners, the majority of whom are parents, who might potentially progress onto higher education.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Realise project**

The Realise Project (formerly ‘Beyond GCSE?’) was developed in 2002 based on the premise that in order to increase the numbers of adults from areas of socio-economic disadvantage participating in higher education, HE needs to engage with these potential students whilst they are studying at level two. The project attempts to address this issue directly, through targeted

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<sup>1</sup> Fraser L ‘Whose Community Education is it Anyway?’ presentation to the Lifelong Learning Institute, University of Leeds, May 2008

outreach and development work and a programme of activities aimed at community-based adult learners, the majority of whom are parents, which aims to stimulate demand for and progression to HE.

Through visits and campus study-days, Realise has continued to target adult learners studying at level 2 in community education centres within the most deprived wards with the highest number of Super Output Areas in the Leeds district. This includes learners from BME groups, single parents and those who are unemployed or in low skilled employment. A high emphasis is placed on targeting learners who are predominantly focused on vocational areas and raising their awareness about Higher Education. Since its inception in 2002, the project has worked with 2094 adult learners. (See **Appendix 1** for profiles in terms of ethnicity and educational background of Realise participants).

We have developed a flexible and responsive programme with our project partners at Leeds Thomas Danby and Park Lane College, which include the following elements:

- Subject-specific study days held at the University, including study skills support
- University taster days for learners to sample aspects of university provision
- 'Top-up' sessions at college community bases taught by university subject specialists
- Use of previous learners as role models and learning champions
- Group and individual IAG sessions, both on campus and in community settings
- Consultation and staff development events to improve communication between the HE and FE sectors

We have learnt that the more study days and visits to the University campus, the greater the knowledge and understanding of higher education and the increase in motivation to progress. The role of information, advice and guidance (IAG) is a key factor in raising HE awareness and this needs to be a pro-active service, engaging students throughout their programme and not waiting until students make an appointment. It can take a while for people to understand what IAG is and feel confident about making use of the service.

The sustained partnership with adult education colleagues in FE is another crucial component in the delivery of this project with both FE and HE deriving positive outcomes. Often the most important staff, in terms of community learners, are part-time tutors and we have undertaken formal and informal staff development so that tutors gain a greater awareness of progression routes and higher education opportunities in order that they can be 'influencers' and 'signposters'. Tutor and student feedback indicates that the staff involved with this project are now making links with HE that they have not done in the past.

### **The impact of the Realise project on parents' aspirations for their own progression to HE**

It has become clear that the Realise project's programme of activities is effective in changing not only adult students' aspirations to HE but also their intentions to stay in education and continue with their studies.

Questionnaires sent out to a sample of 30 learners who completed their GCSEs in 2007 illustrate this:

- Over 50% of learners said that they were more likely to go the university because of the project (only 20% said that they had had any kind of plan for what learning they were going to do next when they first chose their FE course)
- 70% agreed that the study days had been very useful in helping them decide to stay on in education.

Other factors were also cited as useful in helping people decide whether university was for them, these included: information, advice and guidance, contact with University of Leeds staff, the use of learning champions, support from FE tutors and other college staff and support from family and friends.

Questionnaires sent to all 172 learners in 2008 who attended study days at the university show that:

- 90% of learners said that they intend to continue studying.
- 43% said that they intend to study at level 3 or HE level in September
- A further 21% said that they intend to study at level 3 or HE level at some point in the future.

Therefore, a total of 64% said that they intend to study at level 3 or HE level.

Evidence from our FE partners illustrates the effectiveness of the work in raising aspirations and awareness of HE. One FE tutor told us:

"We very much value the links with the university because again it shows another door – the door beyond GCSE ... they love going to the university, they like being on campus. "

Another tutor emphasised the importance of the university coming out to the community: "I mean, obviously we have IAG here as well, but contact from somebody in the university who knows more about it is important as well. The whole project made a big impact."

- The increase in numbers of adult learners progressing to HE

Through our monitoring systems within the Lifelong Learning Centre, we have tracked 18 FE learners who have accepted places onto Foundation Degrees and the Preparation for HE course within the Centre. They told us that they would not have applied to HE if it had not been for the Realise project's intervention. This is just a sample of learners who have been able to progress onto HE, however it does illustrate the longer term impact of the work. An important factor to consider here is that the work is cumulative as it has built up over the years. The following quote from an FE tutor illustrates this:

"I just think that it's a really good idea that it progresses as it does and I think each year we've got more students doing it (a Foundation Degree) and I remember years ago, I had 2 and I think this year I've got 11".

The evidence described above shows that Higher Education Institutions can play an effective role in increasing the aspirations of adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to stay in further education and to aspire to HE. However, it is important to bear in mind that the work is often achieved through long term, sustained partnerships with further education and community organisations. In addition, although it is possible to raise the aspirations of large numbers of adult learners to HE; it is usually a fraction of those who may actually progress onto HE.

### **The intergenerational impact**

- Parents as influencers on their children's aspirations

It has been recognised that parents are the main influencers of children up to a certain age (McGrath and Millen 2004; Sutton Trust 2002). The Realise project has been effective in raising both parents' and their children's aspirations to HE. Learners have reported that their increased expectations have also raised their children's aspirations for themselves and how, over time, this would affect the culture of the family.

One man told us that "I've found a massive impact on my family my youngest son is eight years old and he constantly says to me; 'when I go to University .... When I go to University I'm going to be a teacher' and I find that absolutely amazing because it's an expectation rather than an 'If I go'."

Another learner commented on how this would amount to a change in the culture of her family and their attitude to HE: “It’s not only for me it’s for my family, because my family now, like they will hopefully go on to get a degree themselves. That means that their families when they’re all grown up are going to go on to get a degree and are going to go into higher education and it is going to become the norm, rather than what mine is, which is not the norm.”

- Parents’ influence on their children’s attainment

The project has had an intergenerational impact on the families of learners who have been involved. Many adults are studying at the same time as their children and have remarked on the effect that their studying has had on their children’s attitude and attainment at school and that they have been able to help their children with their work more easily.

One student told us; ‘my eight year old is doing very well at school, I think someone else studying is great for children.’

Another said: “My 7 year old discusses alliteration, onomatopoeia, sibilance and many other techniques with me and I understand what he’s talking about. In fact one particular parent, whose son was in year 6, came to me to ask for help with her son’s maths - she is now enrolled at Thomas Danby. This has boosted my confidence beyond belief and when my eldest took his GCSEs I was able to help him. He had been predicted to do badly but he came out with Cs in English lit and Maths and got into college because of it. He also decided to retake English as he wanted a better grade and has just sat his exam at -you’ve guessed it - Thomas Danby. I am really pleased with this as his attitude towards learning has totally changed due mainly to the choices I made.”

One of our FE partners told us about the broader benefits from the project for the students and its impact on families. He reported that some of their students hadn’t gone on to HE themselves but they had thought that that was what they wanted for their children. In fact, a couple of students had sent their children to FE classes that they themselves had done.

### **The impact on the learners’ wider community**

- The benefits to the learners’ communities

The project has helped to inspire learners to influence their wider communities to think about taking up education. One particularly successful example of this is a former Realise student, now

studying for an English degree at the University of Leeds, has showed great commitment as an ambassador for adult learning in her own community in east Leeds. For the last 2 years, she has worked with her old tutor, as a volunteer teaching assistant, supporting adults in basic skills literacy and numeracy classes at a community FE base. Through encouragement and example, Yvonne has also directly inspired 3 people to aim for university; two of these are currently studying at university and the third has applied for 2009. This same passion has meant she was able to persuade learners to sign up for community-based FE courses which would not otherwise have run, thereby ensuring that more people have access to a wider range of learning opportunities in community settings as well as convincing individuals to persevere with learning. Yvonne has also remained involved in the PTA of her son's school and her fundraising activities even extended to doing sponsored parachute jump for them in 2006. she has recently won an "Adult and Access Student Award" from the University of Leeds after being nominated by Realise project workers.

- Broader community cohesion

The project encourages learners to meet people from different parts of Leeds. This can have an extremely positive effect on people who have often been isolated within their own communities, particularly if that community is isolated within Leeds.

Tutors have reported they have noticed a difference in their learners after they have been to the university: "I think that's really healthy I mean they (the learners) tend to stick in groups together but they do actually mix and that's great. I know one of my students who goes, he was sat with some Muslim women with head scarves and it was the first time he'd spoken and at the end he was just so positive and he was saying, 'I was a bit intimidated at first but then I just realised that they had a laugh like the rest of them'."

- Changes in learners' self-esteem and knowing their direction in life

A further fundamental change amongst learners has been reported by the learners themselves as well as by their tutors. This has been in terms of increased confidence and self-esteem and an increased respect towards the adult from those in authority, such as their children's teachers. One parent told us that: "some of the people who started out with me taking the school course are now seriously considering going further with their studies especially since they have noticed that my son's teacher talks to me as an equal about my son rather than as a parent."

One FE tutor noted that she could: “see a big difference in terms of confidence; it’s a huge step to go to uni. For some of them it’s a dream come true, you can go there and feel what it’s like. . . sometimes you’re not sure and then you go there and it clicks that this is what I want to do.”

Another parent summed up the effect of her learning experiences: “for me, it’s changed my life this last year. I just didn’t think that I’d ever get to this point; I’m going to uni and when I still say it I have to pinch myself that I’m going to uni. And I feel slightly embarrassed about saying it, but a part of me still feels quite proud as well. I’m really proud of myself that I’m off to uni.”

## Conclusion

The Realise project relates directly to a number of national agendas. Firstly, increased aspirations and attainment amongst the children of the participating adult learners, in particular the 14 to 19 year old cohort, contributes to the government’s agenda on ensuring that this group remain in education and attain qualifications to at least level 2<sup>2</sup>.

The broader impact of the project not only on families but also on their communities in terms of raising aspirations as well as increased cross cultural awareness fits in with the government’s Social Inclusion agenda. This has an overarching brief across many policy areas including education, housing and crime. In particular, areas of social exclusion have been referred to as having a lack of social capital<sup>3</sup>. The Realise project relates to this through the use of learning champions who are keen to help others from within their community to better their lives through education. The results of the increased self-confidence and esteem of the learning champions themselves in their interactions with people in authority, such as teachers, can also be seen as contributing to the social capital of a community as they act as powerful role models to others within their neighbourhood. The government’s belief in communities as the key to tackling social exclusion has been emphasized in the Social Inclusion Unit’s recent white paper: “New Opportunities”. This includes policy recommendations to raise the aspirations of young people, one of which is through “Inspiring Communities”. These are described as “places where schools, businesses, local agencies, parents and the wider community all believe that their young people can succeed, and where they can work together to help them achieve their aspirations”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> DCSF (2005) *14-19 White Paper Education and Skills*, Norwich, HMSO

<sup>3</sup> Bryant P for SPRITO TCL (2005) *Social Exclusion and Sport: the role of training and learning* pp.3  
<http://www.communityinvolvement.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Office (2009) *New opportunities. Fair chances for the future* pp. 97  
[www.hmg.gov.uk/newopportunities](http://www.hmg.gov.uk/newopportunities)

To conclude, the work of the Realise project has shown that higher education institutions can engage effectively with families who have no prior experience of HE through interventions with parents who have returned to education themselves. Through aspiration and attainment raising work with adult learners, HEIs can help to influence the aspirations and attainment of not only the adult learners' children and families, but also their wider communities. Therefore, rather than only working with children and young people to increase their aspirations, surely a more effective starting point is to involve parents and other family members who are already taking part in their own learning?

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**Appendix 1**

Chart 1. Illustrates the wide diversity of learners from BME backgrounds who have taken part in the project.

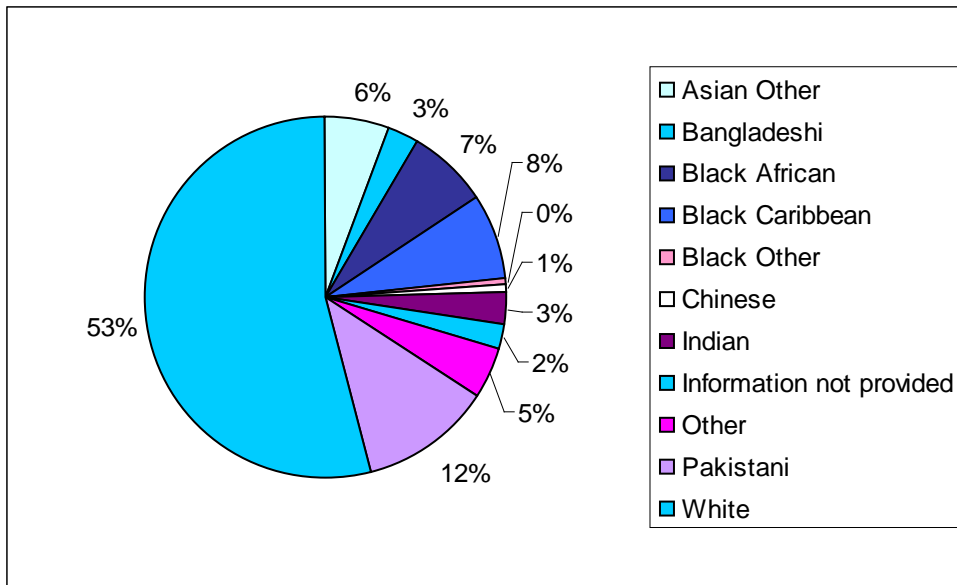
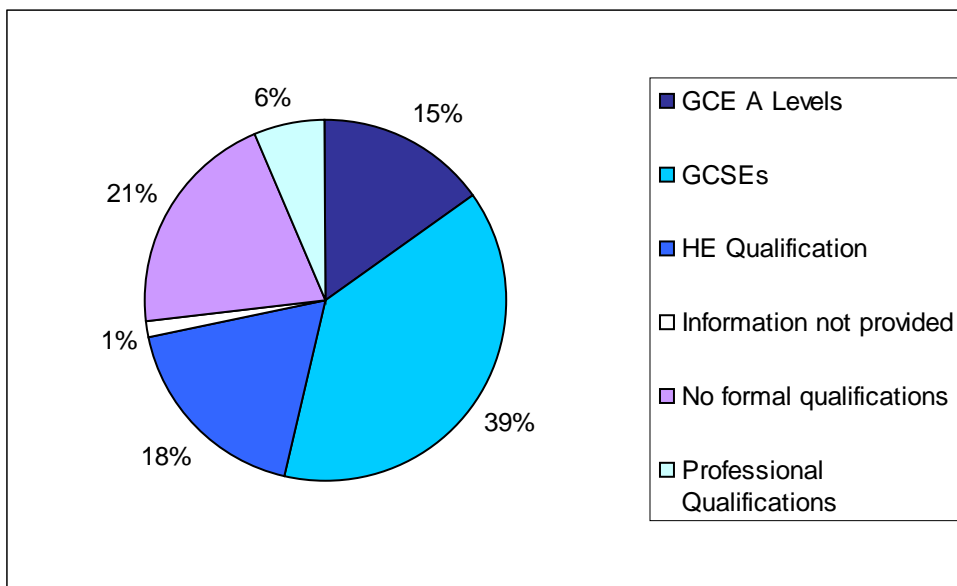


Chart 2 illustrates the high proportion of adults with either no formal qualifications or level 2 qualifications who have taken part in the project.



## Impact – Lessons from Camden Family Learning case studies

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### **Abstract**

We will describe family learning programmes in Camden and the impact they have had on families. This will involve case studies of 3 parents who face multiple barriers including poverty, housing, social isolation and language and literacy needs.

The session will begin with a 5 minute presentation outlining the issues and barriers faced by families living in Camden, including issues related to inner cities such as community division, unemployment, economic exclusion and concerns about crime. A quarter of the population in Camden have few if any qualifications. This will be followed by a description of the aims and approaches used Family Learning programmes in Camden.

There will be a 15 minute video presentation of the case studies to demonstrate the impact of family learning where families describe the difference family learning has made to their lives.

This will be followed by a short summing up of outcomes and lessons learned from the programmes.

The session will close with a short discussion of the issues raised.

**Family learning in the contemporary art gallery: an examination of practice in the context of creative learning theories and practice.**

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**Abstract** (for 30 minute presentation)

This paper focuses on the links between theory, policy and practice in relation to families' creative learning in the contemporary art gallery. It presents findings from a research study which focused on two strands of the Family Programme (*Start* and *Small Steps*) at Tate Modern in order to investigate how these initiatives support family members' creative learning. Recent policy documents draw attention to the potential value of creativity and creative learning is perceived by government to have benefits in relation to educational and social outcomes and the health and well being of pre-school children and young people. These perceptions have found form in cultural policies including 'Creative Partnerships' and the 'Find your Talent' initiative, whilst creativity is identified as a contributing factor to achieving the five outcomes outlined within the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Yet 'creative learning' is a contested term and at present little research focuses on how it can be engendered within the family during visits to cultural institutions.

The paper interrogates constructions of creative learning and identifies features common to theories of creativity in education, family learning and pedagogy in museums and galleries. The argument is advanced that these three domains share conceptions of best practice which include constructing learners as active, and facilitating collaborative teaching and learning within supportive, yet liberating, environments. This best practice can enable individuals to take responsibility for their learning and gain greater confidence, curiosity and independence, improved communication skills, enhanced understanding, original thinking and increased knowledge, hence the desire by policy makers to translate theory into practice.

Tate Modern's current provision for families is examined and the rationale underpinning *Start* and *Small Steps* articulated. The research methodology is outlined. Finally the paper considers the ways in which *Start* and *Small Steps* correspond with the discourse of creative learning and draw attention to how the practice of family learning in galleries and theories of creative learning can usefully inform relevant policy in the future.

## **Introduction**

This paper presents findings from a pilot research study which investigates the Family Programme at Tate Modern and how it supports creative learning in families. There is a long history in museums of programming activities for families. Yet there is little research (particularly in art galleries), which examines their benefits for learning, even though programmes are carefully conceived to provide more than enjoyable leisure activities or ways of keeping children entertained. The study is a pilot for what we hope will become a much larger action research project and we are keen at this stage to have responses and suggestions from colleagues with expertise in the field of family learning. Our paper is presented in two parts. The first gives the context for the research – an introduction to Tate Modern, to the work of the Learning Department and to the family programmes in question. The second describes the research methodology and examines the concept of creative learning before outlining research findings.

## **The context for the research**

Tate Modern opened in 2000 and is a national museum displaying modern and contemporary British and international art. It is down river from the original Tate Gallery, now called Tate Britain, which focuses on British art from 1500 to the present. Last year there were 5.3 million visitors to Tate Modern. Roughly half of these came from London or the UK, with 16-34 year-olds forming the largest age group.

The gallery sits on the northern tip of the borough of Southwark in an area which combines wealth with extreme poverty. It is part of a large area of regeneration and cultural development. Southwark is one of the 20 most deprived boroughs nationally, one of the most ethnically diverse, and with a rising population of children and young people.

As well as catering for the mass of visitors, there have been strong efforts to root the gallery in the locality. For example, the Regeneration and Community Partnerships Department liaises with residents regarding Tate's plans, takes part in a great number of business, employment and environmental initiatives and manages key projects such as a Community Film Club and a Community Garden.

The Learning Department at Tate Modern contributes to national and local agendas through a number of audience-based initiatives. For example, there is a schools programme, a teacher programme, a youth programme, a community programme and, of course, the family programme. In addition to a range of services for the large numbers of confident museum goers who visit, each programme runs smaller, more targeted local projects and partnerships, some with those who might be deemed harder to reach.

Many people visiting the gallery, including regular museum goers, feel a loss of confidence when confronted by modern or contemporary art. It can appear strange and alien and not 'like art'. Unlike much historical art, modern art often has no narrative or readily apparent meaning or intention; indeed it may not have an obvious subject at all. Not surprisingly, people can feel that modern art is not for them, and that art galleries are elitist. Art galleries can take some responsibility for this, but increasing physical and intellectual access is now high up on the agenda of most.

Most activities taking place within Tate Modern's Learning Department happen in the galleries in front of the art, as there is no substitute for seeing authentic work. Gallery sessions are led by artist educators (who are themselves practicing artists) who utilise different methods to engage people with the collection – group work, pair work, the use of handling resources to inspire ideas, simple art-making exercises. The aim is not to teach facts and figures about art and artists, or to persuade people to like something they don't, but to encourage looking and thinking, whilst testing out and sharing thoughts and responses. The Department takes a learning centred approach, focused on enabling visitors to construct their own interpretations. Underpinning this is the acknowledgment that there is often no one 'right' way to interpret an art work, and that it might be understood in a number of ways. Furthermore, people's responses to art are very much dependent on their age, life experiences and cultural backgrounds.

This work can be challenging and exciting; modern art is of our times, and often, therefore, immediately relevant to life now, either in terms of how it is made, or the issues and ideas that it addresses. Consequently a work can be investigated in different ways. For example it may be interesting as an aesthetic object – how it looks, how it is made and how materials have been manipulated. It may be equally significant for the questions it raises or ideas it suggests about history, politics or contemporary society. This gives us a number of ways in to looking at works.

The research focused on two programmes, *Start* and *Small Steps in a Large Space (Small Steps)*. *Start* comprises a menu of object and paper-based games and other activities related to art works from the permanent collection. These are for small groups of adults and children aged 5+ to do together in the galleries, with some provision for the unders 5s. *Start* takes place every weekend and during school holidays and is free of charge. It operates from a specially designed area in the gallery and is staffed by four 'interpreters' who help families to choose games that appeal to their interests or are age appropriate, and provide feedback at the end. Families can stay for as long, and do as many activities, as they like. *Start* attracts some 30,000 people per year, around 20% of whom are repeat visitors. Of those coming from London boroughs, Southwark is the best represented.

*Small Steps*, by contrast, is a targeted, intensive workshop-based programme for smaller groups of parents/carers and pre-school children. Participants sign up for a three week programme led by an artist educator. Each session lasts 2 hours, begins and ends in a studio space with a gallery session sandwiched in between. *Small Steps* is very locally focused and an outreach worker, who is a local parent, helps recruit families from nearby adult and toddler groups. There is a remit to attract harder to reach families and we have had some success in this.

### **Outline of the research**

The research arose from Tate's existing commitment to reflective practice. For example, both *Start* and *Small Steps* have been evaluated internally and by external researchers, and the gallery is aware of the value of them to participants (Cox *et al*, 2000, Hancock *et al*, 2007). Yet until now, they have not been the subject of formal research. The study also stemmed from the recognition that, at present, little research focuses on creative learning within cultural institutions, and none could be found that considered creative learning in the context of family learning in the gallery.

At the outset this study had a broad area of investigation – the value of family learning to those participating – but subsequent discoveries informed and revised the project, narrowing the research focus. In part this development emerged because of the researcher's awareness of interest in recent government policy on creative learning and the role that cultural institutions can play in fostering it. Additionally, initial reading of the literature suggested that Tate Modern's pedagogic approach engendered creative learning. This indicated that the study could usefully enhance understanding and broaden awareness within this field. Therefore, it was decided that the research would address the following question:

- *How does Tate Modern's Family Programme support participants' creative learning?*

The study involved a review of literature relating to creative learning and family learning in the gallery and an empirical research element focused on *Small Steps* and *Start*.

### **Research Methodology**

A qualitative research methodology was adopted; since the study sought to identify what meaning particular experiences have for those taking part, within a specific context (in this case the gallery). Data collection was done through participant observation in the gallery, whilst informal semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 family members who had used a *Start* game and with the adult participants, artist educator, outreach officer and education curator associated with *Small Steps*. Semi structured telephone interviews were undertaken with eight previous attendees of *Small Steps* to gain a longer-term perspective. These approaches enabled a detailed picture to be constructed and allowed for an element of triangulation, thus enhancing the validity of the findings overall. Our study was relatively small scale and short term, involving a comparatively

small amount of participants, which is not unusual in qualitative studies of family learning in museums.

### **What is creative learning?**

'Creative learning' is a contested term, which is sometimes used interchangeably with 'creativity' (itself a wide-ranging concept). Cutler (2006), for example draws attention to contrasting views of creativity as either associated with expansive personal expression or with discipline and craft. Nonetheless definitions of creative learning exist, including the construction of it as 'any learning that stimulates learner creativity' (Craft, 2005: 54), which begs the question; what is learner creativity? Associated with this, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) creativity framework identifies that creative thinking and behaviour involves learners in:

- Questioning and challenging
- Making connections, seeing relationships
- Envisaging what might be
- Exploring ideas, keeping options open
- Reflecting critically on ideas, actions, outcomes (QCA, 2005)

Learner creativity as constructed here is not confined to the arts, but embraces key aptitudes, which individuals apply across the curriculum.

Another key aspect of creative learning is play (Prentice, 2000). Learning through play is central to gallery education practice at Tate and beyond, with practical activities in particular promoting enjoyment and experimentation. Relevantly, playfulness is a key element of creative practice and important parallels can be drawn between the processes of art making and creative learning in the gallery. As with the artistic process, meaning-making in the gallery involves the rational and non-rational. Learners engage in sensory, imaginary and intellectual 'games', which allow them to explore and develop new knowledge.

The concept of gaming informs *Start*, as games can involve family members in fun activities, whilst stimulating ideas and discussion. However, *Start* has been identified as 'closer to fun activities than real games... real games contain winning, chasing, power and so on' (Fisher, 2003: 6). Certain *Start* games do involve an element of competition, as part of an overall creative interpretive process. This suggests that *Start* draws on, but does not adhere rigidly to aspects of gaming (competitiveness, concepts of winning or losing, solving problems to find the 'right' answer) that are less conducive to creative learning, whilst allowing for the playful and collaborative aspects of the medium.

Creative learning constructs the learner as 'generative' (Craft, 2005: 55), hence facilitating expression, fostering imaginative responses and developing learners' ideas is crucial. Equally, the

pedagogic environment must sustain supportive and creative teaching and provide opportunities for learners to experiment and engage in play. Learners need to be able to take responsibility for their own learning and perceive their activities as relevant. Thus the learning context, alongside teacher/learner engagement, is a key contributor to creative learning.

What are the perceived benefits of creative learning? Researchers argue that it enhances curiosity, independence, risk taking and flexibility, whilst impacting positively on learner engagement and motivation (Craft, 2005). Others identify that creative learners enhance their critical and evaluative skills, use their imagination and collaborate strategically (Jeffery, 2005). Positive outcomes deriving from creative learning have been cited in policy initiatives and texts. Notably creative learning strategies have been adopted within Creative Partnerships (CP), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) programme established in 2002 to foster connections between creativity, culture and education. These have been credited with increasing learner motivation and engagement and raising self-esteem, bringing about greater achievement and inclusion in schools (Sharp *et al*, 2005). A recent DCMS/DCSF report identifies that creativity can contribute to the five outcomes outlined within the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda and argues strongly for creativity to be embedded in the early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through effective partnerships with external cultural organisations, seeing this as 'fundamental to successful learning' (DCMS/DCSF, 2006).

### **Connections between creative learning, family learning and pedagogy in the gallery**

Family learning, as constructed by the Campaign for Learning, involves all forms of informal and formal learning involving more than one generation. This broad understanding (which includes friends within the concept of 'family') is appropriate for the Tate context which includes sessions facilitated by artist educators and others and opportunities for self-directed learning. At Tate, the content of the activities is not curriculum based and is determined internally by the gallery. Family learning in the art gallery typically focuses on encouraging families to feel comfortable in the gallery and providing stimulating and enjoyable activities that enable them to engage with artworks. The cultural institution has a clear agenda which embraces learning, but also enjoyment and inclusion.

Consideration of the literature on creative learning, family learning and learning in museums and galleries identified an ideal pedagogic scenario where key positive features found across the three domains are present. Common to all is the construction of learners as active and engaged in purposeful, yet enjoyable and fun, tasks. Important also is collaborative, dialogic forms of teaching and learning that allow for participation and meaning making by all, whilst enabling individuals to take responsibility for their learning. This environment is supportive, yet liberating;

learners are able to question, imagine, explore and take risks and critically reflect on their experiences within a safe intellectual and physical space. Finally, participation engenders a range of beneficial outcomes: greater confidence, curiosity and independence, improved communication skills, enhanced understanding and original thinking and increased knowledge.

### Research findings

The research findings support those of earlier studies into family learning and pedagogy in the gallery and highlight how creative learning occurs within *Start* and *Small Steps*:

- Tate Modern's environment and architecture is liberating. It is not a formal education scenario and the space enables parents and children to feel more relaxed and uninhibited
- The intellectual context framed by Tate's curatorial stance and learning centred education methodology encourages questioning and exploration. Plurality and fluidity in relation to making-meaning shifts the emphasis away from right/wrong answers, allowing learners to develop individual responses
- The positioning of the learner as active and dynamic encourages participants to take responsibility for their learning and embark on a creative process of doing and reflecting
- Dialogic exchange between all participants, rather than the transmission of information from parent to child or artist educator to parents/carers and children, enables everyone's views to be explored and knowledge generated more collaboratively. Creative learning takes place intergenerationally and individually, whilst the focus on talking enhances language and communication skills within small children
- The artist educator's approach (informed by her experience as an artist) exemplifies creative teaching. She adopts a learner-centred, non-didactic stance. She facilitates individuals' creative responses and ideas and gives space for learners to play, engage and reflect on their activities
- The design of the *Start* games and the approach adopted by the *Start* interpreters encourages active participation, experimentation and individual and collaborative investigation. Discussing choices with the interpreters encourages reflection, ideas development and helps make learning explicit.
- As a result learners develop independent learning strategies, grow in confidence and familiarity with the cultural institution and enhance their creative learning attributes.

Yet at the same time aspects of *Small Steps* and *Start* can have a negative impact on opportunities for creative learning amongst families:

- Children need to be controlled within the gallery (particularly in relation to touching work). This and the crowdedness of the spaces can cause stress and prevent families from enjoying or learning about the collection wholeheartedly

- Families can choose not to take up the opportunities Tate provides, or may not participate in the 'spirit' Tate intends. The family dynamic is influential; parents may not take part or can adopt a rigid or didactic stance, rather than the experimental, collaborative approach advocated by the gallery.
- Increasingly *Small Steps* involves children under two. Challenges exist in familiarising such children (and their parents/carers) with the gallery, providing relevant and enjoyable activities and sustaining interest within three two hour workshops. With this age group emphasis can be more on introducing them to the cultural space and having fun, thereby laying the groundwork for creative learning focused more specifically on works of art.

The gallery also seeks to attract families unfamiliar with modern art or visiting museums, who may not perceive the benefits of participating in the family programmes, despite Tate's best efforts, and hence do not take up the creative learning opportunities these initiatives present.

### **Conclusions and future considerations**

Tate's Family Programme builds on good practice established over several years and although not articulated explicitly, creative learning has always been integral to its methodology. At present there is government interest in the potential for creative learning to enhance children and young people's education and development, whilst positive intergenerational learning is also a priority. There is potential for further valuable research to be conducted within the Family Programme at Tate Modern to identify how creative learning enhances family development.

Analysis of the focused, artist-led activity exemplified by *Small Steps* could examine the value of creative learning in relation to literacy and communication skills enhancement amongst young children. *Small Steps* research could also consider how the programme can support the EYFS initiative. Further research on *Start* could address how creative intergenerational learning develops within families using the games in the gallery, or could explore progression in relation to creative learning. In other words how families' knowledge, confidence and skills increase with prolonged use of specific games.

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**Do teachers of family numeracy need to have a subject specialist qualification at  
Level 5?**

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Abstract

The discussion will be prefaced with the findings from our investigation into the barriers to family numeracy teachers taking up numeracy specialist qualifications and the analysis of data collected from FLLN providers around the country on the capability and capacity of their family numeracy teachers to meet the growing demand for family numeracy courses. This investigation has been part of the LSIS programme 'Extending the Reach and Improving the Quality of FLLN (ERIQ) Phase 2'; a report will be completed by January 2009.

Initial evidence suggests that only 21% of teachers delivering family numeracy programmes are fully qualified and 63% do not have a subject specialism. Other findings have shown some of the reasons for lack of take up of numeracy specialist qualifications. These include lack of information and understanding about the requirements for qualifications and the routes to qualifications, and the perception that these are not necessary for family numeracy teachers. The discussion would aim to address and challenge these perceptions. It would look at the possible double standards that are being applied to family literacy and family numeracy around qualifications of teaching staff. It would also encourage family learning managers and coordinators to reflect on the quality of family numeracy programmes and their outcomes for learners and whether improving the subject knowledge of the teachers would impact on this.

The data collected on the current level of qualifications would be shared and used to promote the discussion, along with case study material.

Recent research findings from NRDC into the effect on outcomes for learners of being taught by a teacher qualified in their subject would also be brought to the discussion.

The conclusions from the discussion would be used to feed into the final report and into making recommendations for future support for family numeracy teachers including access to suitable numeracy qualifications and on-going CPD. It would also support future planning for recruitment and training of additional teachers of these programmes, including up-skilling of fully qualified teachers of family literacy who would like to also teach family numeracy.

## **The Impact of Sutton Centre Community College, as an Extended Services and Lifelong Learning Provider, on a Local Community**

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### **Abstract**

In this presentation I describe how The Government's Extended Services agenda and the development of The College's role as a facilitator of Extended Services and the Core Offer, has enabled early-stage work to be carried out with families that helps overcome barriers to the raising of achievement. I explain how a 'progression route of courses enables adult participants, even those with a history of low educational attainment, to achieve success and gain qualifications, in some cases giving access to Higher Education.

I explain how parenting classes have led to the development of a suite of courses, leading to qualification and employment, which has been aided by a Leading Edge grant awarded in 2003

I describe how the grant has also enabled the College to run a Family Homework Scheme for children in Year 5 in local primary schools and those in Year 7 in the College itself. I show how the scheme encourages children and their parents to work on 'fun activities' together at home and attend workshops at special award ceremonies held at the College. I argue that this project has achieved its aim of involving those parents who are rarely seen in school and who would not attend formal parenting classes, action that could be seen as the first and most fundamental, step to raising achievement.

I use data from a pilot evaluation, based on interviews with twelve adult participants, to consider the extent to which engagement has led to employment. I have also examined the effect engagement in the courses has had upon their families and communities.

In summary I suggest that the Community College, in its role as a provider of Extended Services in the broadest sense, has the capacity to fulfill every aspect of the Every Child Matters agenda. I show that it can play an important part in improving the employability of parents in an area of high social disadvantage and have a powerful, positive, effect on the quality of the home as a safe, healthy and productive learning environment. I argue that it could have the potential to address some of the root causes of academic underachievement and disaffected behaviour in children and the social exclusion of some families. I stress that the project will also bring to children and families all the material benefits associated with employment and improved economic well-being.

## **Introduction to Sutton Centre Community College**

Since its inception in the early seventies, Sutton Centre Community College (an average-sized mixed comprehensive community school which offers educational provision for adults) has aimed to meet community needs in the widest sense. Since the provision of Extended Services in all mainstream schools has become a government priority, there has been an even stronger emphasis on the part of the College on developing ways in which the community is served. The current aim is to meet not only the Extended Services core offer, but also to fulfill the Every Child Matters agenda.

Sutton is an area of very low educational attainment (Nottinghamshire County Council 2001) and a high rate of juvenile crime (Police Report). It is an economically disadvantaged ex coal-mining community and in terms of ethnicity it is almost entirely white. In 2003 the school attracted a major grant (£60,000/year) from the Government Innovation Unit 'Leading Edge' Fund. The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the interwoven activities of Extended Services and Leading Edge have contributed to raising the achievement of pupils and parents at the college, feeder schools and partners, enabling better employment prospects, opportunities for volunteering and encouragement for parents to become involved in their children's learning through a family homework scheme.

## **An account of Extended Services**

Extended Services in Sutton became established in September 2006. At this time all schools in The Cluster - six primaries, one nursery and the College itself - agreed to pool funding allocated by NCC of £80,000. This arrangement had the potential to attract further grants and these have been added annually. Regular meetings of Cluster headteachers are led by the Extended Services Co-ordinator where decisions are made on how to spend the pooled funding.

The post of Participation Worker, funded partly by a grant from the Children's Fund and partly by a contribution from Cluster funds, enables crucial face-to-face work with parents to be carried out. Some teaching assistant hours in each of The Cluster schools is allocated specifically for Extended Services work. Administrative support is also paid for from Cluster funds.

The role of the Co-ordinator is to:

- liaise with the Cluster headteachers;
- manage the Participation Worker and Administrator;
- oversee meetings with Teaching Assistants;
- respond to course requests and offer development route suggestions;
- teach courses as appropriate;

- run workshops on numeracy, together with the Family Homework Co-ordinator, at the certificate ceremonies.

The role of the Participation Worker is to:

- produce details of provision in the locality relevant to the core offer; and;
- to distribute it to all parents whose children attend the schools in the cluster;
- consult with parents by promoting the development of coffee mornings;
- liaise with the Teaching Assistants;
- meet requests for specialist input
- consult with children.

The role of the Parent Support Officer (whose job is funded by Leading Edge grant) is to:

- work with the Year7 families at The College on matters such as homework.

### **An Account of The Leading Edge project**

This project came about as an extension of a research programme which was the subject of a doctoral thesis (Orchard 2004) that evaluated a parenting course, introduced in 1997. As a result of introducing the original parenting course, 'progression routes' were developed so that parents were able to enroll on further courses and train to work with children. Even participants with a history of low educational attainment achieved success. A Family Homework scheme was also introduced.

As the result of receiving the Leading Edge grant, the College was able to rent new premises next to the main college buildings to provide the base for the new 'Working with People' section of the adult Education Department and part-time support workers involved in the Family Homework Scheme. The Leading Edge team brought about major developments in the adult education provision offered by the college to the community. NVQ courses were offered for the first time and enrolments increased at a rapid rate. The Family Homework Scheme encouraged more parents to engage in their children's education since it did not require them to attend sessions in school.

Evidence provided in the analysis of case study and questionnaire data suggests that these initiatives could have the potential to improve both the educational quality of children's home environment and the level of social capital in the community.

### **The progression route: vocational courses**

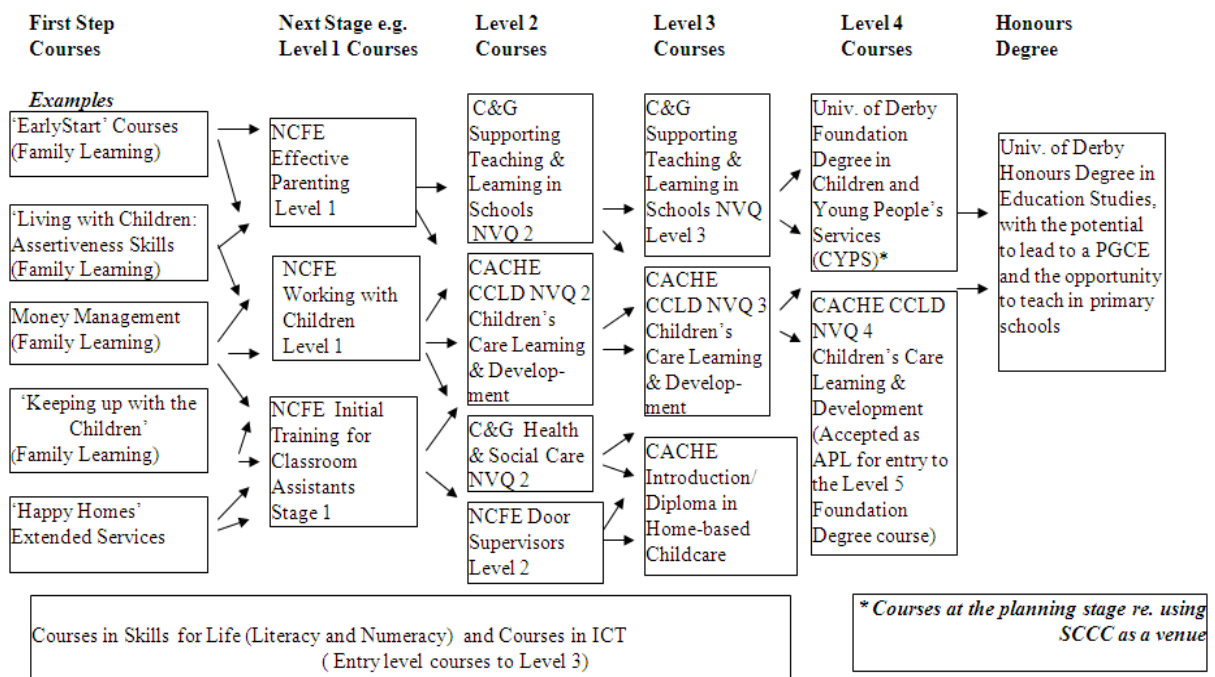
The 'Progression Route of courses is shown in Figure A. It was believed by the Leading Edge Team that attendance on a Level One course would develop the confidence and skills necessary for course members to tackle higher-level, vocational courses.

Every effort was made to help students overcome barriers; for example the college Adult Education Learner Support Fund assisted with childcare costs. The 'Working with People' section aimed to develop a particular style of provision that was effective in engaging inexperienced adult learners and helping them to remain engaged.

**The progression route: non vocational courses**

By drawing upon a range of LSC non-vocational funding streams, it was possible to run courses that provided the first step in encouraging returning learners, including the Effective Parenting course. One early funding stream, The Primary Partnership, enabled non-vocational courses to be run using primary schools as venues. At that time one member of the Leading Edge Team was already employed to administer this scheme. Through contact with Surestart she was able to arrange crèche facilities for daytime courses such as Effective Parenting' or 'Healthy Eating.' Using her experience as an adult education tutor, she ran courses, funded by the LSC Basic Skills Programme, where separate, but concurrent educational provision was made for parents and their pre-school children. It was this experience that enabled her to develop her later role as Extended Schools Co-ordinator.

**FIGURE A: 'PROGRESSION ROUTES' FROM FIRST STEP COURSES TO HIGHER LEVEL COURSES RUN THROUGH THE 'WORKING WITH PEOPLE' SECTION**



**The Family Homework Scheme**

The Family Homework Scheme was an outcome of the original research. Worksheets were written aimed at encouraging parents and children to work together at home, to develop aspects of parenting, such as helping children develop their learning and social/behavioural skills. End-of-course gift vouchers of £5.00 were presented at events to which all participating families were

invited. These provided opportunities for adult education tutors to run workshops and give information about other starter courses. Teaching assistant hours were allocated to administer the scheme in schools and provide extra support for the most vulnerable children. A part-time Family Homework Co-ordinator, was appointed to organise the distribution of sheets and prizes. Currently 540 families are taking part in Years 5 and 7. Nine primary schools and the College itself are participating. The cost of running the scheme is £18.00 per family.

### **Relevant Research**

Qualitative evidence (Orchard 2004) shows that parents gain in confidence in their parenting skills as a result of attending the parenting course. In terms of supporting their children's cognitive and social development. A number proceed to higher-level courses and some become more involved in community activities.

The most vulnerable children, with regard to being excluded from school, are those whose parents are unlikely to attend conventional parenting programmes. (Orchard 2004) It is therefore important to find ways of involving parents that are not dependent upon their physical presence, for example an interactive family homework scheme.

Writers such as MacBeath (2000) argue that extended school, 'full service,' provision is central to building bridges with the community and addressing the complex factors influencing a child's performance in school, such as effective parenting and economic stability.

The government report on Family Learning (Ofsted 2000) concludes that providers are going some way to meeting three key government policy objectives for education - raising achievement; widening participation and countering social exclusion.

**Findings**

## Extended Services

**FIGURE B: NUMBERS OF PARENTS ATTENDING COFFEE MORNINGS (2007-2008)**

School	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Participants	28	14	19	43	22	52	18

TOTAL=186

**FIGURE C: EVIDENCE FOR THE VALUE OF COFFEE MORNINGS (random case studies)**

Students	Coffee Mornings	Non Vocational Courses	Stage 1 Vocational Courses	Stage 2 Vocational Courses	Stage 3 Vocational Courses	Employment
A	a	d	h	k		
B	a	e			l	TA post
C		c			l	TA post
D	a				l	TA post
E	a	d		k	m	
F	a	d	g			Childminder
G	a			k	l	TA post
H	a	f		k	l	TA post
I	a		i	j		
J	a		h			
K	a		h			
L	a		h			
M		b	h			

TOTAL = 13

## KEY:

a = Coffee Mornings

b = Family Finance

c = Family Numeracy

d = Managing Challenging Behaviour

e = Playing with Language

f = Family Language (Spanish/French)

g = Introduction to home-based childcare

h = Teaching Assistants course Stage 1

i = Working with Children Level 1

j = Child Care Learning and Development Level 2

k = Teaching Assistants Level 2

l = Teaching Assistants Level 3

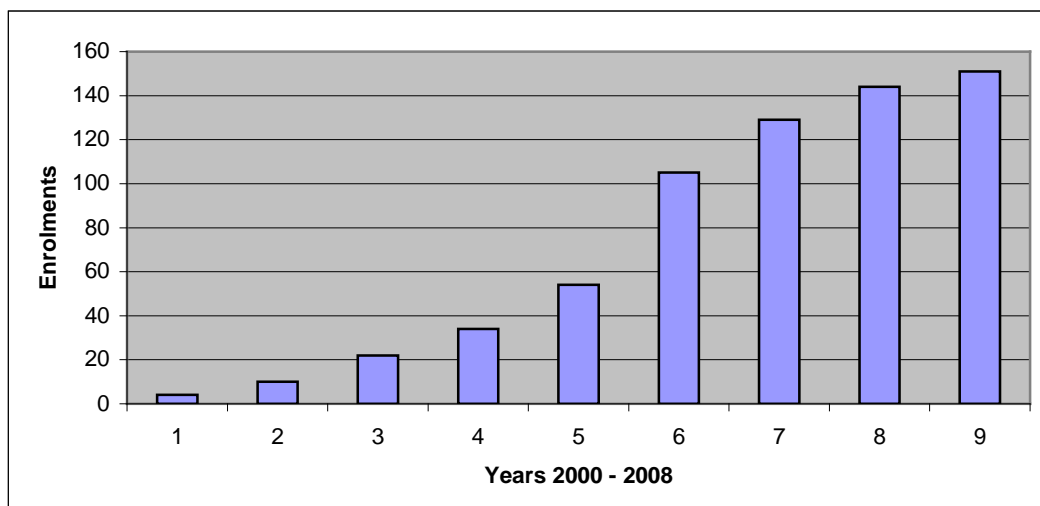
m = Child Care Learning and Development Level 3

### Leading Edge courses

Qualitative and quantitative evidence was used for the pilot evaluation. A small selection of comments is provided here. Enrolment figures were used for the examination of the extent to which the 'Progression Route' of courses had been taken up and what it had led to regarding employment. This data also provided information on the effect engagement in the courses have had upon families and communities. The case studies were based on interviews with twelve adult participants six on 'starter' courses and six on higher level vocational courses. Questionnaire evidence provided by 19 respondents, gathered at the end of the pilot year 2003-2004 was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Family Homework Scheme.

The following evidence shows the benefits of the progression route of courses for parents and adults in the community

**FIGURE D: PATTERN OF INCREASING ENROLMENTS - SEPT. 2000 - 2008**



<b>Key</b>	
1. Year 2000	6. 2005
2. Year 2001	7. 2006
3. Year 2002	8. 2007
4. Year 2003	9. 2008
5. Year 2004	

**FIGURE E: SUMMARY OF STUDENT PROGRESS 2007 - 2008**

<b>Student progress</b>	<b>% (n = 135)*</b>
Students who have gained employment as Teaching Assistants/ Early Years workers/ childminders	43
Students who are seeking employment following qualification	1
Students who have progressed to another course	28
Students who have completed one course only	25
Students who have embarked upon level 4 courses	2
Students who have been employed as course tutor	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Withdrawals = 6

**FIGURE F RESPONDENTS' HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE COURSES**

<b>Enrolment data for the respondents interviewed for the Pilot Evaluation</b>	<b>% n=12</b>
Those progressing from Primary Project or EarlyStart courses to Effective Parenting (Level 1 certificate course)	67
Those progressing from Effective Parenting to Teaching Assistant's courses	58

The information showed the comparatively high percentage of students progressing from 'starter' courses to higher level vocational courses.

The following evidence is based on students' comments on the value of the courses

*Benefits for the student:*

- A boost to self-confidence and a sense of fulfillment.
- The confidence to enroll on further courses: "I would never have dreamed of enrolling on another course. I feel I can do it now."
- Improved literacy skills. The courage to join the library.
- Improved communication and assertiveness skills.
- Qualifications for employment; paid employment; a higher rate of pay.

*Benefits for the family:*

- Improved relationships at home. "We talk things through more."
- Greater assistance given with learning and homework: "He has learned pre-reading skills. He ..... follows print from left to right."
- Better behaviour management skills. One student had introduced a regular bedtime as a result of attending the course.
- Vulnerable families (e.g. single parents who had been victims of violent relationships) have received support. "There is more mutual regard at home.'

*Benefits for the community*

- Greater involvement in voluntary work in schools.
- Contribution to college initiatives in producing educational materials.
- Giving support to friends, e.g. those who are single parents and whose children have behaviour problems that are the result of ineffective parenting.

**Leading Edge: the Family Homework Scheme**

The aims of the pilot evaluation were to investigate the extent to which the scheme encouraged families to become and remain engaged and in what ways they benefited. The fact that 72% of parents said that they would not have attended support sessions at school suggested that they did represent the 'harder to reach.'

*Comments made by parents on whether they and their children enjoyed completing the sheets:*

'Yes! She really focused on all the questions and tasks.'

'C seemed keener to do his homework if I had to help him. He enjoyed all these sheets.'

'Yes I got to spend time with her and working out the questions. It was fun.'

'You also learn with the children things you might not have known before; quality time together.'

*Comments made by parents on whether they and their children benefit and in what ways:*

'E enjoyed doing the sheets. It helped her reading & spelling.'

'Writing has improved.'

'It made him actually do homework rather than leaving it.'

### **Summary of findings**

The potential of Extended Services is indicated by the number of parents attending the coffee mornings. Some of these parents may be those who are unlikely to engage with their children's learning or develop their own. The likelihood that the coffee mornings provide the incentive to attend further courses is a further indication of their value. It can be argued that Extended Services has the capacity to supplement a raft of strategies, like the Progression Route of courses and the Family Homework Scheme, for engaging a category of parent learner often described as 'hard to reach'.

The pivotal role, in most of the Extended Services and 'Working with People' courses, of topics such as behaviour management and communicating effectively actually supports the development of social capital in the form of constructive interpersonal interactions (Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham 2003). This is of particular importance in raising the confidence & achievement of children through improved parenting. It also has the capacity to actually discourage the emergence of negative social capital in the form of anti-social peer group norms (Utting & Henricson 1993). Early qualitative evidence on the benefits of the Family Homework Scheme suggest that it has the capacity to promote such learning.

There is evidence that the initiatives described here have enabled the College to address some of the root causes of academic underachievement and disaffected behaviour in children. It goes without saying that they have the potential to bring to children and families all the material benefits associated with employment and improved economic well-being. Government policy could usefully consider the strong potential of the community college in improving the quality of learning environment that children experience both at home and in the wider community.

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## Working with disadvantaged and isolated ethnic groups

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Read On – Write Away!

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### Abstract

A narrative presentation, which will draw upon the experiences of a Gypsy/Traveller family learning project in Derbyshire, will enable delegates to consider how they would approach engaging disadvantaged and isolated ethnic groups in learning.

A brand new NIACE Lifeline publication '*Working with Gypsy/Traveller families to support literacy development*' shares the story of the project and aims to give professionals a brief insight and understanding of the Gypsy/Traveller cultures and helps to breakdown some of the barriers that perpetuate disadvantage. It is down to earth, realistic and practical as it explores the experience of a partnership project working with Gypsy/Traveller families to establish a learning culture. It gives ideas of how to engage and support families, develop parents' and children's skills, and to increase access to mainstream services.

Many of these ideas are transferable to working with other marginalised communities. Through a presentation and discussion, the workshop will explore the identity of a community, their needs and aspirations. It will look at what stereotypes should be challenged and how, while at the same time recognising and valuing community traditions and heritage. It will examine how learning in the home is affected by the family context and will consider how to construct partnerships which can effectively address key issues which may be barriers to learning. It will look at how to adapt conventional delivery models including issues such as engagement, assessment, retention, progression and achievement. It will explore ways to measure impact to meet the outcomes required by providers and funders.

Delegates will be encouraged to think about their own settings and delivery models and how to adapt these and apply them to isolated communities.

**Playing 2 Learn Family Training at the National Communities Resource Centre in Cheshire – a successful, innovative residential family learning programme supporting parents/carers to support their own children’s learning process at home and in the wider community through creative and physical structured play activities.**

Kath Stott

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### **The Project**

The Playing 2 Learn (Family training weekends) project follows on from a successful three year pilot project funded under the Strengthening Families Grant from the DfES. The success of the pilot scheme, its evaluation and the ethos behind the National Communities Resource Centre (a registered charity offering training and support to all living and working in low-income areas throughout the United Kingdom to develop their skills, confidence and capacity to tackle problems and reverse poor conditions) resulted in a successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund which fully funded the project for a further three years. The Playing 2 Learn Family Training project runs family activity weekends which bring together families from low income communities across England to play, learn and gain practical skills together. Knowledge, tools and confidence gained will enable parents to improve their children’s learning ability. Eight ‘Playing 2 Learn’ training weekends take place annually and accommodate up to 35 people or approximately 8 families (depending on family size).

### **The Venue**

The venue for the family training is Trafford Hall a beautiful Georgian house in rural Cheshire countryside easily accessed by rail, bus or road. The residential family accommodation is in the recently built stable block which houses 2 large training rooms, 11 en suite family rooms, one with disabled access (for individuals/families with mobility issues not allowing the use of stairs we have chalets on ground level, at close proximity to the training suite), a large conservatory, kitchen facilities and alfresco meeting areas. It is set in 14 acres of beautiful gardens, woods, and meadows providing an inspirational environment with the gardens providing an excellent space for in and outdoor learning activities,

as well as an ideal place to relax and unwind. Trafford Hall is able to accommodate and cater for the diverse social and cultural needs and prides itself on being an exciting, relaxing and welcoming environment to all of its delegates. The residential nature of the course is integral to its proven success – by removing families from an assumed reality dictated by their geographical home setting, it is possible to give everyone an equal footing for the course and to allow individuals to arrive with a clean view of themselves and others. Everyone has the same accommodation and access to meals and support from the organisation at Trafford Hall. Families take part in a snap-shot view of a different living environment for the duration of the project, which has as its main aim, to provide a positive non judgemental and supportive environment for everyone coming through its doors. This snap shot experience functions as a widening experience, offering challenges socially, emotionally and physically – the snap shot, in essence is an isolated observation for families of another way of thinking, doing or acting. It allows an opportunity for potential change over a very short and intense period of time. Most importantly the training programme is great fun to take part in!

### **Getting in touch with families**

Families from low income, ethnically diverse communities across England are contacted via their support organisation (statutory services of all kinds, community groups/organisations) and where appropriate, will apply and be offered a place on the programme. Contact and all administration is made via the support organisations to allow the greatest degree of support to the families before, during and after attending the project. The use of the organisation allows continuity of support and keeps the focus a multi agency approach, understanding that our project is intended as a snapshot and stepping stone to re focus families on the benefits of play in supporting their own children in their educational development.

### **Families are central to the success of Playing 2 Learn**

The project views 'families as the first teachers' and clearly reminds families that they are in a partnership with educational establishments (pre schools, nurseries, schools, after school clubs etc) and are not simply handing over the responsibility for their children's education and well being to these establishments. Parents are the key to a socially and emotionally balanced child and they are to be encouraged to feel that they are able to fulfil this role and understand the long term impact of play integrated into day to day living. In the governments present consultation paper on Play Strategy (Dec: 2008) it recognises the very baseline impact of play as it states , 'Young people and their parents all recognise that play is a vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood, supporting children's physical, emotional, social and educational development'. Play is integral to the development of the child and to the relationship the child has with his /her parent/carer. The Play Strategy use 'play' to 'describe what children and young people do when

they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons, balancing fun with a sense of respect for themselves and others'. Playing 2 Learn uses 'play' as a tool and allows the whole family to interact using play in a wide capacity to act as a common focus. Play has always been recognized an integral to the early learning process. Play was first put forward by Fredrich Frobel (1782-1852), a German Educationalist who argued that children's exploration of a wide variety of objects and environments is essential to an understanding of cognitive and verbal understanding. The Charter of Children's Rights (1989) stated that every child in the world should have the right to play as play itself makes a large contribution to the individuals development in the imagination, in feelings and emotions, in relationships, in thinking widely and out-with concrete ideas, in developing the spiritual and moral self and in creating the physical self. The Government stated in Every Child Matters that their aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Each of these points can be supported by a strong and integral play strategy and by placing play as central to the development of children and their family at home and in the wider community. Playing 2 learn Family training has this as its focus.

### **Families on the Project**

The family, for this project means a social unit living together – it can be made up of children with the parenting role being taken up by parents, grandparents, carers, civil partnerships, friends, lone parents or any other adult member who is of importance to the children in question in that social unit. The project is for the whole family and believes that learning and spending time as a family in an informal and cohesive learning environment will, encourage children and adults to feel positive about learning, improve literacy and numeracy skills, help parents to understand how their children learn, enable parents to better support their children's learning, increase parenting skills and enable parents to re-engage with their own learning and personal development (The National Family Learning Network). Families require a basic understanding of what the project expects of them and must be willing to take part in it. The role of the organisation is to work with the project to identify appropriate families to take part and ensure our criteria are met in this selection – families are selected from areas of social and economic deprivation, are in receipt of minimal wages or have no employment, have no or minimal formal educational qualifications and should have an awareness of the need to interact with their children as a tool to support learning in their own family.

### **The Taking Part**

The activities throughout each weekend will focus on a theme (the environment, carnival, puppetry, story sacks, games) but has many wider activities surrounding the theme. Each activity is selected to develop particular learning skills for children and their family e.g. hand to eye coordination, language and communication, co-operation and building confidence and self esteem. Families work together throughout the whole weekend allowing friendships based on understanding and parenting to develop. Parents are at all times throughout the weekend responsible for their children and with the shared support of the trainers and the other families involved, can share problems, ideas and thoughts on ways to support children in the family and wider social and community context . Both adults and children take part in evaluating the work on the project throughout the weekend using a variety of strategies to suit different ages and abilities. The project is facilitated by five experienced trainers (male and female) – the balance between male and female trainers is essential and allows positive male and female role models for the children whilst also ensuring that male carers/parents on the programme are never isolated in a female arena. It highlights the importance of the role of the father in the family unit and ensures that the role of father and mother are reflected equally.

### **Evaluation**

The project is being monitored and evaluated by the London School of Economics – the evaluators take part in a number of the programmes and conduct informal interviews with a sample of the families during the actual weekends project and in a series of follow up interviews in 3,6 months and annually. A report will be written up at the end of each year of the project. A supporting tool kit is issued to each family and referring organisation which acts as a back up to the activities, an explanation of how to run the activity and resources required, an explanation as to why they the activities have been used and a reminder of the benefits gained form play to the child.

**The Home as a Learning Environment: A presentation of the work which WEA are doing in the North East of Scotland**

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**Abstract**

**The Home as a Learning Environment**

The EPPE (Effective Provision for Pre School Education.), The Enabling Parents Study 2004, and The Birth to School (BTSS) research projects influenced Scottish Government Policies as they all indicate that one of the most significant factors in children's attainment is the home environment and that positive interaction between parents and their children in the early years can significantly influence children's behavioural social and academic learning. This has moved the focus in Scottish Government policy from the school to the home as first educators and policy documents such as 'Getting it Right for Every Child and 'The Early Years Intervention Policy' challenge Local Authorities to provide effective provision for vulnerable families to reduce inequalities by supporting parents to provide the best home learning environment for young children.

The WEA's response to this has been to develop an accredited parenting programme to support community parent groups, with their work with vulnerable young parents. The units add value to community parenting groups by providing formal recognition of the vital role parents and carers play as the most influential educators in the early years. This is an important aspect as we are often working with young girls who have been disaffected from mainstream education and have left school with out any formal qualifications and find the challenges of parenting overwhelming. The programme is made up of four half credit units at level 4 in the Scottish Qualifications Framework, they explore parenting and child development in the context of the family and encourage personal development through the natural interest parents have in their children's learning, and through exploring the home as a learning environment. An important aspect of the course is keeping a reflective diary, which not only helps to embed the learning but also acts as a non-threatening way to improve literacy skills.

The workshop at the conference will a presentation about the 'Making the most of the children' project the journey we have travelled, the barriers and successes with an opportunity for questions and answers.

## **What helps and hinders multi-agency working in work with families, parents and family learning?**

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### **Abstract**

This research explores some of the theories and complexities of multi agency/ inter-disciplinary working in the context of work with families. Running clearly through the literature on multi agency working is discourse about the need for professionals to change their practice and work together to ensure better services for children and families.

Multi agency/interagency working is a complex process. The idea of multi agency/interagency working is often seen as the solution to solving social problems but there is a tendency to under-acknowledge tensions and contradictions.

The concept of collaborative working asks for people to re examine their roles and negotiate a different way of working. However, while legislation can be altered rapidly, changes to professional practice are harder to implement. If professionals are not prepared or able to make the changes then new legislation becomes irrelevant. Robinson et al., (2004) explains that this may happen as 'changes in practice aimed at more multi agency working could threaten professionals' sense of themselves as specialists through the 'blurring' of responsibilities.

In working across different disciplines and agencies there can be conflict, anxiety and misunderstandings which impact on team working, including tensions around information and knowledge sharing. As Robinson et al. (2004) found there can be rivalry and conflict between disciplines and so time is required to build up trust in order to minimize this.

### **Topic for discussion:**

When there is a desire for quick fix solutions how do we ensure that organizations and individuals are able to truly work together to meet the needs of children, and families?

### **Argument**

The concept of collaborative working asks for people to re examine their roles and negotiate a different way of working. However, while legislation can be altered rapidly, changes to professional practice are harder to implement. If professionals are not prepared to make the changes then new legislation becomes irrelevant. Robinson et al., (2004) explains that this may happen as 'changes

in practice aimed at more multi agency working could threaten professionals' sense of themselves as specialists through the 'blurring' of responsibilities.

Often professionals, particularly when they feel threatened by organisational and policy changes, defend their particular discipline by criticism of the 'other'. When professional identity and language has been developed through years of training, practice and friendships it is natural that people feel a loyalty and will defend their work against the work of others. Lounsbrough and O'Leary describe this: 'Entrenched patterns of professional behaviour lead to scepticism and distrust of the capabilities of professionals from other backgrounds. The temptation to return to familiar habits in the face of major uncertainty can be powerful.' (2005:12-13)

Working across different disciplines and agencies there can be conflict, anxiety and misunderstandings which impact on team working, including tensions around information and knowledge sharing. As Robinson et al. (2004) found there can be rivalry and conflict between disciplines and so time is required to build up trust in order to minimize this. One issue which can cause these tensions is the understanding of terminology.

Terminology can create barriers between professionals of different disciplines and between professionals and the public. The use of jargon can be used to demonstrate professional knowledge and status and can 'be used to 'exclude' some team members from contributing fully to discussions' (Robinson et al. 2004). In 'The Links between Family Learning and Parenting Programmes' which explores the relationship between family learning and parenting skills services in local authority settings (Lamb et al., 2007) terminology was identified as one of the key difficulties of developing trust, building a shared understanding and collaborative working.

The literature discusses the way in which all of these rivalries discussed earlier can be minimized. It suggests that, where professionals and organisations feel that they are being encouraged and supported to work together to meet targets, such tension is less likely to occur. 'Agencies are more likely to collaborate with other initiatives if they believe that the efforts of both organisations are contributing towards meeting not only the same targets, but that those targets are seen to be meaningful.' (Robinson et al. 2004)

Maychell and Bradley (1991) explore the importance of shared aims and objectives and strategy in overcoming differences: 'Without the support of a joint policy which bridges the boundaries between the various statutory and voluntary bodies individuals' attempts to establish links across agencies are inevitably limited'. (1991:11 cited in Atkinson 2005:8)

One of the key aspects of professionals being able to move from different areas of expertise is that they need to be able to gain new skills, adapt and expand existing skills. This ability to be open to change and new ways of working requires time and support and, as Robinson et al. (2004) found, the complexity of changing practices is not always acknowledged, 'an area which is often overlooked, is the need for professionals to rethink their work roles, freeing themselves up to move between different working practices and activities'. (Robinson et al. 2004). While multi agency working is used in almost every policy document and strategic plan and is seen as key to providing effective services, there is an underlying assumption that this form of working is unproblematic and does not create conflicts between different professions. (Challis et al., 1988).

The complexity of bringing professionals from different disciplines together is discussed by Gunnarsson et al. (1997), who highlight that professional identity and roles are built up over time, through training, and socialisation as individuals learn the terminology, the appropriate language, the ways of behaving and viewing the world: 'each profession has a certain way of viewing reality, a certain way of highlighting different aspects of the world around it. Socialization into a profession means learning how to discern the relevant facts, how to construct and use a grid or a lens to view reality in a professionally relevant way.' (1997:10) They explain that, once gained, these skills are often not easily changed or cast off.

The complexity of joining up services requires time, money and commitment, 'to develop new ways of working and interagency collaboration'. One of the most important factors for effective multi agency working was the 'attitudinal shift required'. (Atkinson et al., 2002:4). This process needs professionals to have opportunities to understand different theoretical perspectives and work practices in order to overcome possible tensions, suspicions and protectiveness of their own professional practice and clients. This is backed up by Maychell and Bradley who found that 'developing interagency initiatives and new work patterns can seem to pose a threat to individual workers or groups of workers, particularly if in the process 'their' clients become the responsibility of other professionals' (1991:38 cited in Atkinson et al.,2002:8). These differences in organisational culture and working practices can lead to tensions and rivalry between professionals and the defending of work boundaries.

In a paper presented in September 2001, (Anning) explored the concept of communities of practice and the way in which professional knowledge is 'created and used in different ways through the separate training and cultures of workplaces'. She identifies the way tensions can arise from 'deconstruction of versions of knowledge (what I know)' which professionals' bring from their previous settings and experiences and to the 'co construction' of new integrated teams creating 'alternative versions of knowledge and ways of working (who I am)'. This process of

deconstruction is important if professionals are to question their professional practice and develop new forms of practice.

One way in which it has been suggested that these agency differences can be overcome, and a common language developed, is through joint training. Scrine (1989:161) writes that '... no progress will be made in interdisciplinary understanding until, as well as practice experience of working in multidisciplinary settings, there are opportunities for shared academic teaching in professional education' (cited in Atkinson et al., 2002:9).

However this complex development of multi agency working is often left to chance rather than supported through a structured process. Robinson et al. (2004) point out there are 'few conceptual frameworks for setting up, managing and delivering 'joined up services', staff are often just expected to make these changes without clarity of expectations, working practices or training to make it happen.

For some people this process of change can mean moving out of their comfort zone (Trifonas 2003) and engendering feelings of anger and resentment. While for others the process of change brings a sense of energy and enthusiasm. Anning's research found that, for some people working in multi-disciplinary teams enabled a fresh approach that generated 'creative energy', as long as people felt that their extended professional knowledge was recognised. (Robinson et al., 2004)

A useful framework to examine this process of change is Engeström's Activity Theory (Engeström 2001) which requires a new way of looking at both problems and solutions. In this model contradictions are seen as positive, they are seen as 'sources of change and development' and not as problems or conflicts.

Engeström explains that, an 'expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. A full cycle of expansive transformation may be understood as a collective journey through the zone of proximal development of the activity.' (Engeström 2001)

The paper explores interagency literature and finds that in much of the literature effectiveness is seen as containing and reducing conflict. But Engeström believes that to really work collaboratively professionals and organisations must 'co-configure' to create new identities through the process of expansive learning.

This is echoed by Trevillion and Bedford (2003) who suggest that, multi agency/interagency working requires professionals to go beyond simply understanding different professional 'languages': 'Learning about "holism" and "flexibility" does not just mean acquiring new knowledge and skills. It also involves the construction of a new interprofessional self.' (Trevillion and Bedford, 2003:219)

### **Conclusion**

Multi agency/interagency working is a complex process. The idea of multi agency/interagency working is often seen as the solution to solving social problems but there is a tendency to under-acknowledge tensions and contradictions.

When there is a desire for quick fix solutions how do we ensure that organizations and individuals are able to truly work together to meet the needs of children, and families without?

In order to deal with these complexities, which come from bringing together various professionals through multi agency work, the concerns of every individual need to be brought together. There is an overarching need for professionals to be able to set out their personal and professional concerns, their knowledge and skills and to openly and honestly debate their differences. To find new ways of working and to respect each others expertise requires clear opportunities to develop new skills, knowledge and practices.

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## Targeted Family Learning – Working with families who gain the most benefit

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### **Abstract**

This discussion session aims to explore different strategies to target Family Learning provision to those families that would benefit the most and to raise awareness of the Family Learning Local Authority Group.

We will look at why we target Family Learning provision including a brief explanation of motivations the Derby team have to target provision. We will then look at how we target Family Learning provision, including the environmental factors to be taken into consideration.

We have identified 3 broad strategies we use to target provision. These are data, links with other agencies and alternative funding streams. For each strategy listed we will briefly explain how this works in Derby with specific examples. We will then facilitate discussions in groups to examine advantages and disadvantages of these examples and capture alternative methods. For example under “Data” we will explain the way we use 2 forms of Data and discuss their advantages and disadvantages and hope to capture other data sources used to target provision. After discussing these 3 strategies will then ask the group, through discussion, to draw up a list of alternative strategies.

Finally, we will spend 5 minutes highlighting the work of the Family Learning Local Authority Group and the benefits of becoming involved for managers of Family Learning provision.

**The national evaluation of family literacy programmes, 2008-09**

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**Abstract**

The only previous national evaluation of family literacy programmes in England took place in 1994-95, though there was a follow-up in 1997 and a further study of programmes for new groups in 1997-98. Thus there has been for several years a need for new evidence on the effectiveness, and even the spread and character, of such programmes. In late 2007 the then Quality Improvement Agency commissioned a new evaluation, to be carried out jointly by NIACE (on behalf of the Alliance with Tribal, and therefore representing continuity from the Basic Skills Agency, which commissioned the earlier work) and the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy at the Institute of Education, University of London.

The new evaluation covers many more areas than the three in England involved in 1994-95, is aiming for a substantially larger sample than the 362 families involved then, and is looking in particular at both standard programmes (formerly called 'intensive', 60 or more hours) and short programmes (30-50 hours). The methods are both quantitative and qualitative. Background information on the participating parents and children is being gathered, together with (wherever possible) objective data on their reading and writing attainments both at the beginning and the end of the course, so that progress can be measured. Parents are being asked about their attitudes to literacy, reading habits, and the frequency of literacy activities they engage in with their children. Some parents are being interviewed, and some children too, using an innovative approach developed at Sheffield. Some sessions are being observed, and programme staff and coordinators are being interviewed. A suite of instruments is being used, some specially devised, others already in use in the field, and even a couple inherited or adapted from the earlier studies.

This presentation will be in the nature of a progress report, and will give details of the samples, instruments and achievements of the evaluation, though any findings will be very preliminary since a great deal of the data-gathering and especially the analysis of the data has yet to be carried out.

## Partnership With Libraries

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When I became a ULR one of my primary objectives was to form a partnership with Sheffield Libraries. I recently had the opportunity to attend a conference arranged by Vital Link - a division of the Reading Agency. Present at this conference were ULR's, and representatives from the Reading Agency, unionlearn and Vital Link. This conference was arranged by Dave Kendall, Project Manager for the Reading Agency. This gave participants an opportunity to discuss action plans, share best practice and where appropriate form Learning partnerships. I was extremely fortunate to meet & talk with Andrew Stansall – Community Development Librarian from Sheffield Libraries. I followed this up with a meeting with Andrew the following week at Sheffield Central Library.

It was agreed that our first action would be to publicise all the services provided by libraries:

- Up to **15** books can be borrowed **for free** at any time
- You can reserve books on-line, then collect from the library of your choice
- You can return books to **any** library, not just the one you borrowed it from
- Services including Learning & Development courses, forum groups and other initiatives

Andrew provided me with posters and leaflets to publicise Sheffield Libraries, which I displayed in the workplace and desk dropped to colleagues. I invited Andrew and his colleague Sue Taylor to promote Sheffield Libraries by manning a stall in the reception of our DWP building on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November. They brought with them a host of promotional material, and provided library cards to colleagues on the day, which was fantastic!

This event went extremely well as we had a 'captive audience' – people leaving and entering the building through our reception at dinnertime. They also took contact details of colleagues who wanted to have a 'behind the scenes' guided tour of the Central Library, and we are now arranging for an after hours guided tour of Sheffield Library.

I am also arranging for a mobile library to attend our building once a fortnight, and I will be rolling out the Six Book Challenge early next year, along with next years range of Quick Read books. I have subsequently set up a Reading Group where colleagues bring in books they have read, and

borrow other peoples books, and this has led to a forum where colleagues discuss their reading activities and share their book reviews & opinions.

## **Why we need to make every home a “reading home”.**

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### **Shared storybook reading**

Contributions to pre-school learning of children neither have to be formal activities nor undertaken by qualified practitioners. Research has highlighted the educational value of informal activities between parents and children that commonly take place in the home. One such activity, shared storybook reading, has been consistently identified as having a positive effect on the acquisition of literacy skills. By actively encouraging this type of activity the Bookstart programme aims to inform parents of the benefits of storybook reading and supply them with the materials to make it a part of their regular routine.

### **The benefits of learning in the home**

Research has consistently demonstrated the benefits of parents and their children reading together at home. The home is a safe and trusted place in which children are naturally eager to participate in activities with their parents. Children are also particularly responsive to encouragement made by their parents. Furthermore, the emotional closeness that arises as books are enjoyed together, adds an additional quality to the learning experience. A child's imagination is unleashed as a parent conveys the excitement and magic of an unfolding story.

Shared storybook reading between parent and child therefore often makes for a natural and productive learning experience. A home environment in which parents actively introduce their children to books has been shown to nurture the type of literacy skills and understanding that leads to the later acquisition of literacy. Children become familiar with the page-structure of books, learn how to identify print and orient themselves to story structures (Baker, Frenandez Fein, Scher & Williams, 1998, Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002, Snow & Ninio, 1986). This kind of shared experience with a trusted parent is believed to further support the acquisition of literacy by encouraging interest and motivation towards books and reading. Studies demonstrate that children who are read to from a very young age tend to display greater interest in reading when they are older. By promoting book sharing in the home Bookstart seeks to empower parents to take advantage of this unique opportunity to nurture their children's development.

### **Shared reading and engagement of the child**

Studies suggest that it is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations (Crain-Threson & Dale, 1992). According to Whitehurst and his colleagues (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan *et al.*, 1988) active engagement of the child predicted his or her later language and literacy skills more strongly than did any of the parental variables related to book reading. This research highlights the importance of parents actively engaging their child in the reading process. This occurs when a parent ensures that the child actually participates in the unfolding story. A parent can ask questions to focus their children's attention, to check comprehension, and to elicit labels for objects and descriptive attributes, such as colour, size and number. Children can also be asked for explanations of behaviour, predictions, and connections between events or objects in the story and those in the child's own life. For example, a parent can ask their child to draw inferences about characters and situations in a story; "How would you feel if mummy left at you at a birthday party like Alfie's mummy is doing with Alfie?" or "Why does Billy have a strange feeling in his tummy thinking about going to his new school?" followed by, "Do you think you will feel the same when you go to your new school?" The value of this type of cognitively challenging talk is that it takes children away from the here and now and helps them to use language to reflect upon themselves.

Of course such structured conversation is a routine feature of shared reading for many parents. The key point is not that this type of practice is necessarily unusual but that parents should be given an endorsement of their good practice where it already exists and given encouragement to adopt it where it is more infrequent or absent. Bookstart performs precisely this role by making the value and fun of shared book reading accessible and appealing to all. Moreover, each of the packs provides information to encourage parents to use the books provided in a way that actively engages their child. The guidance booklet for parents that is included in each of the three packs underlines the importance of the shared reading experience and encourages parents to actively inspire the imagination of their children through the practice of storytelling. Evaluation of the programme suggests that many parents understand the importance of the quality of the reading experience and act upon it in their own use of the Bookstart materials.

### **The importance of active engagement**

The full value of reading with young children is most effectively realised when the child and adult engage in conversations that support interpreting and constructing meaning. The oral language abilities developed through this type of explanatory talk is crucial to literacy development. From a very young age children learn to use sounds and words for an ever-increasing number of purposes. In addition to discovering the power of language to make requests and demands in

more subtle and powerful ways, children also begin telling stories about personal experiences and communicating information and ideas. The link between language skills and reading lies in the way children comprehend words by the individual sounds that constitute them. This developing phonemic awareness allows children to expand their language capabilities and therefore assume greater control over their environment.

Because oral language acts as a precursor to literacy, we can see why book reading is of such value. With books children encounter a broader range of words than they do in typical conversations. Also, they can construct imaginary worlds using the text and pictures as a springboard, and when discussing books they get a chance to reflect on language and to develop skills interpreting and constructing extended discourse. Shared book reading is beneficial, then, because it involves the child in conversations that interpret and construct meaning.

### **Evidence and outcomes**

Among the many sources of compelling evidence of the benefits of shared reading is Beals, De Temple and Dickinson's recent study of the outcomes of different learning environments (Beals, De Temple, & Dickinson, 1994). Beals et al undertook a longitudinal study of children who, during their toddler years, had been exposed to shared reading in the home against a control group who had not. At the age of five, the children underwent a series of tests to measure their language and literacy skills. The tests included a narrative production task in which the child is asked to tell a story about a group of bears shown in three photographic slides that the evaluator cannot see. The purpose of the task is to evaluate the child's ability to produce a narrative for someone who does not share the same visual field. In addition, the study used a Comprehensive Assessment Programme (CAP) which assesses a child's print skills, such as recognition of print words, identification of alphabet letters, the comprehension of story and print concepts, as well as phonemic awareness and writing skills.

The study found that incidence of structured conversation in shared reading was correlated with the child's performance on the CAP, the test of early print skills. In other words, the parent who makes book reading a rich and cognitively challenging event is also helping his or her child to develop a familiarity with how books work and what you need to do to read one. Engaged shared reading was also shown to support the more sophisticated skills of story comprehension and story production. This relationship was evidenced by children's improved performance on telling the bear story and better story comprehension.

Overall, recent research provides powerful evidence to suggest that the language interactions of young children with adults are important determinants of their literacy development. Because literacy development is closely related to the development of language skills, challenging verbal

interaction with adults can be a powerful promoter of early literacy for young children. The shared reading experience advocated by Bookstart speaks to precisely this kind of practice. It is hoped that through the book packs Bookstart can make a significant contribution to establishing book sharing as a routine feature of family life across the country.

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