

Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the Development of Lifelong Learning

26 September 2005



Family Learning in County Durham

Report of Director of Education

Purpose of the Report

1. To explain a project known as Family Learning in County Durham which has been supported by funding from the Single Regeneration Budget and to consider how effective this initiative has been. A presentation will be given by June Davison, Family Learning Co-ordinator.

Background

2. In 2000, the Education Service and the Family Learning Action Group (FLAG) took the lead in establishing a countywide family learning partnership. Prior to this Education in the Community had built up over a decade of experience in helping parents and children improve their literacy and numeracy skills through family learning.
3. Led by Education Service, the Family Learning Partnership brings together Education, Social Care and Health, Culture and Leisure, the county's four Further Education Colleges, the Workers Education Association, District Councils and Durham's Primary Care Trusts.
4. An evaluation of the partnership project carried out by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in November 2004 recommended that the County Council, through the Education Service, should assume responsibility for the development of a Countywide Strategy for Family Learning. Education in the Community are taking the lead in responding to this recommendation.

What is Family Learning

5. Family learning involves parents, carers and children in enjoying learning together and can range from structured literacy and numeracy focused courses to workshops and tasters in ICT, the Arts or sport. Our definition of family learning is inclusive recognising that self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment of learning have an effect on achievement. The breadth and range of family learning offered by our partners reflects this.

'Family Learning in County Durham'

6. Family Learning in County Durham aims to
 - Develop a strategy for family learning in County Durham.
 - Promote links between projects involving family learning.
 - Inform County Durham Learning Partnership and County Durham Learning and Skills Council of identified wants and needs in relation to family learning in order to:-

- Increase the capability of parents to support their children's learning and through this raise their own skills levels, aspirations, expectations and confidence.
 - Increase the capacity of local families to take up education and training and to progress to higher levels.
 - Improve the performance of children through parents and children working together.
7. Our lead partner, Education in the Community, recently received a Grade 2 in inspection (Adult Learning Inspectorate) and has been included in a Department for Education and Skills good practice guide.
 8. The partnership project has received national recognition for its work. Presentations and workshops have been delivered at national and regional conferences.
 9. A county-wide parenting network and a countywide working with men network (Including Men) are supported by the family learning partnership. A recent questionnaire to head teachers pointed to the role schools see family learning playing in raising achievement.
 10. Since 2000 the curriculum delivered by partners has expanded to encompass wider family learning and draw together additional partners. This has included
 - Family Learning through Football and Coaching with Sunderland Association Football Club
 - Early Start, for parents of 0-3 year olds, with local Sure Starts and nurseries.
 - Families First, an outreach initiative with Peterlee Educational Action Zone.
 - Family learning in the workplace with Walkers Snack Foods.
 - Development of a family learning website www.family-learning.org.uk
 11. Area Family Learning Operational groups operate across the county:-
 - Easington
 - Derwentside
 - Sedgefield
 - Tees and Wear
 - Durham City and Chester-le-Street
 12. A wide package of staff and volunteer training and development has evolved and is now incorporated into the Education Development Service Continuing Professional development programme.

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