

Parent champion programmes

A guide for family
learning providers





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Introduction

Parental engagement requires active collaboration with parents and should be proactive rather than reactive. It should be sensitive to the circumstances of all families, recognise the contributions parents can make, and aim to empower parents.¹

Research² shows that family learning produces positive impacts for adults and children from disadvantaged backgrounds by raising aspirations, increasing parental involvement in their child's learning, improving outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap. It provides a simple solution that enables the public sector, including central government, voluntary and community sector and local authority family learning providers to have a positive influence on the home learning environment. However, engaging parents in their children's learning can be challenging, especially parents from hard to reach communities. In response, many family learning providers and organisations have developed parent champion programmes.

The willingness of parents to take action after contact with a parent champion is testament to the unique character of the relationship with parents. Parents reacted positively to the informal and supportive nature of interactions with parent champions. They responded positively to the fact that the parent champion was someone like them and was going through the same challenges they were.³

Diverse parent champion programmes demonstrate their potential to achieve a wide range of positive outcomes. For example: parent – school relationships; the home learning environment; adult skills; the ability of parents to support their children's learning; family relationships; social relationships; children's confidence to learn; children's early years development; parents' confidence to access and refer others to support services; children and adult's aspirations for the future. As a result, there are a range of champion programmes across England.

This guide aims to assist those who want to start or develop a parent champion programme by providing guidelines, information, case studies and links to relevant organisations. It has been informed by a survey of local authority family learning providers in November 2018, telephone interviews and written contributions from providers and other organisations.

¹ Goodall, J. et al (2011) Review of best practice in parental engagement. London: DfE

² Family Learning Works NIACE 2012

³ Parent Champions Final Evaluation report Dr Roland Marden, Monaghan- Monaghan-Pisano March 2014

Our approach

We are grateful to all those who provided the information for this guide. In 2018, a call for evidence of family learning and parent champion programmes resulted in responses from seven providers. Telephone interviews were held with respondents. Managers from four of these providers joined a working group to contribute their experiences as providers who had created

and delivered parent champion programmes. Telephone interviews and meetings were held with other organisations that provide training programmes for parent champions. The initial findings were presented at the National Family Learning Forum meeting in March 2019 and members gave feedback and additional information.

What is family learning?

Family learning is a pedagogical approach that refers to any learning activity that involves both children and adult family members, where learning outcomes are intended for both, and that contributes to a culture of learning in the family.⁴

Family learning is usually delivered by a family learning tutor in primary schools, children's centres and early years settings. There are a variety of course structures and models but all are intended to improve the basic skills of adults and to increase their engagement in their children's learning.

Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) programmes aim to give parents and carers the skills, knowledge and

confidence to support their child's literacy, language and numeracy development and to develop their own skills in these areas. Some programmes lead to accreditation in basic English, maths or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Wider Family Learning (WFL) programmes are those specifically designed to enable adults and children to learn together or those programmes that enable adults to learn how to support their children's learning in a variety of ways. The programmes are often linked to key points in the child's education e.g. school readiness or to health and wellbeing e.g. healthy eating, outdoor games.

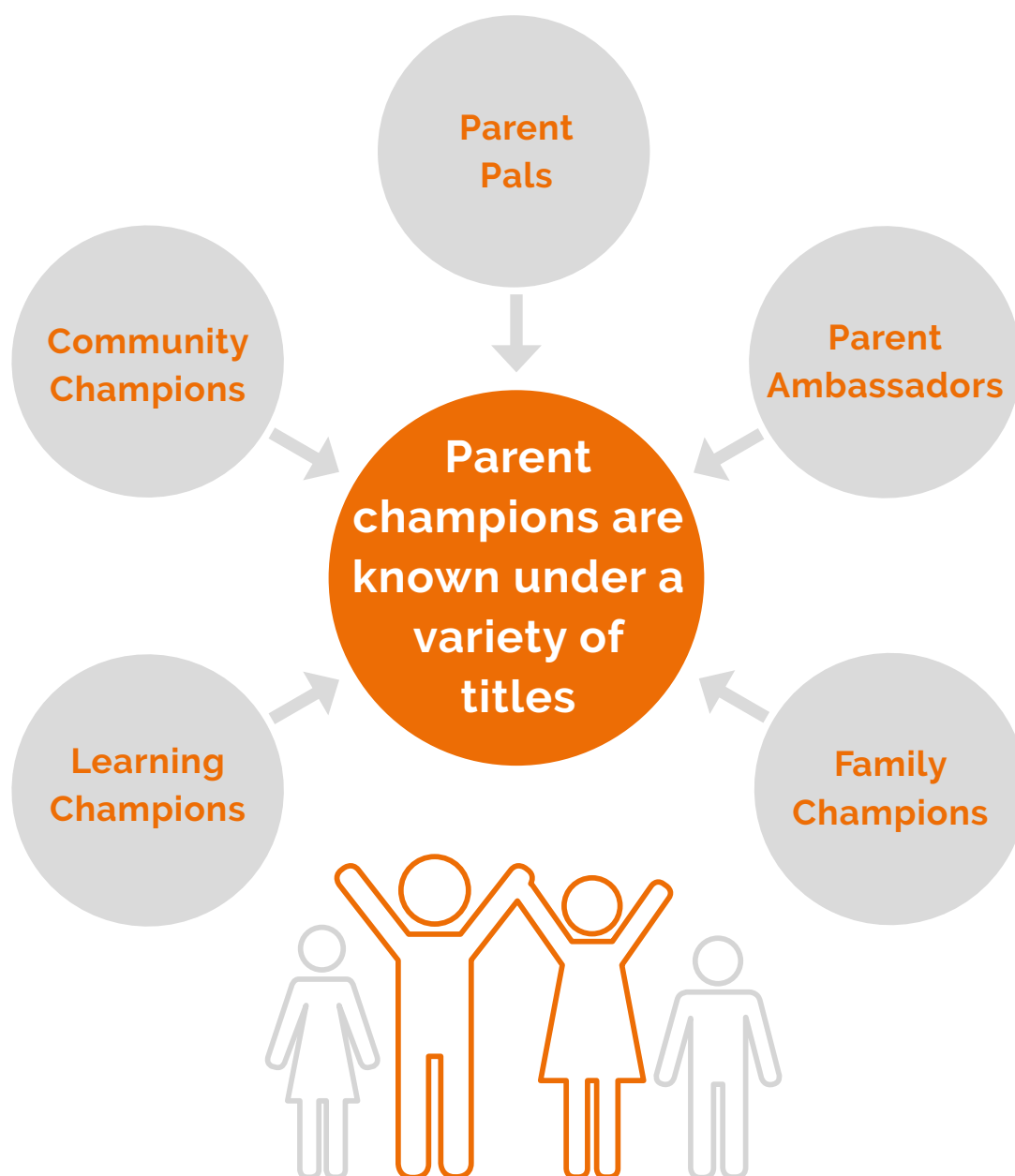
What is a parent champion programme?

A parent champion programme recruits and trains parents to support other parents to find out about opportunities in their local area. It is a peer to peer scheme based on the notion that parents are the best people to support other parents. The champions are usually volunteers.

Some programmes were specifically created to support the take up of the Early Years Entitlement to

free childcare but local authorities and learning providers have used the role in a wide variety of ways including the promotion of family and community learning.

The programmes consist of an initial training course followed by a placement in a school, early years or community setting with ongoing support.



The term 'parent' is used throughout the guide as a generic term for any adult who has a significant caring role for children in their family, for example a guardian, carer, foster parent or grandparent.

Benefits

“ *Parent champions opens a Pandora's box of opportunity.* ”
Programme Manager, Wolverhampton

Benefits for parents

- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Transferable skills that can be used in employment
- Pathway to further training, education and employment
- Feeling of personal efficacy in helping other parents and contributing to a community

“ *The more people I talk to, the more confident I am becoming myself, and the more I am learning about what people want and need. I have also gained better IT skills and am looking forward to doing some training in Information, Advice and Guidance.* ”
Parent Champion, York Learning

Benefits for providers

- Increase in uptake of family and community learning courses
- Engagement with new learners
- Widen reach and participation in local provision
- Progression for learners beyond family learning



“ *Our parent champion programme has helped tremendously with recruitment to our family learning programmes. 80% of our learners find out about the courses through word of mouth.* ”
Adult Community Learning Manager, Camden



“ *If my grandchildren say they can't do it, I say you can't do it ... yet.* ”
Parent Champion, Camden



Benefits for schools and early years setting

- Improved parent-school relationships
- Increased take up of early years provision, family learning and parental activities
- Learning role models for children

“ Parent champions help nurseries and schools to engage with isolated parents, they increase the capacity of your outreach work. ”
Coram Family and Childcare Trust



Purpose of the parent champion programmes

The purpose of parent champion programmes can be far reaching. Adult learning providers who responded to a survey of parent champion programmes stated that the purpose of their programme was:



Getting started

When planning to establish a parent champion programme, providers need several building blocks in place to ensure that the programme is effective and sustainable.

Funding

Many local authorities fund their programmes from ESFA Adult Education Budget as community learning. In those regions where the Adult Education Budget is being devolved, funding will have to be secured from commissioners.

Local funding such as the Mayor's Fund for London has been used to fund activities, rewards and incentives.

Funding is required not only to deliver the initial training courses but also the ongoing support on a one to one basis for parent champions. This is frequently included in the role of a family learning manager or outreach worker, but the demands of this work should not be under-estimated. Programmes using volunteers are low cost not no cost.

In Wolverhampton, parent ambassadors are employed by schools and they take responsibility for the ongoing support for the volunteer parent champions who are placed in the school.

Stakeholders

The most important stakeholders are parents and other residents in the local community who value the contribution that parent champions can make to engage and support their peers. Those selected to be parent champions will have to be able to build a rapport, gain the trust and motivate other parents.

Support from the professional staff in schools, children's centres and early years settings is a pre-requisite to the success of a programme. Successful programmes rely on the practical support from schools and early years settings such as rooms for training and refreshments. School staff can

also help to identify potential parent champions and to provide ongoing encouragement to them. They also need to recognise the valuable contribution the parent champions make to the school community. This can be demonstrated by including information about them in newsletters, websites and noticeboards and including them in school events.

In some areas the support and involvement of public health, housing providers and Jobcentre Plus has been pivotal in establishing and maintaining the programmes.

Our most successful programmes were deeply rooted in the school. School staff recognised the contribution that the parent pals were making to school life. They worked closely with the parent mentors (paid staff employed by the school)
Family Learning Manager, Knowsley MBC



Potential learners

Parent champions are often recruited from family and community learning programmes. Those who have successfully completed courses are very positive advocates to other parents as they can share their experiences. It is also a progression route to further learning for those who have completed family learning courses.

Recruits to parent champion programmes may also come from local communities, paid staff in schools such as midday supervisors, other volunteer programmes such as health volunteers, library volunteers or referrals from agencies such as Job Centre Plus.

We have learners who do family learning courses every year as their children progress through school. Parents who have "got the learning bug" but reached their limit in terms of family learning progression. We feel the programme can help them to develop further skills.

Family Learning Manager, Doncaster MBC

Parent champion programmes

Introduction

Parent champion programmes usually consist of an initial training course over several weeks followed by a placement in a school or early years setting. The parent champions are then given ongoing support with further training, accreditation, network meetings and development opportunities.

Initial training

There are many different models of initial training used. The course content is to some extent dependant on whether the course is for family learning champions only or as part of a wider community champions programme. The number of guided learning hours offered varies amongst providers. The most common model is six to nine hours spread across two or three sessions.



Examples of initial parent champion courses

Meeting local need is a key element of successful parent champion programmes, in order to do this, many providers not only create their own programmes but the resources to go with them.

AES Wolverhampton has designed and developed a successful programme that is undertaken over eight weeks. Each week covers a different aspect including mentoring, emotional intelligence, resilience, communication and managing conflict. Role play is used as an effective learning approach supported throughout by tutorials.

Some providers choose to use or adapt formal programmes that are available. This is a selection of current training programmes and resources that are used:

CORAM Family and Childcare Trust

CORAM's parent champion programme was originally created for those who were working in a paid or voluntary capacity to encourage the take up of early years education and childcare through the Early Years Entitlement and to support the home learning environment.

CORAM offers a range of six hour initial programmes tailored to specific interests including a home learning unit and an employability unit. Learners complete a workbook and activities on a placement. The course is accredited by OCN London and moderated by CORAM. Successful learners receive a certificate, badge and lanyard. There is a set-up fee to design a course to meet the provider's needs, publicity and promotional materials, delivery of the course, moderation, monitoring and evaluation. In subsequent years providers can pay an annual fee to join CORAM's Parent Champion Network allowing access to its conferences, newsletters and events. There is also an optional Train the Trainers course which would enable the provider's staff to deliver the course.

Derbyshire County Council Volunteer Passport

Whilst this is a generic programme for community volunteers it has been adapted by some local authorities to train family learning parent champions.

The Volunteer Passport Toolkit has six core elements.

Training course plans. At the heart of Volunteer Passport is a quality assured training package specially designed to meet the needs of adult volunteers. Each Volunteer Passport training session uses tried and tested learner-centred activities which are easily adapted by the tutor to suit local needs. The five half day sessions are delivered by the local provider's tutors.

Learner workbooks. A learner workbook is provided as a key part of the course for each learner to gather their own evidence from interviews, photographs, discussions or peer observations.

Learning resources. The Volunteer Passport Toolkit includes useful templates, for example:

- for learners: information packs, guidance on completing the evidence booklet
- for trainers: handouts, lists of other resources, sample responses to support the five sessions, outline learning plans

Support package. Derbyshire County Council's training coordinator will visit each organisation to set up the Volunteer Passport agreement and licence. There is a fee charged for each individual licence which includes the accreditation fee.

Branding and communications. The toolkit includes materials to help to attract people on to the Volunteer Passport training course. There is a branding kit that includes artwork for certificates, ID badges, publicity leaflet, sample text for websites and online application form which can be adapted to use the provider's logo and colours

Accreditation. Volunteer Passport has been successfully accredited by NCFE.

The Volunteer Passport has been used in Doncaster MBC since 2015 for a wide range of volunteering programmes. Family hubs across the borough and primary schools use the award to train parent champions. The structure of the units is set but local statistics and examples are used to reinforce the key themes, such as census information and details about local provision. Volunteers create a workbook of evidence for five units and receive a certificate and passport badge.

National Numeracy

A National Numeracy parent champion is someone who works in a school to help develop parental engagement in maths. The resources are designed specifically for this role but could be adapted for parent champions who would be encouraging parents to join family learning maths courses. Materials to support the programme are available on the National Numeracy website

Northern College

In addition to its volunteering skills programmes which can be accessed by individual learners, Northern College is able to offer bespoke family learning parent champions initial or development training for groups of learners from a learning provider or community. This would typically be a residential course over three days, including accommodation and childcare. Fee remission is available for those who are eligible under ESFA funding rules. The course content and resources will be negotiated with the referral provider.

Accreditation

Most of the providers who responded to the survey did not use external accreditation for their initial training course preferring to create their own syllabus, scheme of work and internal verification using RaRPA⁵ (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement).

There is not an accredited programme specifically for parent champion programmes, however some programmes use accreditation designed for volunteers as part of their initial training.

The Derbyshire County Council (DCC) Volunteer Passport programme includes a customised NCFE level 1 accreditation in volunteering. The quality assurance and moderation are provided by the DCC Volunteer Passport team.

Northern College offers a NCFE level 1 unit as part of its community learning programme but its "Volunteer? Who me?" volunteer champions programme is not externally accredited.

York Learning uses NCFE level 2 certificate in Information, Advice or Guidance as an online course through the Skills Network as an element of its initial training course.

AES Wolverhampton delivers an accredited Parent Ambassador course as a progression route from their non-accredited parent champion course. This is a single unit accredited by Open College Network West Midlands

⁵ learningandwork.org.uk/resource/updated-rarpa-guidance-and-case-studies/

Ongoing support

Most providers offer parent champions further training after they start in their role. This could be to pursue a particular interest or to address a specific issue such as dyslexia awareness or mental health first aid. Incentives have been used to encourage learners to attend the course regularly and to continue in the role after the initial training.

Parent champions should have regular meetings with the provider and school to discuss their progress or any concerns and to identify further training needs.

Incentives

Most parent champions are volunteers and are paid only for travel costs but learning providers have been able to provide incentives to encourage learners to join the course or to be active in their role after the initial training.

Schools and early years settings can support this by providing refreshments, school lanyards or badges and invitations to school events. Local businesses occasionally provide vouchers for local attractions.

Rochdale MBC covers all out of pocket expenses for their champions and have given vouchers for hairdressing or cinema tickets. They aim to match the incentive to individual needs or interest, but they have found that for many the reward for their work is reciprocity; the feeling of self-worth and contributing to their community is incentive enough

Camden Adult Learning offered shopping vouchers as an incentive to join their course which was funded through the Equalities Task Unit. Parents could earn £300 in vouchers over 10 weeks. It was found that this led to high rates of attendance and retention.



Find out how you can earn up to £300 in shopping vouchers by being a **Parent Champion**.

To learn more come on 20th July, 10-11am

for tea, coffee and cake and a £20 Sainsbury's voucher for attending.

Richard Cobden Learning Centre, Camden Street, NW1 0LJ
For more information, contact Perin on 020 7974 4191

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Oxsted
Skills Funding Agency
Camden

Progression

There are two aspects to progression. Firstly, the parent champion programmes offer a progression route for learners from family learning or other community learning courses. Secondly, parent champions use the skills, confidence and experience they gain during the programme to progress on to other volunteering, employment or further education

“*Progression is the key to the success of the programme. After the initial course parent champions have a choice of options. There are clear progression routes. Some go on to gain more qualifications, access to HE courses and degrees. Others move into other volunteering such as participating and then organising Talk English activities, or supporting Strengthening Families programmes. Volunteering is a stepping stone for those who want to get paid employment. Some schools in Wolverhampton employ parent ambassadors and several parent champions have progressed on to the accredited parent ambassadors course and have successfully applied for jobs in schools.*”

Programme Manager, AES Wolverhampton

“*Kimberly applied for a job but she said she was so nervous waiting to be interviewed. Then she thought “if I can speak in the parent champion group I can do this” and she did! She got a job at London Zoo and was highly delighted.*

Stacey took advantage of the information, advice and guidance offered as further support to the parent champions to develop a plan to start her own business cleaning wheelie bins in her neighbourhood. She progressed on to a business development course, and her aim is to employ more people to expand the business.

Carly has grown in confidence. She went on to join an Enjoy English with Kings Cross Story Palace. She has taken on a leading role in the Parent Teachers Association.”

Family Learning Manager, Camden

Four parent champions working in three target areas of York: Westfield/Carr, Tang Hall and New Earswick/Haxby Road have achieved a level 2 Information, Advice and Guidance qualification and working with settings, aim to set up a minimum of eight family learning workshops.

Adult Learning Manager, York Learning

Outcomes and impact

Outcomes

In any parent champion programme there will be a dual set of outcomes.

The outcomes for the parent champions themselves, which may be qualifications, an increase in skills and personal development and progression into further education or employment.

The outcomes for providers, schools and early years settings may include increased enrolments, increased engagement by parents in school activities and improvements in children's school readiness.

Providers must plan before the course starts how they will identify, capture and record this data.

Measuring impact

It is well recognised that community learning can bring both direct and wider social benefits for learners, their families and communities. However, the reformed system for publicly funded community learning means that many providers will need to strengthen the mechanisms they have in place for demonstrating the impact of their work. Under the new funding rules, providers are required to show how their work contributes to the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities. The outcomes that are set by each local community learning network must be both measurable

and capable of being evaluated by communities and other stakeholders. At the stages of planning, delivering and evaluating learning, providers need to pay attention to the outcomes their provision achieves and the social value it creates.

There are also sound operational reasons for focusing on the wider social outcomes of learning and the social value that it generates. It can help with internal planning and quality improvement. It can also put providers in a stronger position to develop new local partnerships and access funding opportunities, by providing evidence to demonstrate the range of ways in which learning contributes to wider policy agendas such as health, families, employability and crime prevention⁶.

Learning and Work Institute, in partnership with FLLAG (Family Learning Local Authorities Group), and the National Family Learning Forum developed a Family Learning Common Outcomes Framework in 2017-2018. This has not been widely used by providers to date but should provide a useful method of capturing the impact of parent champion programmes.⁷

Rochdale MBC has a comprehensive cost benefit analysis of its community work. As the research includes the work of community champions, the specific impacts of parent champions are not identified separately.⁸

⁶ learningandwork.org.uk/resources/community-learning-reform/measuring-impact-social-value/

⁷ learningandwork.org.uk/fllag-survey/

⁸ rochdale.gov.uk/pdf/2016-05-27-Proposition-Summary-for-CBA-DDIN-Making-a-Difference-in-Kirkholt.pdf

Making it work

Here is a summary of the key points made by contributors and their advice to providers setting up their own parent champion programmes:

Funding

Volunteer programmes are low cost not no cost. Ensure that sufficient funding, resources and staff time are allocated to the project to maintain a long term commitment.

School support

Ensure that the school or early years setting is fully committed to the programme as their support is essential

Role description

Use a role description for the parent champions so that their roles and responsibilities are clear to them and to everyone else involved (see appendix 1).

Staff development

Ensure that there is sufficient professional staff time (e.g. volunteer coordinator, outreach worker) to give parent champions ongoing support and access to up to date information.

Identity

Make sure that the parent champions are easily recognisable (e.g. wearing a badge) to avoid having "self-appointed" champions taking on the role.

Networking

Bring parent champions from different schools and early years settings together to give them opportunity to share their experiences and to feel part of a wider community.

Managing expectations

Learn to manage parent champions expectations, they may be too ambitious or easily disappointed when parents don't respond to their encouragement.

Programme development

Be prepared to adapt the programme as each cohort of volunteers is different.

Succession planning

Parent champions leave so be prepared to recruit replacements. This is a positive step especially when they are moving on to paid employment.

Use of incentives

Manage your allocation of incentives sensitively so that parent champions don't feel patronised or pressurised.

Conclusion

Family learning successfully engages parents to develop skills, knowledge and confidence to support their child's learning, increase their own skills and employability and to progress into further education.

Parent champion programmes offer for those parents who have completed family learning a progression route into volunteering whilst receiving on-going support and training. In some cases, the programme provides a route into accreditation and paid employment.

Parent champion programmes offer benefits to providers and communities. The programmes operate as a peer to peer scheme. As members of their local community, parent champions are the best people to support other parents. As role models in their communities, they can help with recruitment on to family learning courses, support school-home relationships and provide advice about further education.



Appendix 1

Sample parent champion role description

Role title – Parent champion

Position type – Volunteer

Location - ABC School

Purpose of the role

To inform, encourage and support parents and other adults in the school community about the range of adult and family learning opportunities available at school and in the local area

Key activities

Engage with parents and their families

Build good knowledge of the school community

Build good knowledge of adult and family learning opportunities in the local area

Signpost parents to the adult and family learning service and courses

Assist parents to enrol on to courses and childcare provision if required

Record accurate information about the activities completed adhering to data protection regulations

Attend training and other development activities

Treat all parents and their families with courtesy and respect

Act in accordance with ABC School policies and procedures

Act in accordance with Learning Provider policies and procedures

Person specification

Have experience of adult and family learning

Ability to communicate with other parents, school staff and learning provider staff

Ability to keep basic records of activities completed

Have knowledge of and commitment to equal opportunities, inclusiveness and diversity

Case studies

London Borough of Camden's Parent Champion Programme

Introduction

In December 2015 a bid was made to the Equalities Task Unit to develop parent champions from Camden's white British working class community. This came about following the research highlighting the underachievement of the white British children across the country.

Participating schools agreed to identify a minimum of two white British parents to attend the parent champion course and they also agreed to put on a series of family learning workshops in their schools after the course, so we could measure impact.

Head teachers personally chose and invited two parents from their schools to attend a launch of the project, where details of the course were explained. More than 25 parents representing 10 primary schools attended the launch and eighteen of them enrolled on the course.

Parents were told that they would be doing an "apprenticeship" and that they could earn a possible £300 over 10 weeks in Sainsbury's vouchers. This payment was seen as an advance on work they would be doing as parent champions after the course, to support their schools, other parents, their communities and children's achievement, through family learning workshops.



Parent champion course

The NIACE community learning champion programme was used as a starting point. The tutor picked out activities that best suited the parents and were meaningful to them. This included looking at the role and qualities of a parent champion, learning journeys and barriers, safeguarding. The parents gave presentations on what they had learnt on the course. Employability skills such as team building, speaking and listening, group work, and time keeping were embedded throughout the course.

The course centres around developing learners' self-esteem, confidence, social and communication skills to perform the role of parent champion. Parents at Richard Cobden School, for example, were actively investigating setting up a Parents Association at the school. Learners were developing empathy for other parents because of analysing their own barriers to getting involved in learning and supporting their children's learning.



Each week the parents were given a task to support communication skills with their children at home and were asked to feedback at the beginning of each week. It was evident from the onset that parents talked at their children and rarely made time for meaningful conversations. Activities included parents thinking what their children would say if they asked their children a particular question, for example 'What would your children take with them if they were stranded on a desert island'? The responses from children were completely opposite to what they expected.

Each week the feedback from these activities grew stronger and stronger and became an important part of the session. Feedback at the end of the course highlighted this as being one of the strengths of the course.

During the course there was a formal observation and the session was given a grade one. Feedback was valuable and focused on the learning, which came through strongly.

Progression

Parents enjoyed being back in a learning environment and began to talk about their ambitions. Progression opportunities were put on in response to the request of the groups. For example, they had

wanted to do GCSE in English but didn't feel they were good enough. Adult community learning created an Enjoy English course solely for this group who said that they were not ready or confident enough to go to college but wanted to explore an English course and felt comfortable in the centres.

Some went on to set up Parent Teacher Associations and three parents went on to get jobs, which they accredited to building confidence on the course. Laura had attended several family learning courses before the parent champion course and grew in confidence over the years. She applied for work and was successful, she said it's taken her a long time to get her confidence. Kimberly and Charlotte also went on to get jobs. Linda went on to complete her food and hygiene qualification as part of her plan to follow her dream of becoming a chef.



Impact on families

Throughout the course there was an element of family learning activities the parents did at home with their children, especially around communication. All learners spoke about how they were communicating better with their children and having fun. The parents spoke a lot about how the Carol Dweck⁹ approach with their children had had a huge impact.

Parents began telling their children 'you can't do it yet', which surprisingly to all the parents, meant their children tried again until they got it. Most parents said they would never have thought of asking their children questions as they were usually telling their children what to do.

One parent felt her child had low self-esteem because she had modelled that behaviour, due to her own insecurities. This meant communication between mother and daughter had broken down. She lacked confidence in her own skills and in particular said she couldn't write as her handwriting was so bad. She happened to write down some questions for homework and her group all commented on how nice her handwriting was. She disagreed, but the group suggested she have this discussion with her daughter about what had been said in class and ask her opinion. On the back of this discussion the parent went home and shared her writing with her daughter and told her what had been said. This was a breakthrough for this family as a two way discussion unfolded and her daughter is now sharing her homework, which was always a battle before.

Impact on community

The learners worked together with artists Marysa Dowlings and Georgie Faye to create a series of photographs and an art installation, using hands as a symbol of community. The parents decided on this topic as they felt it represented togetherness and supporting each other in order to improve their children's future. At first, they were apprehensive about doing anything "arty" as they called it, but once they started, they thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. They were very proud that their work was going to be displayed, and took their children to visit the exhibition.

⁹Dweck, Carol S (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House, New York

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council Adult, Family & Community Learning - a parent champion case study

Introduction

Doncaster Adult, Family and Community Learning has developed its parent champion programme in close association with the borough's family hubs which provide support to families with children under the age of five.

This is a case study of Heather, a parent champion.

Recruitment

Heather has been a parent champion at Central Family Hub in Doncaster since 2017. She first attended the hub as a first time mum looking for a baby massage class. She joined this class then she moved on to the First Friends group for parents to meet and receive information and support. After a short time of attending she was approached by a staff member who said they felt that she would be an ideal candidate to be a parent champion.

Training

Heather followed the course that was based on the CORAM programme. She completed the initial pack and had one to one support through the training. There was much enthusiasm around what was at that point a new enterprise for the family hubs in Doncaster. Heather was invited to termly meetings with the other parent champions based at the central hub where they would share ideas, receive updates and further training. The Hub provided her with childcare vouchers for her son so

that she could fulfil her role whilst he spent time in a nursery. This was a benefit for both of them.

Development

All of the staff at the hub had made Heather feel very welcome, which was important to her as she had suffered with post-natal depression and anxiety, but then being asked to be a parent champion both boosted her self-esteem and helped to reduce her anxiety levels. The effect on her own health and well-being has been fantastic and it has also given her an impetus to want to improve her job prospects.

She loves meeting new parents and promoting the hub and the groups available there, she goes out in to the wider community, talking to people while stood in shop queues; handing out leaflets, taking information to local businesses etc. She has some great fundraising ideas for the Hub as well as ideas for possible new sessions. She goes above and beyond her role, taking new parents to sessions and signposting them to get the support they need.





Further education

Heather was working part-time in the retail sector but also started further education. She completed online learning in caring for young children, safeguarding & prevent and understanding autism, all at level 2. She is now at an FE college studying for a level 3 early years educator qualification. She said that being a parent champion 'opened doors' for her, and if she hadn't had this opportunity then she would have just continued to 'plod' on in retail. Continuing in her voluntary role as a parent champion Heather said that she just wants others to benefit as she has done through accessing the Hub services and wants to do what she can for others and to make a better future for herself and her family.

Adult Education Wolverhampton - adult education providing progression routes

Introduction

Adult Education Wolverhampton has been offering parent champion courses for three years. Parents are recruited from family learning and informal learning courses, strengthening families programmes and referrals from family hubs.

The non-regulated course is funded through Adult Education Wolverhampton's ESFA Community Learning funding. It is a well-structured eight week programme which includes role play as a learning tool and is supported by tutorials. There is an effective partnership network with Whitmore Reans family hub, who liaise with each student throughout their studies supporting their transition with moving into voluntary placements or paid employment opportunities.



Enrolment

Enrolment takes place at key points in the year:

- In mid-summer parents whose children are moving into nursery or from nursery to school are recruited. Parents who attend a pre-nursery play and learn group are told about the new opportunities available.
- In September, the target group is parents who may have more time to dedicate to their own learning when their children are back at school after the summer holidays.
- In January, parents of those who are starting nursery in the second semester are recruited.

Progression from family learning courses

Family learning courses engage with parents to build self-confidence skills so that they feel ready to progress into further educational courses. Parents felt better equipped to manage their stress and deal with emotional wellbeing, which in the past led to parents progressing to more technical courses such as paediatric first aid, health and social care and supporting teaching and learning.

Wider Family Learning programmes offer short, fun activities to initially engage families and provide the first steps into learning and supporting children's learning. Longer programmes in family English, maths and language show parents and carers how to encourage the love of reading, writing and using numbers in children and gain useful qualifications themselves which help them towards further learning or employment.

Family learning programmes engage parents and carers so that they have an opportunity to improve their own skills to support the work of schools and help their children to succeed by understanding how children learn in school and how they can help them at home. The skills are developed as an integral part of courses in subject areas such as English, maths and language, which might include wider literacy and number skills. This can then lead to volunteer roles as a parent champion or as a parent ambassador.

Progression by parent champions

Progression is the key to the success of the programme. The parent champion programme "opens a Pandora's box of opportunity" as it helps parents to have goals and aspirations. Not only do the parents have the opportunity to take on a voluntary role as a parent champion on completion of the course, they use it as a way into further education, further volunteering or paid employment. To date 55% of the parents who have completed the course have progressed into volunteering or paid employment and 45% have progressed on to further education. This includes progression on to full level 2 certificate in childcare, supporting teaching & learning and even level 3 programmes such as access to higher education diplomas progressing on to degree courses.

There are opportunities for parent champions, especially those who are bilingual to gain employment in schools. Local schools employ parent ambassadors who support families and young people in Wolverhampton schools, especially those for whom English is not their first language. This programme trains parents at the school in mentoring and supporting families and young people in the community and also provides ongoing one to one support to volunteers in schools.



York Learning – parent champions building networks

Introduction

York Learning is the adult community learning team in the City of York Council. It has an extensive and well established family learning provision but wants to develop a parent champion programme to provide a progression route for family learning learners and others and to increase the number of enrolments on to its courses.

The Building Networks project works with communities and schools to provide support and Information, Advice and Guidance training to understand how best to engage more parents and carers in opportunities to support children's learning and develop their own skills.

Policy coherence

The aim is that equipping "trusted individuals" with skills and local knowledge will widen participation and engage with harder to reach

families who may not normally access provision. It contributes to community development, the home learning environment and social mobility agendas.

Development

The project is run in three target areas of York: Westfield/Carr, Tang Hall and New Earswick/Haxby Road. The target is to set up a minimum of eight workshops engaging with at least forty learners.

The first learners recruited were four sessional childcare workers who already had some knowledge of the provision but wanted to develop their skills further. Learners will study information, advice and guidance skills and will have the opportunity to gain a level 2 accreditation online through the Skills Network.

There will be opportunities for progression to English, maths and ICT skills and qualifications for parent champions and for those parents they engage. They will also try out and evaluate activities to do at home with their children, supporting children's learning.

Impact on community

By training people already based in communities, and providing a network of support and development, they will become role models for other parents to become involved.

Greater emphasis on word of mouth recruitment will enable those less likely to respond to paper/online advertising of courses to participate.

Contributors

Adult Education Wolverhampton

enquiries@aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk
aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk

City of York Learning

yorklearning@york.gov.uk
yorklearning.org.uk

CORAM Family and Childcare Trust

parentchampions@coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk
familyandchildcaretrust.org

Derbyshire County Council Volunteer Passport programme

passport@derbyshire.gov.uk
derbyshire.gov.uk/passport

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council Adult, Family & Community Learning

afcl@doncaster.gov.uk
doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/community-learning

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council Family Learning and Parenting

keith.mcdowall@knowsley.gov.uk
knowsleyface.org.uk

London Borough of Camden Adult Community Learning

adultlearning@camden.gov.uk
camden.gov.uk/adult-community-learning

National Numeracy

enquiries@nationalnumeracy.org.uk
familymathstoolkit.org.uk

Northern College

communitywellbeing@northern.ac.uk
northern.ac.uk

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

livingwellhmr@biglifecentres.com
rochdale.gov.uk

Further information and resources

Campaign for Learning

campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/index.asp

Education Scotland – Family Learning Framework

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/FamilyLearningFrameworkApril18.pdf>

Learning and Work Institute (L&W)

learningandwork.org.uk/familylearning

Learning Unlimited

learningunlimited.co/resources/download





Arnhem House, 31 Waterloo Way,
Leicester, LE1 6LP

+44 (0)116 204 4200

enquiries@learningandwork.org.uk

www.learningandwork.org.uk

 @LearnWorkUK