



National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

*Learning Literacy together: the impact of Family
Literacy on parents, children, families and schools*

Full Final Report

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Contents

List of figures and tables	5
Project team	6
Acknowledgements	7
Key to interview transcripts and narrative comments	8
1. Executive summary	9
1.1 Outline of the project	9
1.2 Main findings	10
1.3 Enabling factors to running successful FL programmes	15
1.4 Implications and recommendations for policy and practice	17
2. Introduction	19
2.1 Aims and scope of evaluation	19
2.2 Background and history of family literacy	19
2.3 Previous evaluations	21
3. The research and design process	24
3.1 The research design	24
3.2 The sample	26
4. Research findings	29
Introduction	29
4.1 Profiles of parents, children, tutors and early years' teachers	29
4.2 Summary of family literacy provision	35
Parents/Carers	36
Children	36
Parents/Carers	36
Children	36
Number recruited	36
4.3 Assessment of parents' reading	37
4.4 Assessment of parents' writing	40
4.5 Assessment of children's writing	41
4.6 Assessment of children's reading	45
4.7 Overall summary of parents' reading and writing	48
4.8 Changes in parents' assessments of their child's literacy	50
4.9 Changes in parents' views of themselves and their children as learners	51
4.10 Parents' evaluations of their family literacy courses	53
4.11 Parents' views on family literacy programmes three months after courses had finished	55
4.12 Children's perceptions of their literacy practices	66
4.13 Tutors' and early year teachers' views on family literacy programmes	70
4.14 The family literacy classroom	79
4.15 Headteachers' views on family literacy provision	91
4.16 Managers' views on family literacy provision	100
4.17 Summary of research findings	112
5. A case study of one local authority	114
6. Discussion and conclusions	119
6.1 Limitations and generalisations	119
6.2 Research findings	120
6.3 Themes and issues arising from the research, and questions to raise further discussion	128

6.4 Enabling and constraining factors in family literacy provision	132
6.5 Key messages for policy and practice	134
6.6 Opportunities for further research.....	136
6.7 The final word	138
Glossary	140
References	143

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Family Literacy's contribution to policy networks and government priorities	147
Appendix B: Data on the Demonstration programmes	148
Appendix C: Findings and recommendations from Ofsted report on family learning (2009)	149
Appendix D: The research design including further limitations of the research	150
Appendix E: Ethical considerations	152
Appendix F: Training and support provided	153
Appendix G: Interview schedule for parents' focus groups and individual interviews	154
Appendix H: Parental changes in home literacy activities	160
Appendix I: Parental changes in attitudes after the course	162
Appendix J: Adult Profile and contact Details	164
Appendix K: Interview schedule for children	167
Appendix L: Child Profile	169
Appendix M: Managers' questionnaire schedule	171
Appendix N: Managers' interview Schedule	173
Appendix O: Managers' summary of the course	175
Appendix P: Tutors' questionnaire and profile	179
Appendix Q: Teachers' questionnaire and profile	183
Appendix R: Challenges encountered during evaluations and data gathering the sample	186
Appendix S: First languages other than English	188
Appendix T: Common practices observed in FL classrooms	191
Appendix U: Headteachers' interview	192
Appendix V: Analysis of questionnaire returns from FLN Managers	193
Appendix W: Case studies	207

Lists of Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 3.1	Summary of the research instruments used, personnel responsible for gathering data, and sample sizes	21
Table 3.2	Assessments of reading and writing used on short and standard courses	24
Table 3.3	The number of LAs who participated in the project, and the number of FL courses that were evaluated in each government office region	24
Table 3.4	Number and type of FL courses evaluated and the average number of hours	25
Table 3.5	Sample of parents, children, tutors and early year teachers	25
Table 4.1	Parents' background characteristics	27
Table 4.2	Children's background characteristics	28
Table 4.3	Tutors' years of teaching experience in FL	30
Table 4.4	Tutors' highest level of qualification	31
Table 4.5	Teachers' years of teaching experience	31
Table 4.6	Teachers' highest level of qualification	32
Table 4.7	Type of course and of setting	32
Table 4.8	Averages by course type (standard deviation in brackets)	33
Table 4.9	Average numbers of parents and children by course type (standard deviation in brackets)	33
Table 4.10	Parents' reading results, standardised scores, overall and by type of course	35
Table 4.11	Returner parents' reading results, raw scores, by type of course and test level	36
Table 4.12	Parents' writing results	38
Table 4.13	Children's writing stages at the beginning and the end of the courses, overall	39
Table 4.14	Children's average writing stages at the beginning and end of the courses, by subgroups, returners only	42
Table 4.15	Children's <i>Literacy Baseline</i> results	43
Table 4.16	Average number (and range) of contact hours between pre and post-tests for parents and children, by reading v writing, and by short v standard courses	46
Table 4.17	Methods used to interview parents post FL course	53
Table 4.18	Details of researchers' observations of FL classes	78
Table 4.19	Summary of manager interviews	98

Figures

Figure 4.1	Parents' standardised reading scores at the beginning of the courses, overall	35
Figure 4.2	Parents' standardised reading scores at the end of the courses, overall	35
Figure 4.3	Changes in parents' average standardised reading scores, by type of course	36
Figure 4.4	Changes in parents' average standardised reading scores, by English as first language or not	37
Figure 4.5	Parents' writing scores at the beginning of the courses	38
Figure 4.6	Parents' writing scores at the end of the courses	38
Figure 4.7	Emergent writing at Stage 2	40
Figure 4.8	A child's writing at Stage 7	40
Figure 4.9	The distribution of returner children's writing stages at the beginning of the courses	41
Figure 4.10	The distribution of returner children's writing stages at the end of the courses	41
Figure 4.11	Returner children's raw scores for reading at the beginning of the courses	42
Figure 4.12	Returner children's raw scores for reading at the end of the courses	42
Figure 4.13	Means for each activity as evaluated by parents (response range: 0 – never to 5 – every day)	48
Figure 4.14	Parents' average confidence (responses from 1 – not at all confident – to 4 – very confident)	49
Figure 4.15	Parents' average perceptions of their children literacy skills (responses from 1 – below average to 3 – above average)	49
Figure 4.16	Parent feedback on FL programme	51
Figure 4.17	A child's written responses to Questions 1 and 4	64
Figure 4.18	Children's reading enjoyment by gender	65
Figure 4.19	Children's writing enjoyment by gender	67

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List of the LAs involved in the evaluation

(In alphabetical order):

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Key to interview transcripts and narrative comments

Interview extracts

[text]	Background information
[...]	Extracts edited out of transcript for sake of clarity
...	Pause

Narrative observations

T or Tu	Tutor
EYT or Te	Early Years Teacher
P	Parent
C	Child
WB	Whiteboard

Note on timescale

This full report on the evaluation was completed, and submitted to the (then) Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in July 2009. An Executive Summary was also prepared and submitted, and this was published by LSIS in October 2009 (Swain *et al.*, 2009), followed in March 2010 by a separate document (Swain *et al.*, 2010) containing some of the Appendices and Tables prepared for the full report.

In the period 2009-13 interest in family literacy grew substantially, and several powerful international research reviews appeared (for a brief summary, see section 2.4 below). Also, in 2012-13 NIACE mounted an inquiry into family learning, including family literacy, for which a further review was commissioned (Carpentieri, 2012), and in 2013 NRDC, with funding from the Nuffield Foundation, began a new investigation into family literacy. The time therefore seemed right to make this report available.

Accordingly, in October 2013 a decision was made by NRDC to update this report in the light of developments in the field since 2009, and then publish it on the NRDC website. The updating was done by Greg Brooks, and checked by Jon Swain. Posting on the NRDC website has, however, been delayed until mid-2017, giving the opportunity to add the following paragraph.

Meanwhile, two journal articles based on this report had been published: Swain and Brooks (2012) and Swain *et al.* (2014). Also, the study funded by the Nuffield Foundation was not only begun, but completed and published (Swain *et al.*, 2015). It was a mixed-methods study with a stronger research design than previous studies in Britain (including the one reported here) because it had a comparison group. The study found that children who attended family literacy programmes made greater gains in their reading than the comparison-group children, who did not.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Outline of the project

The project was a two-year evaluation to assess the impact and effectiveness of family literacy (FL) programmes in England on the skills of parents¹ and their children, and on family relationships, progression and social mobility.

A total of 42 Local Authorities (LAs) were involved in the research, which took place from November 2007 to July 2009. A total of 74 FL courses were evaluated, of which 46 (62%) were short courses (30-49 hours) and 28 (38%) were standard courses (60-72 hours).

Parents and children were assessed in their progress in reading and writing. The total number of parents who took part in the evaluation was 583². Due to attrition, the number of parents who took a reading assessment both near the beginning of the course (pre-test, Time 1) and towards the end of the course (post-test, Time 2) was 379; and the number who took the writing assessment, which was only used on standard courses, at both Time 1 and Time 2 was 121.

The targeted group of children were aged between 3 years 0 months (3:0) and 6 years 11 months (6:11) at the start of the courses. The total number of children involved in the evaluation was 527. 301 children took a writing assessment at Time 1 and Time 2, and 81³ took the reading assessment at Time 1 and Time 2.

The project employed a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative research. It used tested and established assessment instruments in reading and writing, classroom observations, semi-structured questionnaires with LA managers, FL tutors, early years teachers and parents, and qualitative interviews with LA managers, tutors, early years teachers, headteachers, children and parents.

¹ The term parents is used throughout the report to mean mothers, fathers and carers

² The project does not have a complete data set on every parent or child. The figure of 583 includes 542 parents who enrolled on courses, plus 41 who were interviewed in focus groups. It also means that the project received at least one piece of data about them. In almost all cases though, the project has a wide spread of data on each parent and child.

³ This number is comparatively low because children's reading was assessed on standard courses only, and the target group was only children aged approximately between 5:0 and 5:10 at the start of the courses.

1.2 Main findings

Summary of literacy provision

Settings

- 85% of the children (N=345) attended FL in school settings, and 12% (N=56) attended nurseries. There were only three Children Centres in the evaluation.

Types of course

- 59% (N=44) of FL courses evaluated in the project were classified as short and 41% were standard.

Duration of courses

- The average number of hours was 31 hours for short courses and 53 hours for standard courses.

Amount of teaching contact time for parents

- The amount of contact teaching time with parents is often considerably lower than is sometimes assumed. For example, on some 30 hour short courses, the amount of contact teacher time was less than 20 hours.

Recruitment, attendance and retention

- The average number of learners recruited was around nine parents and children on both short and standard courses. The average attendance for parents and children was around 79%, and the average retention rate was around 84%.

Number of parents achieving qualifications

- The average number of parents achieving a qualification was 56% on short courses and 71% on standard courses. 73% (N=54) of the parents who were interviewed said they had taken qualifications on the course. While the majority of these were national qualifications in literacy at Level 1 and Level 2, the project does not have detailed data on this.

Demographic profiles

Parents' profile

- 94% of the parents involved were women (N=477), and only 6% (N=32) were men.
- 96% (N=384) were parents or carers to the children in the sample and 4% (N=16) were grandparents.
- Almost half the parents were in their 30s (47%, N=235).
- Three-quarters (N=374) were white British. The next largest ethnic group was Pakistani (7%, N=34).
- 78% of parents had English as their first language.

- Thirty-one languages other than English were reported as parents' first language.
- 36% (N=153) of parents had stayed on in education beyond the age of 16.
- At least 23% (N=114) of the parents had a qualification in English or literacy at Level 2 or above. The actual percentage is likely to have been higher because the figure given does not include parents who reported their highest qualification as being a GCSE, which could be Level 1 or Level 2.

Children's profile

- The gender balance for children was about equal: 51% (N=237) were girls, 49% (N=231) were boys.
- Almost exactly half of children were aged between 4:6 and 5:5 at the outset.
- Almost three-quarters were white British (73%, N=337) and 12% (N=51) were Indian or Pakistani.
- About four-fifths of the children had English as their first language.
- Thirty-one languages other than English were reported as children's first language.

Tutors' profile

- 96% (N=66) of the tutors were women.
- The average number of years of teaching in FL was 4.9 years.
- Two-thirds (N=33) of the tutors were qualified to degree level or above, and most of the rest had 'legacy' qualifications, either generic (Teacher's Certificate) or basic skills-related (e.g. City and Guilds).

Teachers' profile

- The average number of years teaching in FL was 3.2 years, and around a quarter were teaching FL for the first time.
- Three-fifths (N=29) of the teachers were qualified to degree level or above, and most of the rest had either a Teacher's Certificate or a Level 3 qualification for working with young children.

Assessments in reading and writing

Children's reading

- Children made substantial progress in reading during the courses. However, it was not possible to state any findings on whether subgroups (e.g. boys and girls) made similar or different amounts of progress.

Children's writing

- Children made considerable progress in writing during the courses. The improvement in average stage for these children was highly significant. The average improvement of about three quarters of a stage (out of a possible seven stages) compared well with that observed in previous evaluations.
- Courses worked equally well for boys and girls, and for children with English as the first or an additional language.
- The amount of progress on standard courses was not significantly different from that on short courses.

Parents' reading

- Parents made only a non-significant amount of progress in reading.
- The amount of progress on short courses was slightly more than on standard courses. However, the average scores of those on standard courses (some of whom had higher previous qualifications) and of those with English as their first language were already high at the beginning of the courses, and this left little room for improvement (ceiling effect).

Parents' writing

- On average, the parents made a small but statistically significant gain in writing.

Changes in parents' perceptions

(On benefits to parents see also Swain *et al.*, 2014, in press.)

Changes in parents' assessments of their children's home literacy activities

- There were statistically significant changes in almost all the parents' assessments of their child's home literacy.
- Parents attending standard courses showed a greater amount of individual change in their perceptions on average, compared to parents on short courses.

Change in parents' views of themselves and their children as learners

- There were statistically significant gains in parents' confidence in all areas that the parents were asked about. These gains were approximately the same across all areas.

- There were also statistically significant positive changes in the parents' perceptions of their children's literacy skills.
- Parents attending standard courses showed greater individual change in their perceptions, on average, than parents on short courses.

Findings concerning local authorities and managers

- FL provision appeared to work best when it was embedded as part of a wider family and adult learning programme to encourage engagement via short ('taster') FL courses and enable progression.
- Relationships and partnership working were the two most frequently mentioned ingredients in the delivery of effective FL services.
- The drive to build capacity to deliver programmes had put added pressure on staff managing provision.
- Only a small number of FL managers appeared to have up-to-date information on the scale of need, especially among adults.
- Few LAs appeared to collect systematic data on the progress of FL children against other groups of similar children in the school.
- Some school teachers were reluctant to provide LAs with baseline data on children.
- Almost all managers supported parents taking accredited qualifications. Most felt that this had been a major factor in raising the profile of FL.

Findings concerning schools

- Schools played a vital part in providing resources, recruiting parents and contributing to the design of FL programmes.
- A key success factor in school partnerships was the commitment of the headteacher.
- Schools were not always able to provide dedicated rooms, and so teachers and learners had to adapt to different spaces on different occasions. The shortage of space/appropriate accommodation was a serious concern for all respondents, and had a powerful effect on successful and effective FL provision.
- It was often harder to find space for dedicated teaching rooms and crèches in successful schools, where pupil rolls were more likely to be rising.
- Smaller schools generally found it harder than larger schools to recruit parents to FL courses.
- Smaller schools generally found it more difficult to achieve a homogeneous age range of children in the early years classes.

- Using early years teachers in delivery of adult and joint sessions may have contributed to success, as schools then had ownership of the FL course, and courses linked directly to the school curriculum.
- Parent support (or liaison) officers appeared to be very effective in recruiting parents and understanding local parental concerns and issues.

Findings concerning parents and children

- The prime motivation for participating in FL for all parents was to support their children's learning skills, rather than develop their own. They wanted to find out what and how their child was learning at school in order to know how to support them at home.
- The vast majority of parents were positive about their experience of FL. A total of 97% (N=94) of parents reported in interviews gaining some kind of benefit from the FL course, and three months on 96% (N=89) thought that they were continuing to benefit from attending the course.
- The great majority of parents prioritised their parental role, at least in the short term. They sought and gained parenting skills, and were concerned with spending quality time with their children and supporting their children's learning, rather than developing their own literacy skills.
- Parents had a positive view of taking a national accredited qualification.
- The majority of parents wanted to progress to further study and/or training while their child was in Key Stage 1, and would seek employment later.
- Many parents had completed further courses and/or intended to continue learning after completing FL. A majority (55%, N=53) of interviewees said that they had been on another course since family literacy, and it was noticeable that many parents mentioned that this was with the same tutor in the same setting. A total of 84% (N=81) of parents said that they were thinking of taking another course.
- 64% (N=61) of parents said that, since taking a FL course, they had become more involved in their child's pre-school or school.
- 76% (N=71) of parents said that they had changed as a person since taking the FL course. This generally meant that they felt more confident, but also that they had become more capable across a range of areas.
- Not having to incur any cost was important for parents, and was especially likely to be so for those in the target socio-economic group.
- 99% (N=272) of children said they enjoyed the FL course. They particularly liked working with their parent making and playing activities and games.
- 91% (N=249) of children said they liked reading, and most were able to cite a favourite book. The response rate was very similar for boys and girls.

- 88% (N=242) of children read with their families. They mainly read with their mother at bedtime.
- 82% (N=220) of children reported that they liked writing.

1.3 Enabling factors in running successful FL programmes

(See also Swain and Brooks, 2012.)

Enabling factors

Local Authorities

- LAs which have managers who have a strong educational background, and who are able to understand school structures and how schools work.
- LAs which have a flexible approach to FL, including willingness to maintain programmes when adult enrolments are low, in order to keep schools engaged.
- LAs which have strong relationships with schools, and staff who are patient, persistent and flexible in building relationships with schools.
- LAs which are able to provide funding for dedicated tutor and teacher time, including funds for schools to buy supply cover so that school staff can be involved in FL recruitment, planning and delivery, and attend training courses.
- LAs which are able to develop partnerships with colleges, which enable access to good quality *Skills for Life* tutors for FLLN.
- LAs which provide funds for free crèches during FL sessions.
- LAs which can evaluate courses, and promote all outcomes and include them in LA annual performance assessments.
- LAs which promote success, and advertise FL activities and achievements through a variety of channels.

Courses

- Courses that are embedded as part of a wider family and adult learning programme to encourage engagement via short FL courses and enable progression.
- Provision that includes a mixture of short courses for parents who are daunted by the commitment required to attend standard courses, and standard courses which have a greater chance of maximising change and progression.

- Courses that have clear progression routes, e.g. into further learning, voluntary work and roles in school.
- Courses that have high quality resources and materials (e.g. laminating machines and access to ICT).
- Courses that use local, convenient and familiar venues, appropriately resourced and furnished for FL sessions, and adjacent premises where learners can continue their studies.

School settings

- Schools where there is a committed headteacher who supports FL and recognises its benefits and the role of parents in children's learning.
- Schools that employ a parent support officer or pastoral coordinator, who builds trusting relationships with parents and engages them in learning.
- Schools that have an established timetable to include FL.
- Schools that have a specially designated space for FL in the main school building.

Teachers and tutors

- Well qualified tutors and teaching staff (e.g. tutors who have been awarded a Grade 2 by the inspectorate).
- Tutors and teachers who are committed and passionate about FL, can form positive relationships with learners, and have a good working partnership with one another.
- Double staffing so that tutors and teachers can work together in the joint session.
- Training and CPD for FL tutors, including courses on literacy strategies for teaching children, and support and further training for SfL teachers new to FL.
- Built-in dedicated and paid time for planning between tutors and teachers.
- Tutors (and managers) who understand local cultural norms and attitudes.

Parents and children

- Parents who are committed and attend regularly.
- Parents who form good relationships and support each other.
- Parents who use the class activities with their children each week to support their learning.

1.4 Implications and recommendations for policy and practice

LAs

- Appoint LA managers who have a strong educational background and who understand school structures and systems.
- Build up and maintain key partnerships with schools.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with colleges, which enable access to good quality *Skills for Life* tutors.
- Use local venues that are run during school hours, and include childcare provision.
- For continued learning, use a convenient and familiar venue and accommodation that is as near as possible to the original FL setting.
- Use wider family learning (small ‘taster’ courses) as a first step to engaging schools in FL provision.
- Employ enthusiastic, committed high-quality teaching staff who have received a Grade 2 or above from the inspectorate.
- Where possible, try to use early years teachers from within the school.
- Build in dedicated paid time for planning between tutors and early years teachers.
- Encourage tutors to set up learner peer support groups which continue working together once the course has finished.
- Recognise the importance of the need to understand learners’ backgrounds and their specific cultural needs.
- Build outside visits (e.g. to the local library) into the course.
- Ensure that coherent progression pathways are available, and provide information, advice and guidance about local learning opportunities and funding support.
- Have the flexibility to extend short courses into standard courses if the parents are keen for this to happen.

Schools

- Use past and present parents on FL courses to act as ‘learning champions’ to attract other parents.
- Make sure that advertisements, flyers and letters are translated into first languages if needed.

- Hold ‘celebration assemblies’ where children can see their parents gain certificates for accredited tests.
- Make sure that headteachers are active and visible in setting up and maintaining the FL programme.
- Employ pastoral coordinator/parent support workers to build relationships with parents and engage them in learning.

Central Government

Provide additional funding to:

- help improve accommodation; enable double staffing in FL sessions; meet childcare costs; run small groups; and engage hard to reach learners.
- capture impact data such as more robust and systematic ways of collecting data on children so that LAs and schools can measure the impact of provision over time.
- provide more national training in pedagogy for adult tutors, to achieve a greater consistency of approach.

In addition:

- Ensure that new buildings, such as Children’s Centres (or refurbishments), have larger, purpose-built rooms, which can accommodate at least 10 adults.
- Give more guidance on accommodation, including what LAs should accept as the bottom line.

2. Introduction

2.1 Aims and scope of the evaluation

This is the full report of a two-year evaluation project undertaken by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) and 'The Alliance'⁴ on behalf of the (then) Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to assess the impact and effectiveness of family literacy (FL) programmes in England.

The research (which took place from November 2007 to July 2009) aimed to assess the impact of family literacy (FL) courses on the skills of parents⁵ and their children, and on family relationships, progression and social mobility. A range of short (30-49 hours) and standard (72-96 hours)⁶ family literacy courses involving children aged between 3 years 0 months and 6 years 11 months at the start of the courses was included, and, in specific terms the research objectives were to:

- Collect and analyse data on parents' and children's literacy skills at the beginning and end of the course
- Explore parents' perceptions of how they supported their children with reading, writing, speaking and listening, and how this might have changed as a result of the course
- Gather and analyse data about parents' and children's perceptions of being involved in the course
- Gather data on achievements/qualifications (where appropriate) and progression
- Examine the perceived impact on participants' lives – from the perspective of both participants and their tutors/teachers. Outcomes investigated included interest in involvement with their child's school or nursery and in pursuing further learning opportunities.

The project went beyond these original objectives and included the views and perceptions of headteachers and local authority FL managers.

2.2 Background and history of family literacy

The term 'family literacy' (FL) was coined by Taylor (1983). It was first used to refer to the interrelated literacy practices of parents, children and others in homes (Barton and Hamilton, 1998), but very soon was also used to describe a research interest and a range of educational programmes that generally run in socially and economically deprived areas. Such programmes originated in Turkey and the United

⁴ Formed in 2007 when the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) merged with the Basic Skills Agency working with Tribal.

⁵ Once again, the term 'parents' is used throughout the report to mean mothers, fathers and carers.

⁶ In the relevant Learning and Skills Council Guidance (2009), Standard courses were categorised as running for 60-72 hours.

States in the 1980s (Brooks *et al.*, 2008; Carpentieri, 2012; Carpentieri *et al.*, 2011; Hannon and Bird, 2003). Hannon and Bird argued that FL evolved from two distinct strands – early childhood education and adult and community education (see also Brooks *et al.*, 2008, 2012), and the initial focus, and rationale for policy makers, was to improve children’s literacy standards. Another underlying assumption of FL programmes was that parents with poor literacy skills were exacerbating the educational difficulties of their children, and so reaching both generations with educational programmes was seen as a way of breaking this ‘cycle of disadvantage’ (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

In England, at the time when this report was mainly written (in 2009), the family literacy model was funded by the (then) Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and was based on development work in four Demonstration Programmes set up by the (then) Basic Skills Agency in 1994, and on research by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Brooks *et al.*, 1996). The research identified key features that made the programmes successful, and from this the family literacy model was developed.

FL courses today tend to be either short (30-49 hours) or standard (60-72 hours), and a typical FL class will last for two-three hours. The courses are run in partnership with schools and Children’s Centres, and generally involve parents and young children aged 3–6. Programmes offer separate sessions for parents and children to develop their literacy skills, and joint sessions for parents and children to work together to support the children with literacy activities. Staff teams from providers of adult learning and early years plan and deliver the courses. Provision is close to home and often based at the local school or Children’s Centre⁷; the courses are free, with crèche support.

The objectives of FL programmes at the time of this evaluation were as follows:

To raise standards of literacy for both mothers and fathers and children, to extend mothers’ and fathers’ skills in supporting their children’s developing literacy skills, and to provide opportunities for adults to achieve entry level qualifications and/or national tests as appropriate.

(Family Programmes, Guidance for Local Learning and Skills Councils and Local Authorities, 2009/10)

The need to support disadvantaged young children had recently been highlighted in research that found that, by the age of three, children of the least educated parents were already up to one year behind their more advantaged peers on vocabulary tests (George *et al.*, 2007). The government saw FL playing a key role in increasing social inclusion and reducing intergenerational transfer of disadvantage (see Appendix A). FL is one element of family learning, and as such it both occupied a prominent place in the *Skills for Life* strategy (2001:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20081007160501/http://dcsf.gov.uk/readwri-teplus/bank.cfm?section=211>)

⁷ FL classes were only set in three Children’s Centres in this project.

and was closely related to the agenda set out in *Every Child Matters* (2004: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DfES/1081/2004>).

Other prominent government initiatives/policies on which FL drew were The Children's Plan: Building brighter futures (2007: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/arc_SOP/Page11/CM%207280) and Every Parent Matters (2007: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/arc_SOP/Page19/DFES-LKAW-2007).

Since 2000, the Government has implemented policy changes and funding increases to improve family programmes nationally. For example, between 2008 and 2011 the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS; now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, BIS), spent £25m per year for the delivery of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) programmes, and £12m a year for Wider Family Learning (WFL). Although it is not possible to separate out what is spent on family literacy from the other strands, informed sources estimated in 2009 that around £12-£15m per year was being spent on FL⁸.

2.3 Previous evaluations

The crucial importance of the family dimension in the literacy learning of young children and parents is well documented (see, for example, Brooks *et al.*, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2008; Ofsted, 2000; Desforges and Abouchar, 2003; Horne and Haggart, 2004; Hodge, 2006; Sénéchal and Young, 2008).

The Basic Skills Agency's FL demonstration programmes were evaluated by Brooks *et al.* in 1994-95. They found that the programmes were associated with statistically significant advances in achievement in literacy for both parents and children (Brooks *et al.*, 1996). In a follow-up study, two years later, all these specific and many wider gains were being sustained (Brooks *et al.*, 1997). For more information about these programmes, including sample size, see Appendix B.

There were many similarities between the courses evaluated in this project and those in the demonstration programmes, in that both were designed for the joint engagement of parents and their 3- to 6-year-old children, and were targeted on at-risk children and parents with 'very low entry characteristics'. However, they differed in one important aspect: the courses in the demonstration programmes were highly focused and much longer, being 96 hours in duration and spread over 12 weeks, an average of eight hours' provision per week. The average number of hours for the parents-only and joint sessions in the courses in this project was 31 hours for the short courses and 53 hours for standard courses.

⁸ This estimate came from Jerry O'Shea at the national Learning and Skills Council (personal communication, March 2009).

In 2000, Ofsted surveyed Family Learning programmes in 28 Local Authorities (LAs), and judged two thirds of the provision for family literacy to be good. Parents had a deeper understanding of their children's development and learning, and improved their own skills in literacy, numeracy and parenting; they gained in confidence and had better relations with their children's schools, and in over 50% of cases they progressed to further education (FE) or further training, or a better job. The children's early oracy and literacy skills were accelerated; they also gained in confidence, and their teachers recorded positive attitudinal and behaviour changes. However, and almost despite these findings, Ofsted also found that resourcing of the programmes was poor and fragile, and that strategic thinking on the part of providers was weak.

In 2009, Ofsted conducted a further review of family learning programmes, covering 23 local authorities (for more detail see Appendix C). They found that family learning programmes had "considerable impact" (p.5) on the achievement of children and adults. In almost all programmes surveyed, Ofsted concluded, participating adults were developing good or very good skills. Both Ofsted reviews, however, were observational rather than quantitative.

And there are other difficulties with the evidence. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) pointed out that, although many evaluators argue that the intergenerational element is an essential element of the programme design, it is difficult to establish what its 'value-added' impact is, since all learners receive this component, and there are usually no control or comparison groups. This question has not been answered in research so far, and was not the remit of the project reported here either.

In 2008, Brooks *et al.* (2008) reviewed 19 studies of family literacy, language and numeracy provision and, as above, found that very few studies used a controlled trial design. Most studies used matched-group and one-group pre-and post-test designs, which meant that much evidence needed to be treated with caution. Brooks *et al.*'s review concluded that, although there was convincing evidence that parents benefit in their ability to help their children in many ways, and that children's skills also improve, the evidence that parents' own skills benefit was much less certain. The project reported here, and the spin-off article by Swain *et al.* (2014, in press), provide some relevant findings on benefits to parents.

In conclusion, Brooks *et al.* (2008) argued that research had been unable to provide a definitive answer to whether two-generation FLLN programmes benefit both parents and children; whether parents in FLLN programmes make better progress than they would in discrete or stand-alone adult literacy or numeracy courses; or whether particular pedagogic approaches to FLLN are more effective than others. However, some research (see, for example, Guralnick, 1997) indicates that interventions are most effective if they target more than one family member at the same time, utilising the potential of intergenerational learning.

2.4 Developments 2009-13

In this section, added in October 2013, only a very brief summary can be provided. Extensive detail can be found in the reviews by Carpentieri *et al.* (2011) for the European Commission and by Carpentieri (2012) for NIACE.

Both reviews highlighted the significant growth in international research interest in this field in recent years, particularly visible in the six statistical meta-analyses they analysed. All six found moderate to good effect sizes for benefit to children's literacy skills arising from participation in FL programmes (for details, see the Appendix in Carpentieri, 2012). However, very little of the evidence has arisen from Britain. An NRDC project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation and under way in 2013, is an attempt to fill this gap. It is using a matched-groups design, one group receiving FL, the other stand-alone pre-school experience.

Thus the evidence that children's skills benefit more from other forms of preschool provision, or none, is strong and growing. In contrast, Brooks and Hannon (2013) found that the position had not materially improved on the three gaps identified by Brooks *et al.* (2008) and listed in the last paragraph of the previous section. However, for some indirect evidence on the second of those gaps (whether parents in FLLN programmes make better progress than they would in discrete or stand-alone adult literacy or numeracy courses) see the data collated in Brooks and Hannon (2013).

The next chapter looks at the research design of the evaluation reported here, and provides information on the sample used in it.

3. The research and design process

3.1 The research design

The collection of data was a collaborative enterprise, and the LAs were heavily involved. Due to the pressures of time and resources data have not only been gathered by researchers, but also by LA managers⁹, course tutors, and early years teachers (EYTs), all of whom have been regarded as ‘co-researchers’ or ‘research practitioners’.

In total, 133 practitioners from 77¹⁰ LAs were trained to help the research team to collect data from learners on their courses. Between March and November 2008, the project team held 12 full training sessions and seven briefing meetings.

The project employed a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative research. A more comprehensive and detailed outline of the research design, including the ethical considerations, the training and the support provided, is available in Appendices D, E and F. It used tested and established assessment instruments in reading and writing, classroom observations, semi-structured questionnaires with LA managers, FL tutors, early years teachers and parents, and qualitative interviews with LA managers, tutors, early years teachers, children and parents. A summary of the research instruments used can be seen below in Table 3.1, and copies are in Appendices G to Q. The Table also includes the numbers of respondents to each instrument (sample size), and the job title of the person responsible for administering the instrument during data collection.

⁹ The title, ‘LA manager’, included many other titles such as FL Manager; FLLN Co-ordinator; Adult Community Learning Manager; Programme Leader; Community Development Manager; Children and Family Manager; Learning Co-ordinator; Curriculum Team Leader for Family Learning; Learning Standards & Curriculum Development Manager.

¹⁰ Not all of these 77 ‘signed up’ to the project but all but one expressed a very strong interest in taking part.

Table 3.1: Summary of the research instruments used, personnel responsible for gathering data and sample sizes

Group targeted	Purpose	Research instrument used	Sample size	Person responsible for administration	
Parents	Measure progress in reading	Go! Reading assessments (completed at both time points)	379	Adult tutor	
Parents	Measure progress in writing*	Go! Writing assessments* (completed at both time points)	121	Adult tutor	
Parents	Motivations, perceptions of course, progression	Focus groups, individual face-to-face & phone interviews - See Appendix G	101	Researcher and adult tutor	
Parents	Changes in home literacy activities	Questionnaires (completed at both time points) – See Appendix H	between 230 and 325	Adult tutor	
Parents	Perceptions of themselves and their child as literacy learners	Questionnaires (completed at both time points) - See Appendix I	between 230 and 325	Adult tutor	
Parents	Profile and contact details	Profile questionnaires - See Appendix J	543	Researcher	
Children	Measure children’s progress in writing	Gorman and Brooks (1996) 7-stage emergent writing assessments (completed at both time points)	301	Early years teacher	
Children	Measure progress in reading*	Hodder and Stoughton literacy baseline reading assessments* (completed at both time points)	81	Early years teacher	
Children	Perspectives on FL course and literacy experiences	Face-to-face interviews - See Appendix K	297	Early years teacher	
Children	Profile	Profile questionnaires - See Appendix L	527	Researcher	
LA managers	Views on strategies involved in delivery of FL courses	Questionnaires - See Appendix M	33	Researcher	
LA managers	Views on strategies involved in delivery of FL courses	Face-to-face and telephone interviews – See Appendix N	10	Researcher	
LA managers	Summary of course	Questionnaires – See Appendix O	57	Researcher	
Adult tutor	Pedagogic approaches to literacy, perceptions of course	Profile	See Appendix P	59	Researcher
		Questionnaire		62	
Early years teacher	Pedagogic approaches to literacy, perceptions of course	Profile	See Appendix Q	57	Researcher
		Questionnaire		62	

Key: * Applies to standard courses only.

Table 3.1 shows that the project attempted to gather a large amount of data, and, in order to provide a full data set, LAs were required to collect and return up to 22 discrete pieces of data on standard courses and 18 on short courses. For researchers, there is always a tension involved between trying to secure sufficient data to produce robust evidence and conclusions, and asking participants to gather too much information and so running the risk of losing their support and participation.

It is important to note that on short courses the project did not assess parents' writing or children's reading. This was, first, because it was thought that around 30 hours was insufficient time to show significant progress, and secondly, it was felt that the learners would spend a disproportionate amount of time being tested rather than learning. A summary of what was assessed, in terms of reading and writing on short and standard courses, can be seen below in Table 3.2. All other data were collected on both types of course.

Table 3.2: Assessments of reading and writing used on short and standard courses

Short courses	Standard courses
Parents' reading	Parents' reading Parents' writing
Children's writing	Children's reading Children's writing

3.2 The sample

The number of LAs involved and location of courses evaluated

Between November and March 2009, around 30 LAs withdrew from the project for various reasons, which are discussed more fully in Appendix R. This meant that forty-two LAs took part in the project, representing 28% of the total number (N=150). The project evaluated 74 FL courses¹¹ across England and each of the nine government office regions was represented. However, as Table 3.3 below shows, while some regions, such as the North West, evaluated a high level of courses, others, such as the West Midlands, evaluated only a few.

¹¹ From the total of 74, eight courses were adult only.

Table 3.3: The number of LAs who participated in the project, and the number of FL courses that were evaluated in each government office region

Region	Number of LAs involved from each region	Number of courses evaluated by region
East of England	2	2
East Midlands	4	7
London	8	15
North East	4	5
North West	12	19
South East	4	7
South West	5	12
West Midlands	2	3
Yorkshire and The Humber	1	4
TOTAL	42	74

Number of courses evaluated, including short and standard courses

Of the total of 74 courses evaluated, 46 (62%) were short courses (30-49 hours) and 28 (38%) were standard courses (60-72 hours). However, the vast majority of short courses were around 31 hours, and most of the standard courses were around 53 hours in duration. This information is summarised in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: Number and type of FL courses evaluated and the average number of hours

	Short courses	Standard courses
Total number of courses	46	28
Average number of hours	31	53

Number of parents, children, tutors and early years teachers involved

The total number of parents who took part in the evaluation was 583. Due to attrition, the number of parents who took a reading assessment both near the beginning of the course (pre-test, Time 1) and towards the end of the course (post-test, Time 2) was 379 (65% of those pre-tested); and the number who took the writing assessment at Time 1 and Time 2 was 121.

The total number of children involved in the evaluation was 527. A total of 301 children took a writing assessment at Time 1 and Time 2, and 81¹² took the reading assessment at Time 1 and Time 2.

The number of tutors who took part in the project was 68, and the number of early years teachers, 77. This information is summarised below in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Samples of parents, children, tutors and early year teachers

Respondents	Total number in evaluation	Reading at T1 and T2	Writing at T1 and T2
Parents	583	379	121
Children	527	81	301
Tutors	68	n/a	n/a
Teachers	77	n/a	n/a

The next chapter presents the main findings from the project, beginning with those based on (mainly) quantitative research, followed by the findings from the interviews, questionnaires and observations.

¹² This number is comparatively low because children’s reading was assessed on standard courses only, and the target group was only children aged approximately between 5:0 and 5:10 at the start.

4. Research findings

Introduction

This chapter begins with profiles of the parents, children, tutors and early years teachers who were involved in the project, before summarising the characteristics of the FL provision evaluated. The next six sections (4.2–4.7) provide quantitative data on parents' and children's assessments in reading and writing, and on parents' assessments of their children's literacy, and of themselves and their children as learners. The remaining sections present mainly qualitative data from children, tutors, early years teachers, parents, headteachers and FL managers. Section 4.14 also takes the reader into an FL classroom to delineate common forms of practice.

4.1 Profiles of parents, children, tutors and early years teachers

The section begins with demographic profiles of the learners and teaching staff.

4.1.1 Parents' profile

A total of 542 adults were enrolled on 74 courses, 354 (61%) on short courses, and 229 (39%) on standard courses. However, not all profiles were returned, and some of those returned were incomplete. In particular, almost half of those who returned profiles either did not say what their highest qualification in English was, or were not sure, making statements based on that variable less reliable. The numbers of parents for whom other items of information were available also varied, as shown in Table 4.1.

As would be expected, the majority of parents involved in the programme were women. From other demographic information on 408 of the adult participants, we know that 392 (96%) of that group were parents to the children in the sample, and 16 (4%) were grandparents. Almost half the parents were in their 30s. Three quarters were white British. Just over one-fifth had a first language other than English.

Even though some of the numbers and all the percentages for highest qualification in English are unreliable (because almost half the parents were not sure or did not answer the question), we can say that at least 114 parents had qualifications in English at Level 2 or above (some of those who responded 'GCSE' will have had a Level 2 grade), including 15 at Level 3 (A-Level or equivalent), and four at Level 4 or above (higher education). This, and the fact that 36% overall had stayed on in education beyond 16, suggests that the courses were serving some families at higher socio-economic levels than, for example, in the Demonstration Programmes mentioned in Section 2.3.

Table 4.1: Parents' background characteristics

Category	Overall sample size for category	Subcategory	Sample size by subcategory	Percentage within main category
Gender	509	Female	477	94
		Male	32	6
Age	496	Under 20	1	<1
		20-29	144	29
		30-39	235	47
		40-49	92	19
		50-59	15	3
		Over 60	9	2
Ethnicity	510	White British	374	73
		White other	8	2
		Black African	16	3
		Black British	11	2
		Black Caribbean	3	1
		Bangladeshi	7	2
		Indian	16	3
		Pakistani	34	7
		Chinese	3	1
		Mixed heritage	4	1
		Other	34	7
First language	506	English	396	78
		Another language *	110	22
Learning difficulty	498	Yes	36	7
		No	462	93
Physical difficulty	496	Yes	17	4
		No	479	96
Age of leaving full-time education	414	below 15	20	5
		15	56	13
		16	185	42
		17	53	12
		18	51	12
		19	24	6
		20	13	3
		21+	12	3
Highest qualification in English	438	Level 4+	4	1
		Level 3	15	3
		Level 2	95	19
		Level 1	62	12
		GCSE (Level 1 or 2) **	42	8
		Entry Level	34	7
		No qualification	64	12
		Not sure/no response	194	48

* For details see Table S.1 in Appendix S.

** 42 parents gave the answer 'GCSE' without specifying a grade. We are therefore unable to say whether these qualifications were at Level 1 (grades D-E) or Level 2 (grades A*-C).

The majority of parents who had Entry Level or no qualifications were on short courses¹³. Standard courses contained more learners with higher qualifications, and there were more people with higher qualifications on standard courses than on short courses. The implications of this are discussed below in the sections on the test results (see section 4.7).

Altogether 31 languages, other than English, were reported as the parents' first language, representing a vivid cross-section of the world's languages. A more detailed breakdown of these languages can be seen in Appendix S, where each language is listed, as well as language group or region (e.g. Indo-European, Far East).

4.1.2 Children's profile

A total of 529 children were enrolled on 74 courses. However, because not all their profiles were returned (112 (21%) were missing), and some of those returned were incomplete, the numbers of children for whom different items of information were available varied (as shown in Table 4.2).

Dates of birth were available for 447 children. Subtracting these from the dates on which they were given the writing and/or reading pre-tests enabled the calculation of the ages in years and completed months at the beginning of the courses of 357 children (test data were not available for the others).

Table 4.2 shows that the gender mix was about equal, about three-quarters of the children were white British, and about four-fifths had English as their first language. Most children were within the intended age-range for these courses (3:0-6:11), but 4 were younger and 17 were older; almost exactly half were aged between 4:6 and 5:5.

As with the parents, 31 languages other than English were reported as children's first language. For more details see Appendix S, where each language is listed, as well as language group or region (e.g. Indo-European, Far East).

¹³ It is important to emphasise that 48% of the sample were either not sure what their highest qualification was in literacy, or gave no response.

Table 4.2: Children's background characteristics

Category	Overall sample size for category	Subcategory	Sample size by subcategory	Percentage within main category
Type of course	417	Short courses	227	54
		Standard courses	190	46
Gender	468	Boys	231	49
		Girls	237	51
Age at beginning of course	357	Below 3:0	4	1
		3:0-3:5	7	2
		3:6-3:11	18	5
		4:0-4:5	26	7
		4:6-4:11	95	27
		5:0-5:5	79	22
		5:6-5:11	59	17
		6:0-6:5	38	11
		6:5-6:11	14	4
		Over 6:11	17	5
Ethnicity	464	White British	337	73
		White other	5	1
		Black African	11	2
		Black British	9	2
		Bangladeshi	4	1
		Indian	21	5
		Pakistani	30	7
		Chinese	3	1
		Mixed heritage	19	4
		Other	27	5
		First language	528	English
Another language *	114			22
Learning difficulty	209 **	Yes	20	
		No	189	
Physical difficulty	210 **	Yes	15	
		No	195	
Setting of family literacy provision	452	School	345	85
		Nursery	56	12
		Play group	8	2
		Children's centre	3	1

* See Table S.2 in Appendix S for more details.

** These categories were left blank on many profiles. The numbers of children with a learning or a physical difficulty are probably reliable, but the other numbers are probably not, and percentages are not given because they would certainly be misleading.

4.1.3 Tutors' profile

Altogether, 69 tutors taught on the 74 courses (five taught more than one course). The number of tutors who returned the profile form was 59, and the number who completed the interview/questionnaire was 62 (although this does not necessarily mean that they were the same individuals). Of the 69 tutors, 66 (96%) were female.

Tutors' years of teaching experience in FL

The number of years of teaching experience in Family Literacy varied from less than a year to 13 years, with the average being 4.9 years. Around half of the tutors had between three and seven years' teaching experience in FL (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Tutors' years of teaching experience in FL

	N	%
less than 1 year	2	4
1 year	8	15
2 years	3	6
3 years	5	10
4 years	11	21
5 years	1	2
6 years	6	12
7 years	3	6
8 years	7	13
9 years	1	2
10 years	3	6
12 years	1	2
13 years	1	2
Totals	52	100

Tutors' qualifications

A total of 51 tutors supplied information about their highest professional teaching qualification in English/Literacy (see Table 4.4). Two-thirds had a first degree, and within this group 10 (a fifth of the total) had postgraduate qualifications. Most of the rest had 'legacy' qualifications, either generic (Teacher's Certificate) or basic skills-related (e.g. City and Guilds).

Table 4.4: Tutors' highest level of qualification

	N	%
Master's degree/Level 6	2	4
PGCE/Level 5	8	16
Degree (e.g. BEd)/Level 4	23	45
Teacher's Certificate (or equivalent)	5	10
A-Level/City and Guilds/Level 3	12	24
O-Level	1	2
Totals	51	100

N.B. 'Levels' are those of the earlier National Qualifications Framework, not those subsequent to the re-organisation of levels above Level 3.

4.1.4 Early Years Teachers' profile

The number of early years teachers who returned the profile form was 56, and 62 completed the interview/questionnaire. Altogether, 77 teachers taught on the 74 courses evaluated. The number of teachers is greater than the number of courses because on some courses children came from different schools and each school sent their own teacher. All the Early Years teachers were female.

Teachers' years of teaching experience in FL

Compared with the tutors, the 47 teachers who answered the question had fewer average years of experience in FL (see Table 4.5). The average was 3.2 years (as opposed to 4.9 years for the tutors), and varied from less than one year to 11 years. Around three-quarters of the teachers had between less than one year to four years of experience, with around a quarter teaching FL for the first time.

Table 4.5: Teachers' years of teaching experience

	N	%
Less than a year	11	23
1 years	6	13
2 years	5	11
3 years	5	11
4 years	7	15
5 years	3	6
6 years	4	9
7 years	1	2
8 years	2	4
9 years	1	2
10 years	1	2
11 years	1	2
Totals	47	100

Teachers' qualifications

Forty-seven teachers supplied information about their highest level of qualification (see Table 4.6). Three-fifths had a first degree, and within this group 12 (a quarter of the total) had postgraduate qualifications. Of the remaining 18, 11 had a Teacher's Certificate, and four of those at Level 3 had qualifications for working with young children.

Table 4.6: Teachers' highest level of qualification

	N	%
Master's degree/Level 6	1	2
PGCE/Level 5	11	23
Degree (e.g. BEd)/Level 4	17	36
Teacher's Certificate (or equivalent)	12	26
FE/NVQ/Level 3	6	13
Totals	47	100

N.B. 'Levels' are those of the earlier National Qualifications Framework, not those subsequent to the re-organisation of levels above Level 3.

4.2 Summary of family literacy provision

It is important to note that information on where FL provision was set is based on only 57 returns by FL managers, representing just over three-quarters of the courses evaluated in total.

Table 4.7: Type of course and of setting

Type of course	Short 59% (N=44) Standard 41% (N=30) Total 100% (N=74)
Where is the course held?	School 79% (N=45) Children's Centre 5% (N=3) Other 16% (N=9)

LA managers were asked to give intended and actual teaching contact hours for each course, and as Table 4.8 shows, there are only slight differences between the two. Overall, the actual numbers of hours were lower than the intended numbers. The total number of contact hours for parents (obtained by adding the actual contact hours of the parents-only session to the actual contact hours of the joint session – highlighted below) was on average 31 hours for the short courses and 53 hours for standard courses.

There were virtually no differences between short and standard courses in relation to proportions of contact hours for parents-only, children-only, joint sessions and home activities. On average, provision consisted of 40% of parents-only sessions, 24% joint sessions, and 26% of children-only sessions, and the rest of the time (10%) was counted as home activities.

Table 4.8: Averages by course type (standard deviation in brackets)

	Short		Standard	
	Intended	Actual	Intended	Actual
Number of sessions per course for parents	14 (5)	12 (3)	20 (8)	18 (7)
Number of contact hours of the parents-only sessions	23 (9)	22 (9)	36 (11)	33 (9)
Proportion of parents-only sessions contact hours	40% (9)	43% (9)	39% (9)	41% (9)
Number of contact hours of the joint sessions	12 (7)	9 (5)	21 (8)	20 (9)
Proportion of joint sessions contact hours	24% (10)	22% (9)	26% (13)	24% (13)
Time in hours per course for any home activities that counted as hours on the course	6 (7)	6 (7)	7 (8)	9 (9)
Proportion of home activities that counted as hours on the course	8% (10)	9% (11)	7% (9)	11% (11)
Number of contact hours of the children-only sessions	14 (8)	13 (8)	30 (18)	26 (16)
Proportion of children-only sessions	27% (12)	26% (13)	28% (16)	25% (16)
TOTAL hours	56 (20)	31 (18)	87 (29)	53 (27)

The average number of parents and children recruited on both short and standard courses was around nine, although, as we will see, this does not necessarily mean that all of them took an assessment. There were no major differences between short and standard courses in relation to their composition (gender of learners, attendance and retention). The proportion of parents who achieved a qualification at the end of the course on average, out of those who were recruited, was understandably higher on standard courses (71%) than short courses (56%).

Table 4.9: Average numbers of parents and children by course type (standard deviation in brackets)

	Short		Standard	
	Parents/ Carers	Children	Parents/ Carers	Children
Number recruited	9 (3)	9 (3)	8 (2)	9 (2)
Number female	8 (3)	4 (2)	8 (2)	5 (2)
Number male	0.3 (0.6)	4 (3)	0.3 (0.5)	4 (2)
Number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	0.4 (0.7)	1 (2)	0.5 (0.7)	0.4 (0.5)
% attendance	79% (13%)	81% (15%)	78% (14%)	77% (13%)
% retention	83% (21%)	85% (26%)	84% (19%)	84% (19%)
Number achieving qualifications	5 (3)	-	6 (3)	-
% achieving qualifications	56% (26%)	-	71% (27%)	-

4.3 Assessment of parents' reading

The parents' reading was assessed on both short and standard courses, using the Go! reading tests, which were administered by tutors near the beginning (Time 1) and again near the end of the courses (Time 2). The assessments covered two levels, a (primarily for readers judged to be at lower Entry Level) and b (primarily for readers judged to be between Entry level 3 and Level 2). The tests were based on a magazine, and parents were given up to 30 minutes to complete them. The reading tests yield both standardised and raw scores; for the overall results and for most of the subgroup analyses only standardised scores are reported because these allow scores from the two test levels to be combined, and raw scores do not. The standardised scores have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10; these results are shown in Table 4.10. The data for the beginning of course assessment are shown separately for those who were also assessed at the end of the course ('returners') and those who were not ('non-returners'), in order to facilitate valid statistical comparisons. Table 4.10 also gives the returner parents' results at both stages by the type of course attended. The distributions of scores at the two stages are shown graphically in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, and the changes in scores by type of course in Figure 4.3.

The overall difference between the returners' overall average scores at the beginning and end of the courses was not statistically significant ($t=1.67$, $p=0.096$), and the very small overall effect size of 0.13 confirms that the gain was not educationally significant. A possible partial explanation emerged in the analysis by type of course (see below).

Table 4.10: Parents' reading results, standardised scores, overall and by type of course

Beginning of courses (Time 1)						End of courses (Time 2)			Gain	Effect size
Non-returners			Returners			Returners				
N	Average	(s.d.)	N	Average	(s.d.)	N	Average	(s.d.)		
115	63.2	(23.7)	379	66.0	(22.9)	379	67.3	(17.7)	1.3	0.13
Short courses			240	61.2	(22.9)	240	63.6	(18.3)	2.4	0.24
Standard courses			139	74.2	(20.4)	139	73.7	(14.5)	-0.5	-0.05

Note: The effect sizes were calculated by dividing the gains by the standard deviation of the test, 10.

Figure 4.1: Parents' standardised reading scores at the beginning of the courses, overall

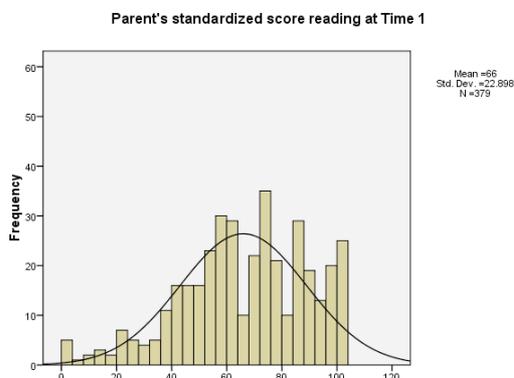
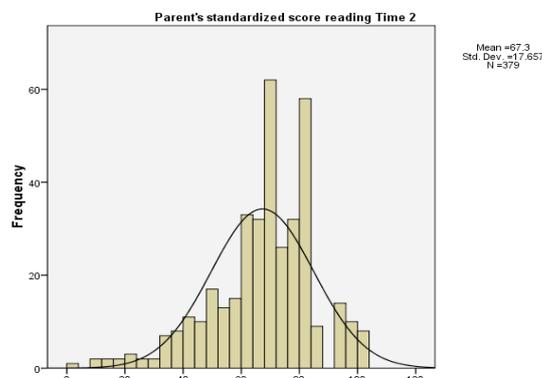


Figure 4.2: Parents' standardised reading scores at the end of the courses, overall



Subgroup analyses

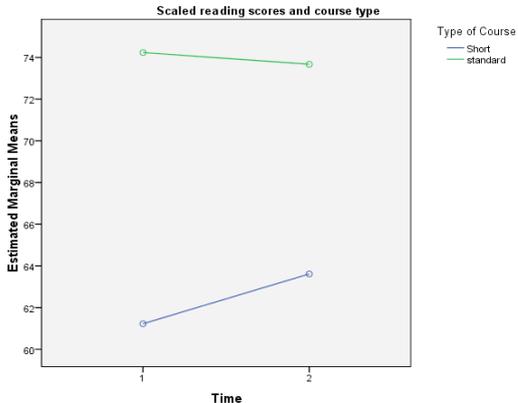
Analysis by ethnic group was not attempted because there were so few people in groups other than White British; and not enough people stated their highest qualification in English to make analysis by that variable possible.

Subgroup analyses were therefore carried out by age group, type of course, whether or not English was the first language, and whether the child with whom the parent attended was a boy or a girl.

There were no statistically significant differences in attainment between age groups.

Parents on standard courses had higher average standardised scores at both time points than parents on short courses ($F=35.54$, $p<0.001$), which is consistent with the fact that those on standard courses tended to have higher previous qualifications and with the suggestion from the parents' profiles that some were from higher socio-economic levels. The change in average standardised score was not statistically significant for either group ($F=1.27$, $p=0.26$), but the difference in amount of progress approached significance ($p=0.07$). As Figure 4.3 shows, parents on short courses made some progress, while those on standard courses did not. However, there may have been a ceiling effect here, that is, the average Time 1 score for the parents on standard courses was already very high, so that they had little room in which to improve. If so, this could also help explain the non-significant overall gain reported above.

Figure 4.3: Changes in parents’ average standardised reading scores, by type of course



N.B. The truncation of the vertical scale exaggerates the slope of the graphs.

Further exploration of the reading results is possible via the raw scores, which have to be split by test level, as shown in Table 4.11, because a given raw score on Level a (the easy version) has a different meaning from the same numerical raw score on Level b (the less easy version).

Table 4.11: Returner parents’ reading results, raw scores, by type of course and test level

	Level	Maximum	N	Beginning of courses (Time 1)		End of courses (Time 2)		Gain
				Average	(s.d.)	Average	(s.d.)	
Short courses	a	30	29	19.1	(8.2)	21.9	(7.3)	2.8
	b	39	133	25.5	(7.6)	26.8	(6.2)	1.3
Standard courses	a	30	6	13.9	(12.7)	22.0	(6.1)	8.1
	b	39	106	28.8	(6.2)	29.8	(4.7)	1.0

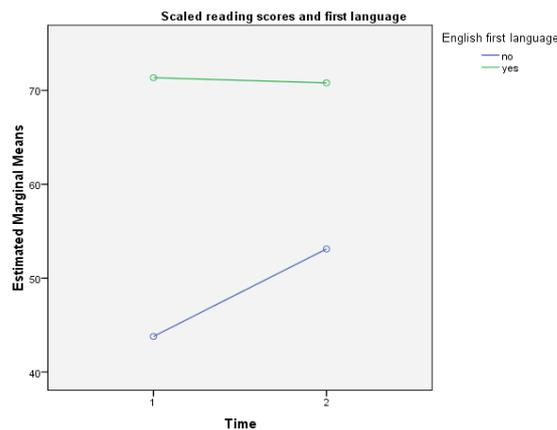
So few parents on standard courses took Level a that no commentary is given on that. The gain of 2.8 points by parents on short courses who took Level a represents 9% of the maximum score; both averages are within NQF Entry level 3, and the gain is almost 30% of that level.

The gain of 1.3 points by parents on short courses who took Level b represents 3% of the maximum score; the Time 1 average is at the very top of Level 1, while the Time 2 average is over the threshold into Level 2, and the gain is about one tenth of a level.

The gain of 1.0 points by parents on standard courses who took Level b represents 2.6% of the maximum score, and both averages are within Level 2; it is not possible to characterise the gain as a fraction of a level because high scores are strictly speaking at ‘Level 2 or above’. These figures do, however, confirm that the parents on standard courses were on average already quite capable readers; and both sets of scores on the Level b test confirm the ceiling effect.

Just over 20% of the parents had a first language other than English, and this variable had a significant impact on performance ($F=25.87$, $p<0.001$). As Figure 4.4 shows, those whose first language was English had higher average scores at both stages, but did not make progress (though this again could well be a ceiling effect), while those with English as an additional language did make progress.

Figure 4.4: Changes in parents' average standardised reading scores, by English as first language or not



N.B. The truncation of the vertical scale exaggerates the slope of the graphs.

Parents who attended the courses with a son had greater rates of improvement than those who attended with a daughter ($p<0.05$). This finding is intriguing, offers no obvious explanation, and would bear further investigation.

Summary

Overall, the parents appeared to make only an insignificant amount of progress in reading. However, there seems to have been a ceiling effect: the average scores of those on standard courses (some of whom had higher previous qualifications) and of those with English as their first language were already high at the beginning of the courses, leaving little room for improvement. By contrast, parents on short courses and those with English as an additional language did make some progress on average, though this reached statistical significance only for those with English as an additional language. There were no differences in attainment between age groups. Intriguingly, parents who attended with a son made more progress than those who attended with a daughter.

4.4 Assessment of parents' writing

The parents' writing was assessed only on standard courses, using the Go! writing tests. These were based on the same magazine, and parents were given 30 minutes to complete the task. The scores are not standardised; they are raw scores, with a maximum of 29. The results are shown numerically in Table 4.12, where it seems clear that the non-returners and returners did not differ significantly at pre-test. The returners' results are also shown graphically in Figures 4.5 and 4.6, where the shift in

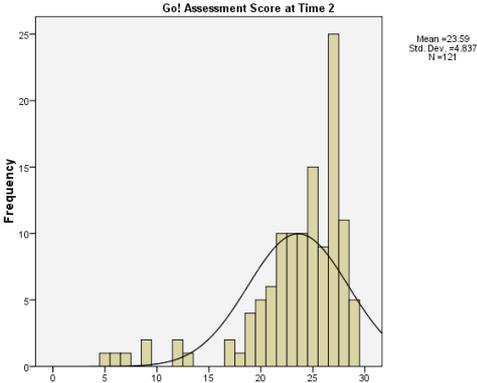
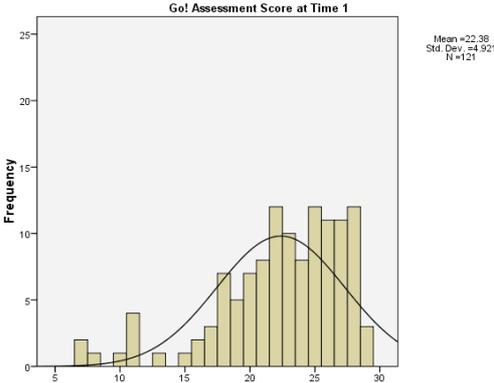
the curve is clear. A paired samples t-test showed that there was statistically significant progress in writing ($t=3.51$; $p=0.001$). The average gain, of 1.2 points, represents about 4% of the maximum score of 29. The average score at the beginning of the courses was very near the top of NQF Entry level 3, in fact only slightly below the threshold for Level 1 (a score of 23), while the average score at the end of the courses was just over into Level 1. In terms of the NQF, the average gain represents about one sixth of a level.

Table 4.12: Parents’ writing results

Beginning of courses (Time 1)						End of courses (Time 2)		
Non-returners			Returners			Returners		
N	Average	(s.d.)	N	Average	(s.d.)	N	Average	(s.d.)
57	22.9	(4.2)	121	22.4	(4.9)	121	23.6	(4.9)

Figure 4.5: Parents’ writing scores at the beginning of the courses

Figure 4.6: Parents’ writing scores at the end of the courses



Subgroup analyses

Because of small numbers in some subgroups, no subgroup analyses of the parents’ writing results were attempted.

Summary

On average, the parents made a small but statistically significant gain in writing. No subgroup analyses were attempted.

4.5 Assessment of children’s writing

The children’s emergent writing was assessed on both short and standard courses. They were asked to make a drawing of their own choice on an A4 piece of white paper, and then to do one of the following forms of (real or emergent) writing:

- a few lines or a sentence (usually about the drawing), if the child could do this;
- if not, then their own name and some other letters;
- if not that, then a few attempts at letters, letter-like forms, or scribbles;
- if not that, then copying a few words.

The task was generally administered by the early years teachers, and carried out near the beginning and near the end of the courses. The aim of the exercise was to gather the highest stage of real or emergent writing that each child was independently capable of. Their writing samples were assessed against the seven-stage scale developed by Gorman and Brooks (1996) for the Basic Skills Agency's Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes.

Figure 4.7 shows an example of emergent writing graded at Stage 2, and Figure 4.8 gives an example of writing in the final stage of development (Stage 7) for children in this age group. Both are taken from Gorman and Brooks (1996).

Writing samples were available for 433 children at the beginning of the courses, and for 301 at the end – see Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Children's writing stages at the beginning and the end of the courses, overall

	Beginning of courses (Time 1)				End of courses (Time 2)	
	Non-returners		Returners		Returners	
Stage	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	10	8	30	10	21	7
2	20	15	57	19	28	9
3	17	13	29	10	16	5
4	38	29	76	25	65	22
5	10	8	25	8	39	13
6	29	22	59	20	75	25
7	8	6	25	8	57	19
Total	132	100	301	100	301	100
Average stage (and s.d.)	4.0 (1.7)		4.0 (1.8)		4.7 (1.8)	

Figure 4.7: Emergent writing at Stage 2

In the early stages, children are already getting an idea about how writing works and understanding that marks are used on the page to pass ideas from the writer to the reader. They are learning the complicated business of how to form the shape of individual letters.

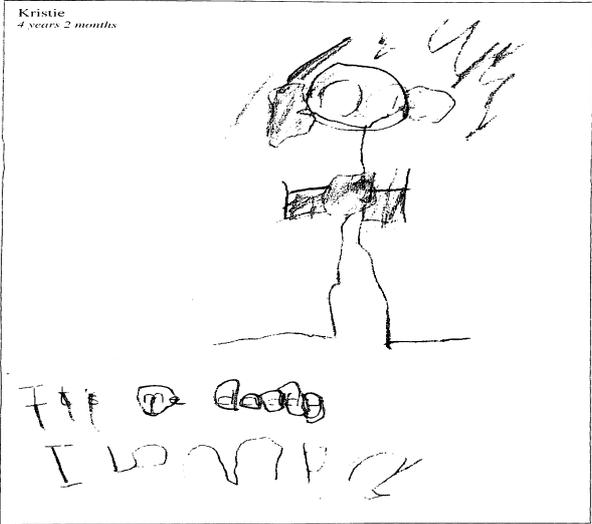
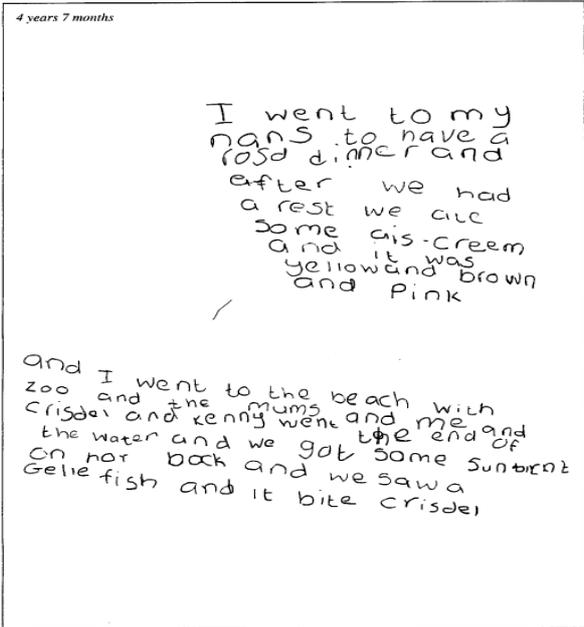


Figure 4.8: A child's writing at Stage 7

At stage 7, children write using well-formed letters, which can convey a set of related ideas in a way that makes sense.



The averages for the two groups at the beginning did not differ significantly; the returners were therefore representative of the full initial sample. The improvement in average stage for the returners, however, was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Thus these children had on average made good progress in writing during the courses.

Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show the distributions of the returners' writing stages at the beginning and end of the courses; it is clearly noticeable that there are fewer children at the early stages, and a greater number have reached the higher stages at the end of the courses.

Some of this growth would of course have occurred in any case, whether the children had attended family literacy provision or not, simply because they were some months older at the end. However, the average improvement of about three quarters of a stage compares well with that observed in previous evaluations (see Brooks *et al.*, 1996, 1999), and in our judgment represents more progress than would have been expected in the absence of the courses.

Figure 4.9: The distribution of returner children's writing stages at the beginning of the courses

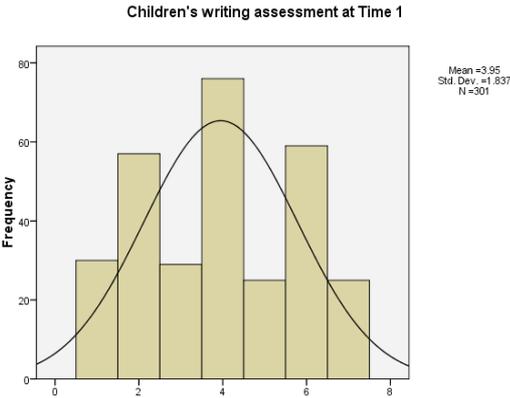
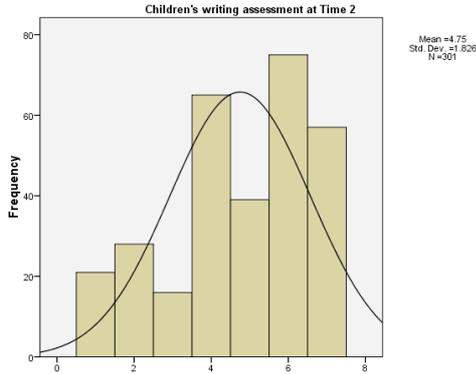


Figure 4.10: The distribution of returner children's writing stages at the end of the courses



Subgroup analyses

Four subgroup analyses were carried out, using data only from children who provided writing samples both at the beginning and the end of the courses – see Table 4.14.

All the differences in average score between the beginning and the end of the courses were highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), except for children in nursery settings ($p > 0.05$). This group of children were the youngest in the study, and for them each stage on the scale would represent a large amount of development. From the other results it seems that the course had worked well for children in school settings, and equally well for boys and girls, and for children with English as the first or an additional language. The oddity here is that the amount of progress on standard courses was not significantly different from that on short courses: perhaps a case of a novelty effect wearing off.

Table 4.14: Children’s average writing stages at the beginning and end of the courses, by subgroups, returners only

	N	Beginning of courses (Time 1)		End of courses (Time2)	
		Average stage	(s.d.)	Average stage	(s.d.)
Short courses	177	4.0	(1.8)	4.9	(1.9)
Standard courses	124	3.9	(1.8)	4.8	(1.8)
Boys	134	4.0	(1.8)	4.8	(1.8)
Girls	139	4.1	(1.8)	4.8	(1.8)
English 1 st language	210	4.1	(1.8)	4.8	(1.8)
English additional language	60	3.9	(1.9)	4.6	(1.8)
School settings	223	4.3	(1.7)	5.2	(0.9)
Nursery settings	35	2.3	(1.3)	2.3	(1.5)

Note: Information on gender, whether English was the first language, and type of setting was missing for varying numbers of children.

Summary

On the whole, the children’s writing developed considerably during the courses, and this growth was seen for most subgroups (type of course, gender, English as a first or additional language, and school settings).

4.6 Assessment of children’s reading

In addition to providing writing samples, some children on standard courses (but not on short courses) were asked to take the *Literacy Baseline* test. Only those aged at least 5 years 0 months (5:0) at the beginning of their courses were meant to take it then; a few children outside this range were nevertheless given the test, and their scores have been used in these analyses where possible (i.e. except in analyses using standardised scores, which are age-based).

The test yields three types of score, for varying groups of children:

- a raw score, that is, simply the total number of items answered correctly. All children who take the test achieve a raw score, which can range from zero to the maximum of 40. In this project, 109 children took the test at the beginning of their courses, of whom 81 (74%) took it again at the end, and 28 did not;
- a standardised score, that is, one adjusted for age by reference to the scores of representative samples of children who took the test while it was being developed. Most standardised scores (as here) are on a scale with a mean (average) of 100 and a standard deviation (s.d.) of 15. The standard deviation is a measure of the divergence of scores from the mean; just over two-thirds of all scores fall within ± 1 s.d. of the mean. The *Literacy Baseline* yields

standardised scores only for children aged 5:0-6:4. In this project, 63 children were within this age-range at the beginning of their courses, of whom 36 were still within that range when they took it again at the end of their courses, and 27 either did not take the test again or were aged over 6:4 when they did so;

- a reading age (r.a.), that is, the chronological age of the average child who achieved a particular raw score during the development of the test. Reading ages, like chronological ages, are expressed in years and months. The *Literacy Baseline* yields r.a.'s for children who achieve a raw score of at least 6 but not the maximum raw score of 40. A raw score of 6 yields an r.a. of 4:0, and r.a.'s below that would be unreliable. The maximum score does not yield an r.a. because it could be achieved by children of a wide range of ages. In this project, 100 children achieved raw scores in the range 6-39 at the beginning of their courses (and were therefore attributed r.a.'s for that point), of whom 66 achieved raw scores within that range again at the end of their courses, and 34 either did not take the test again or achieved scores outside that range when they did so (9 of these children had moved up to the maximum score).

Table 4.15 presents the results of the *Literacy Baseline* for all three types of score. 'Returners' are the children for whom the relevant types of score are available at both stages; 'non-returners' are those for whom scores are available only for the beginning of their courses. The distributions of the returners' raw scores at the two stages are shown in Figures 4.11 and 4.12, where the shift in the curve is clearly visible.

Table 4.15: Children's *Literacy Baseline* results

	Beginning of courses (Time 1)						End of courses (Time 2)			Impact measure
	Non-returners			Returners			Returners			
Type of score	N	Aver -age	(s.d.)	N	Aver -age	(s.d.)	N	Aver -age	(s.d.)	
Raw scores	28	26.6	(11.1)	81	22.7	(11.1)	81	31.9	(7.9)	
Standard- ised scores	27	110.7	(15.5)	36	112.4	(17.7)	36	122.0	(17.0)	Effect size = 0.64
Reading ages	34	6:4	(1:0)	66	5:7	(1:0)	66	6:9	(1:0)	Ratio gain = 3.1

The non-returners' beginning of course results are given in order to compare them with the returners' results at that stage, and therefore to investigate whether the returners were representative of the full original samples. If the beginning of course results for the two groups are not significantly different, we assume that the returners are representative of the full original samples, otherwise not. The differences on raw and standardised scores were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), but the initial average reading ages did differ significantly ($p = 0.002$). However, the difference in this case was in favour of the non-returners, so it was not the case that only poorer readers 'dropped out', and the improvement in r.a. for the returners is therefore all the more impressive.

Figure 4.11: Returner children's raw scores for reading at the beginning of the courses

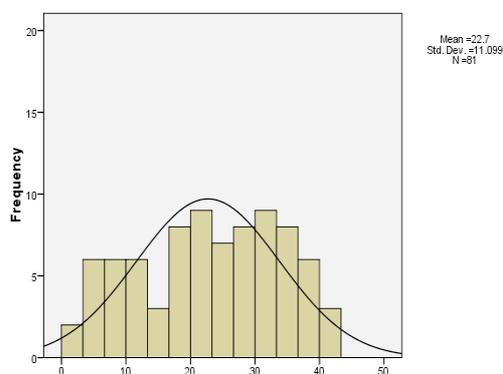
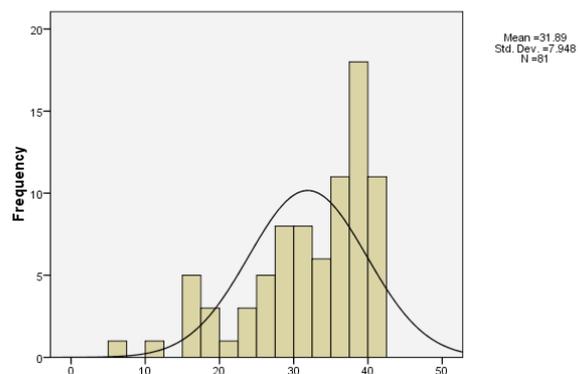


Figure 4.12: Returner children's raw scores for reading at the end of the courses



Another facet of the average beginning-of-course standardised scores and r.a.'s should be noted: for both groups they were already above the respective relevant norms of 100 and 5:4 (the latter being the average chronological age of the 109 children at the start). This contrasts strongly with the well-below-average initial scores found in the evaluations commissioned by the Basic Skills Agency in the 1990s (see Brooks *et al.*, 1996, 1999). All the courses evaluated then were located in areas of multiple deprivation, and this was meant to be so in the subsequent national roll-out. However, the results above suggest that the courses evaluated in this project were serving families of a rather different socio-economic and educational profile, thus confirming the impression from the parents' profiles (section 4.1.1) and some of their reading scores (section 4.3).

On all three types of score the returners' end-of-course average scores were significantly higher than their beginning-of-course average scores ($p < 0.001$). Raw scores and r.a.'s would be expected to improve with age in any case, but standardised scores would not (age-standardisation means that, if there is no real change, the standardised scores are the same, or at least not significantly different, at the two stages). We therefore need further measures of the impact on the children's literacy.

In the case of r.a.'s the appropriate statistic is the ratio gain (RG), that is, the average gain in months of r.a. divided by the average number of months between the two test occasions. Here, the average gain in r.a. was 14 months (6:9 minus 5:7), and the average interval was 4.5 months, yielding an RG of 3.1. Exactly standard progress (one month's gain in one month) would give an RG of 1.0, and any RG over 3.0 represents substantial progress.

In the case of standardised scores, the appropriate statistic is the effect size, that is, the average gain in standardised score points divided by (in this case) the s.d. of the test, which (as already noted) is 15. Here, the average gain in standardised score points was 9.6 (122.0 minus 112.4), which divided by 15 yields an effect size of 0.64. Exactly standard progress would by definition give an effect size of zero (same average score at both stages), and any effect size in the range 0.5 to 0.8 is considered medium.

These two impact measures are not contradictory – they are based on different numbers of children – and both attest considerable benefit to these children’s progress in literacy.

Subgroup analyses

Three of the four forms of subgroup analysis used for the writing data were not feasible for the reading data: by type of course (only children on standard courses did the reading test), English as first language or not (only 17 of these children had a first language other than English), and setting attended (only five of these children were attending family literacy in settings other than schools). The only subgroup analyses attempted were therefore by gender, and only for returners. The numbers involved were relatively small: for raw scores, 33 boys, 45 girls; for standardised scores, 16 boys, 20 girls; and for r.a’s, 27 boys, 36 girls. It is therefore not surprising that none of the differences were statistically significant. With larger samples such results would suggest that the programmes had benefited boys and girls about equally; with these numbers, this would be a hazardous inference.

Summary

Children who took the *Literacy Baseline* test at the beginning and end of their courses on average improved their reading during the courses. It was not possible to state any findings on whether subgroups (e.g. boys and girls) made similar or different amounts of progress.

4.7 Overall summary of sections 4.1-4.6

About equal numbers of boys and girls participated, but most of the parents were mothers. Almost half the parents were in their 30s. Most of the children were within the intended age-range, but a few were younger or older. About three quarters of both generations were white British, and just over a fifth of both generations had a first language other than English – 31 other languages from around the world were reported.

At least a quarter of the parents had qualifications in English at Level 2 or above, and 36% had stayed on in education beyond 16. From this, and the high initial levels of some parents’ reading and writing scores, and the high average level of the children’s reading scores, it would seem that the courses were serving some families at higher socio-economic levels.

Overall, the parents appeared to make only an insignificant amount of progress in reading. However, there seems to have been a ceiling effect: the average scores of those on standard courses (some of whom had higher previous qualifications) and of those with English as their first language were already high at the beginning of the courses, leaving little room for improvement. By contrast, parents on short courses and those with English as an additional language did make some progress on average. There were no differences in attainment between age groups. Intriguingly, parents who attended with a son made more progress in reading than those who attended with a daughter.

On average, the parents made a small but statistically significant gain in writing. No subgroup analyses were attempted.

On the whole, the children’s writing developed considerably during the courses, and this growth was seen for most subgroups. The subsample of children who took the reading test on average improved their reading during the courses. It was not possible to state any findings on whether subgroups of children made similar or different amounts of progress in reading.

With the partial exception of parents’ reading (where there is a plausible explanation), the courses appear to have achieved their central aim of boosting both the parents’ and the children’s literacy levels.

Researchers also carried out an analysis of the number of teaching contact hours children and parents were given between tests. Table 4.16 shows that, particularly on short courses, the amount was not very high. On short courses, there was an average of 13 hours’ contact time between the pre- and post-tests of children’s writing, and an average of 17 hours’ contact time between the tests of parents’ reading. Although the number of hours was greater on standard courses, it is hardly surprising that learners did not make more progress in their literacy skills, and it makes it difficult to compare findings relating to progress in studies such as Brooks et al’s assessment of the Basic Skills Agency’s Demonstration Programmes (Brooks et al., 1996; Brooks et al., 1997) and the results of several studies tabulated in Brooks and Hannon (2013)

Table 4.16: Average number (and range) of contact hours between pre- and post-tests for parents and children, by reading v writing, and by short v standard courses

		Children’s writing hours	Children’s reading hours	Parents’ reading hours	Parents’ writing hours
Short courses	average	13	n/a	17	n/a
	(range)	(3-30)		(6-34)	
Standard courses	average	27	23	27	31
	(range)	(15-51)	(11-48)	(5-51)	(15-48)

4.8 Changes in parents' assessments of their child's literacy activities

Introduction

The next two sections (4.8 and 4.9) are based on parental perceptions, and therefore these data should be regarded as more interpretive and less objective than data presented for reading and writing. This means that conclusions should also be regarded with more caution.

This section looks at changes in parents' assessments of their children's literacy activities, which mainly take place at home. Parents were asked to appraise the frequency of time they spent with the child writing a shopping list and own name; drawing; using a computer; playing games and with toys; talking about TV, nursery/school; telling stories; singing songs/saying rhymes; looking at and reading printed text such as comics, newspapers and books; and the number of times they visited their child's nursery, including talking to teachers.

The following section (4.9) considers parents' views of themselves and their children as learners.

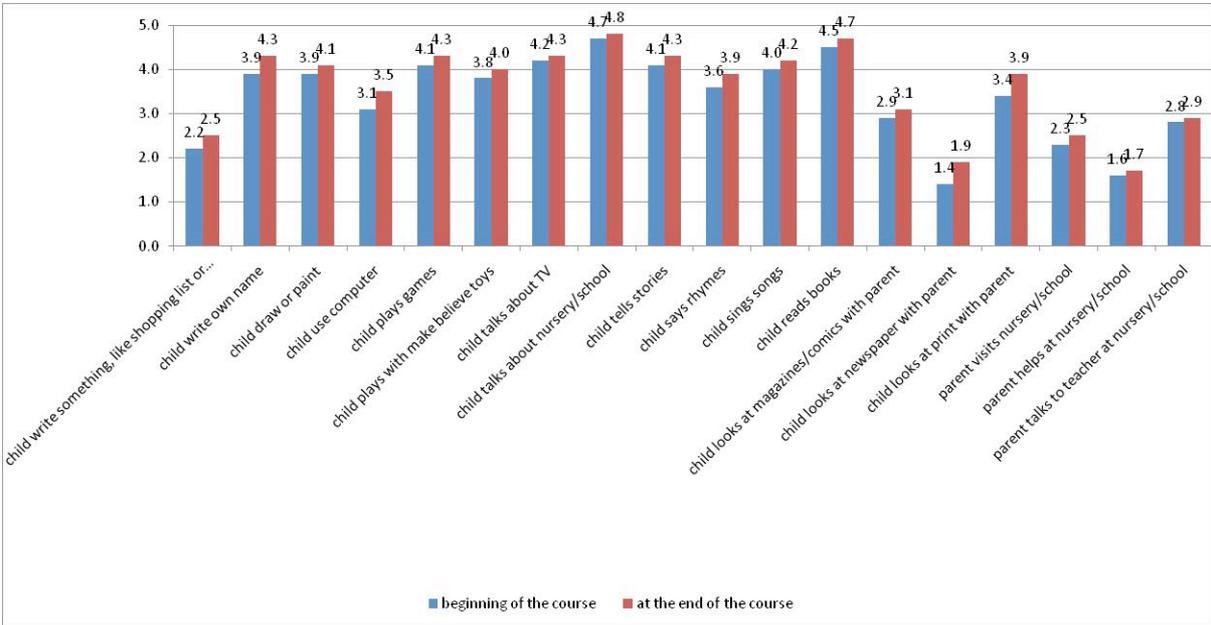
Parents were asked to make both these evaluations at two time points, near the beginning (Time 1), and at the end (Time 2), of the FL course, to see if any changes had taken place. The questionnaires were administered by the course tutors. The individual items were answered by varying numbers of parents at the two stages, so that the numbers from whom responses on the different items were available at both stages ranged from 230 to 325.

There were statistically significant changes in almost all the parents' assessments of their child's home literacy activities (see Figure 4.13). It is interesting to note that almost all the non-significant items except one were connected to children's nursery, that is parents visiting their child's nursery, talking to teachers, helping at nursery, or children talking about nursery.

The greatest positive changes in parents' perceptions occurred in relation to their children's writing activities, using the computer, looking at newspapers and reading various forms of texts together. Further analysis confirmed that parents' perceptions showed the greatest amount of positive change amongst the age group 40-49, compared to other age groups, and also in parents whose first language was not English compared to parents whose first language was English.

Parents attending standard courses showed a greater amount of individual change in their perceptions on average than parents on short courses.

Figure 4.13: Means for each activity as evaluated by parents (response range: 0 - never to 5 - every day)



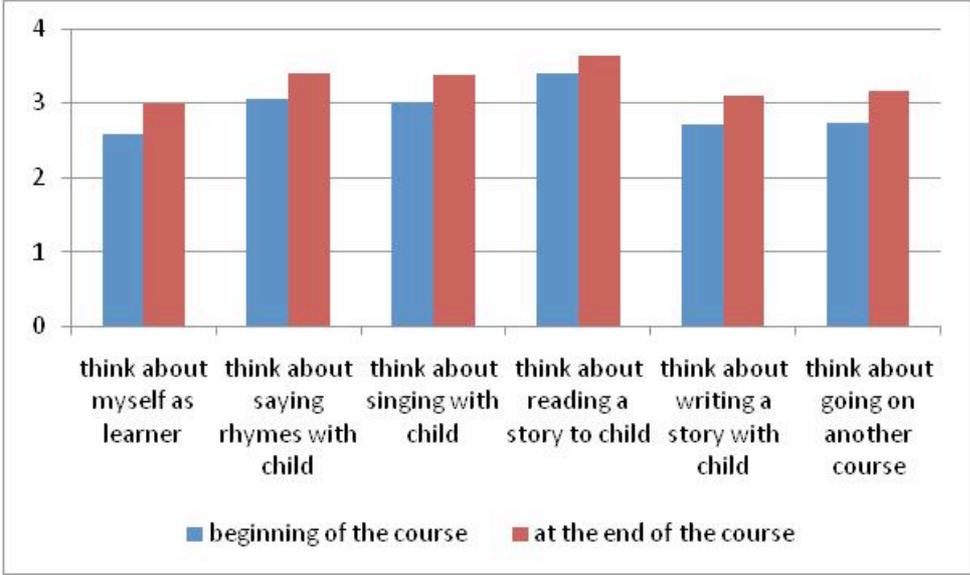
4.9 Changes in parents' views of themselves and their children as learners

Introduction

Parents were also asked to evaluate themselves and their children as learners at the beginning (Time 1) and end of their course (Time 2). Specifically, they were asked to assess their level of confidence when they supported their child in saying rhymes, singing, reading and writing. They were also requested to make an assessment of their child's skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and their level of concentration.

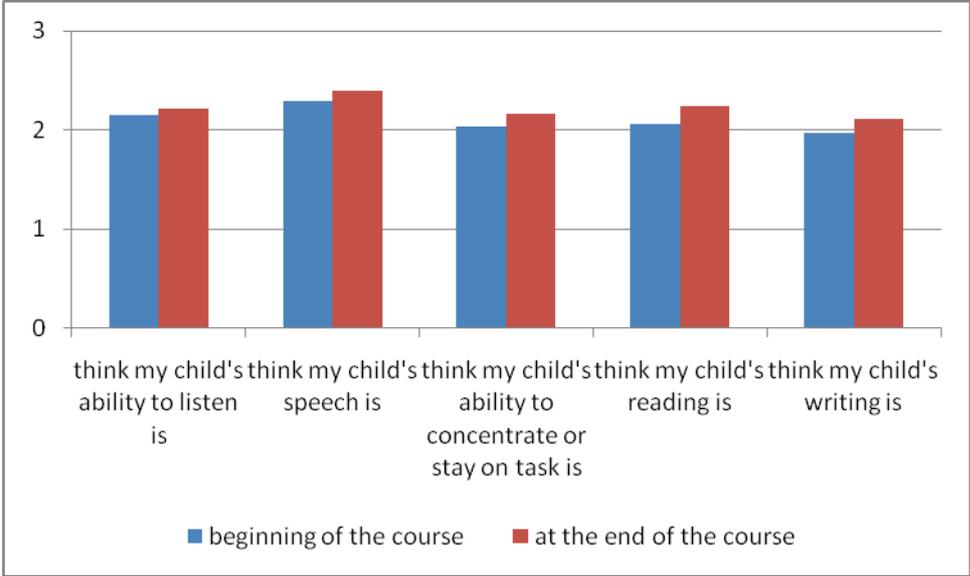
There were statistically significant gains in parents' confidence in all areas that the parents were asked about (see Figure 4.14). These gains were approximately the same across all areas.

Figure 4.14: Parents' average confidence
 (responses from 1 – not at all confident to 4 – very confident)



There were also statistically significant positive changes in the parents' perceptions of their children's literacy skills (see Figure 4.15)

Figure 4.15: Parents' average perceptions of their children's literacy skills
 (responses from 1 – below average to 3 – above average)



As in the previous section (4.8), parents attending standard courses showed greater individual change in their perceptions on average than parents on short courses.

4.10 Parents' evaluations of their family literacy courses

At the end of their course, parents were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Of the 542 adult participants in the study, 159 (29%) of the parents replied.

Parents were asked to write what they thought of the programme. Using open text coding, responses were analysed and grouped under three headings of 'personal' (for self), 'instrumental' (goal-oriented) and 'content' (of the course, including structure/organisation/teaching). The most frequently reported comments (over 3% response) were:

Personal:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Found course enjoyable/fun | 38% |
| 2. Improved/refreshed parent's/child's knowledge | 25% |
| 3. Appreciated meeting other parents/making friends | 16% |
| 4. Appreciated time spent with child | 16% |
| 5. Found course interesting/informative | 15% |
| 6. Improved parent's understanding of child's schooling/work | 14% |
| 7. Improved parent's/child's confidence | 13% |
| 8. Wanted more time with child | 4% |
| 9. Appreciated learning new things | 3% |
| 10. Found atmosphere relaxed/supportive | 3% |

Instrumental:

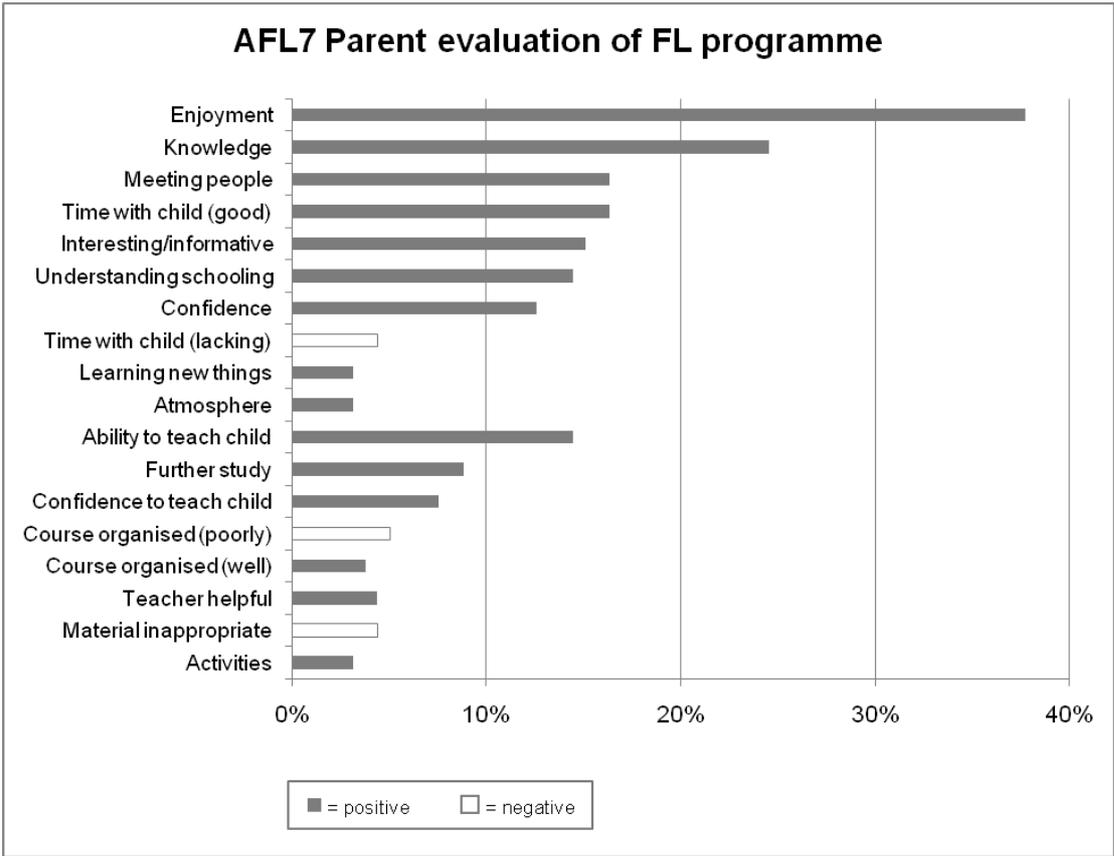
- | | |
|---|-----|
| 11. Improved parent's ability to teach/assist child at home | 14% |
| 12. Would take another course/qualification | 9% |
| 13. Improved parent's confidence in interacting with/teaching child | 8% |

Content:

- | | |
|---|----|
| 14. Found lessons organised poorly | 5% |
| 15. Found lessons organised well/good choice of materials | 4% |
| 16. Found teacher helpful/approachable/adaptable | 4% |
| 17. Found course unhelpful/inappropriate to parent/child | 4% |
| 18. Appreciated interactive activities (games/visits/trips) | 3% |

For the distribution of responses, see Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16: Parent feedback on FL programme



Only three respondents were men, but these fathers wrote that they enjoyed being the only man in their group and felt supported.

The majority of the responses to the programme were positive, and the most frequently used word was ‘enjoyed’. Much emphasis was placed on this factor, and even those who suggested changes or responded negatively often also noted their enjoyment.

Also common was the idea of confidence, both improved self-confidence in themselves and/or their children, and confidence in teaching and interacting with their children’s learning. Many full-time mothers commented that they had lost touch with the world since having their children. The development of confidence seems to have made the parents much more outward-looking and optimistic.

Interaction – with their child, other parents, tutors and guests – was another prominent theme. Much emphasis was placed on the friendships formed and communities strengthened by interacting with other parents, especially those from their children’s schools.

Time spent with their children was also very important to the parents. Many appreciated the additional one-to-one time the course provided in the classroom, and were pleased to be able to actively translate this to their homes. A large number of parents stressed the benefits of being able to teach their children at home now –

because their self-confidence was raised and/or they were now familiar with how their children were being taught, in comparison with their own schooling.

Other individual comments touched on accessibility factors – free crèche, no course fees and proximity of the classroom to their child’s school or home – the absence of which would have discouraged or precluded their attendance. Two respondents commented that their children had learning difficulties and they wished the course had addressed those particular needs.

Many of these findings are confirmed in the next section, which reports on parents’ evaluations of their FL courses, three months after they had finished.

4.11 Parents’ views on family literacy programmes three months after courses had finished

Introduction

This section begins with a brief description of the methods used to gather and analyse the data. Findings are then reported using thematic headings, which reflect the questions addressed to participants. Where appropriate the numbers of parents who answered ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the relevant closed question are reported, along with the number of interviewees who responded. Percentages are also given when the total number of valid responses exceeds 80. Key themes from the qualitative data are identified and illustrated by quotations, although, in the interests of confidentiality, they are not attributed to named individuals.

4.10.1 Methods

The original remit was to track 100 parents by telephone around 12 weeks after they had completed their courses, with the aim of identifying any short- and medium-term benefits and the impact of participating in FL provision. In the event, the research team decided to use a range of methods to gather these data: these included seven group interviews (with between three and nine participants and involving a total of 43 parents), 42 short individual telephone interviews (of about 10 minutes’ duration) and 16 longer individual telephone interviews, lasting on average 20 minutes. The latter gave parents the chance to expand on any issues and to discuss responses to open questions in greater depth. For a summary of these interviews, see Table 4.17.

The research team developed an interview schedule to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and which could be used flexibly, depending on the data collection method used (see Appendix G). The original schedule was amended in the late autumn to add a question about motivations for joining a FL course, and again in January 2009, in response to a request from the funder, to explore the relationship between these courses and employability. As some of the interviews had been completed by this time, data relating to these questions are missing from some interviewees.

Table 4.17: Methods used to interview parents post FL course

Method	Number of parents involved	Interviewer(s)	Dates
Focus group	43	LA managers and researchers	October 2008-February 2009
Short telephone interviews with individual parents	42	Researchers	March-April 2009
In-depth telephone interviews with individual parents	16	Researchers	October 2008-March 2009
Total	101*		

*This includes three parents who were interviewed both in the focus group and then again in-depth by telephone.

4.10.2 Findings

The main themes covered in the parent interviews were: motivations for joining the FL course; an overall evaluation of the course; useful, enjoyable and challenging aspects of the course; perceived benefits of the course; further courses and training; barriers and enablers to participation in further courses; the relationship between FL and employment/progression; changes in involvement in children's schools; changes in supporting children; and sitting and attitudes to taking tests.

Motivations

A total of 85 parents identified their motivations for joining a FL course, which were many and diverse. The majority gave more than one reason, with some giving several:

Get more involved in child learning; get an idea of what and how they are learning. Improve and bring out my own skills and abilities. Boost up confidence mine and child. Involve myself on the school, social reasons, learn new skills. Become a better parent.

The list of main motivations that researchers recorded is as follows:

1. To find out what and how their child is learning in order to know how to support them at home¹⁴
2. To become more involved with their child's learning
3. To spend more time with their child at school and at home
4. To become more involved with their child's school
5. To improve their own literacy skills
6. To improve their confidence
7. To become a better parent
8. For social reasons, including the chance to meet new people (fellow parents)
9. To give their life a greater purpose and provide a routine.

¹⁴ This includes, for speakers of English as a second language, learning more about the UK's education style.

Although some of these responses overlap, they can be broadly grouped into three categories of instrumental (goal-oriented) reasons (1-4); personal (for self) reasons (5-7); and social reasons (8-9).

One difficulty with this question was that it was actually posed to the participants retrospectively and therefore might not measure accurately their motivations at the point of enrolment. For example, if a parent met and made friends with other parents during the course they might claim this as a reason or motivation for joining, even if it was not the driving force at the time their original decision was made

Further analysis showed that two main categories of motivation emerged. The first was linked to the parents' children and their children's learning; the second was associated with the parents' own learning and development. Reasons in the first category were largely instrumental, that is parents wanted to learn about how children are taught in order to support them. For some interviewees this was a particular concern because they had not been educated in the UK; others just wanted to update their knowledge:

I wanted to find out about the teaching methods in school, e.g. how sounds are taught. When I was at school things were taught differently.

A few had specific concerns over their child's progress or confidence, which was sometimes related to specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or autism. Importantly, there was some recognition of the partnership between parents and teachers:

It was [...] the teachers told us that it was to help our children, so it was that really. It was to like learn how the teachers was learning the children at school, and so we was following suit, so we wasn't doing one thing and the teachers doing something different...

In terms of their own learning, parents gave a mix of reasons. Personal reasons centred on the wish to gain or refresh skills and knowledge. Very specific goals such as gaining a qualification or preparing for employment were rarely mentioned. One of the more expansive parents recognised the relationship between her skills and her ability to help her child:

Particularly to improve my literacy skills, for myself, and to realise how my children work within the school, and how they are taught...basically, I need to learn to teach them. So if I don't learn, then obviously I can't teach them anything. And if I am learning, basically me learning helps them come along as well.

Personal reasons also included the wish to boost their confidence, to meet other parents and do something enjoyable for themselves or spend one-to-one time with their child.

Of the 33 parents who were specifically asked whether employment was amongst their reasons for joining a family literacy course, 12 said the chance of getting of job, or a better job, was a motivation, while 21 said it was not.

Parents' overall evaluation of their course

As the previous section showed, the vast majority of parents were positive about their experience on family literacy courses and, as the following two extracts illustrate, some were particularly effusive:

I would recommend the course to every parent. A lot of parents think that they are already equipped to help with their children but the course makes you realise that you need some training.

...generally the courses are brilliant. It helps parents get involved and know what their children are learning and how they can support their learning at home.

Parents from one course were disappointed about the limited amount of time they spent in joint sessions and thought that the time they did have was not well organised. As the following extract suggests, some of their disappointment may have arisen from expectations raised by publicity material:

The way that it was worded, it was worded that we would be working with the children. Constantly we would be doing work with them. And to only get sometimes half an hour with them, it was a little bit misleading. (We got) half an hour to an hour (with children), depending on what they were doing.

Only a few parents offered suggestions about how to attract the target group or to improve the course. Ideas for recruitment included providing more information and in particular stressing the informality and accessibility of family literacy:

I think it's a shame that more people don't come on it. And I think it's because when I joined it I didn't really know much about it. The information we got didn't really say exactly what we'd be doing. It just sort of said would you like to join this family learning course to help your children read and write? And obviously that was the incentive, but it didn't really tell me what I was going to be doing. I didn't even know that I was going to get an exam at the end of it. And I think people don't get enough information, that's why they don't sign up initially, do you know what I mean? Because it's such a good thing. I mean, everyone I speak to, I say if you get the chance to do it, do it, because you don't have to be fantastic at reading and writing, you just have to want to learn.

Some parents also recognised that they could play an important role in recruitment by acting as learning champions, and this was supported by headteachers (see section 4.15). Parents understood many of the concerns and issues and, being able to see things from their peers' point of view gave them more credibility than staff who tend to be associated with the 'official' culture of the school.

Although interviewees were not asked specifically for feedback about their tutors, many spontaneously offered comments that were very largely positive, and it was generally recognised that the quality of the tutor or teacher was key to the success and effectiveness of the course. This finding is supported by previous research (see, for example, Swain, 2005; Coben *et al.*, 2007).

Tutors were variously described as ‘very good’, ‘fantastic’, ‘encouraging’, ‘supportive’, ‘helpful’, ‘understanding’, ‘approachable’, ‘accommodating’ and ‘down to earth’.

Only two interviewees criticised their tutor, with one identifying a number of issues of concern:

It's the way he teaches. He's only a young lad, not that I'm old. He's only a young lad, but he just thinks he'll give you a worksheet and you will work through it yourself. And that doesn't help, because if you don't know something you need someone to give you an example, and then work through it with you. Or, if you stick you hand up, you don't want to keep saying – oh [...] I don't know this, oh [tutor's name] I don't know that. You feel a bit stupid then, thinking - I can't remember anything.

The parent went on to say how the average number of parents attending the course had dropped from around eight to two or three.

Useful and enjoyable aspects of the course

Altogether 87 respondents identified aspects of the course that they found useful and enjoyable, and most identified several aspects of the course in each of these categories.

Reassuringly, the aspects of FL courses that parents found most useful largely mirrored the reasons they gave for joining the course in the first place, although they also identified some additional ones. Responses can be broadly categorised as progress in supporting their children, boosting their own literacy, and generic (social and personal) skills.

In relation to supporting their children, interviewees referred to learning how children are taught in school, how to help them develop their literacy skills, and how to play and make resources such as games with their child:

Since I joined the course I learned how to teach the kids things like how to read to them, how to spend some quality time every day, to stop pushing them so much and learned something from playing.

The different activities and strategies that we used, to help me assist my daughter, and it was how it made it seem so simple and easy to understand, and mainly fun.

‘Brushing up’ or recapping on the basics of English grammar or improving their own literacy skills were also identified as useful, with some parents referring specifically to learning about, or being reminded of, phonics and phonemes.

Learning the words such as phonemes that they use at school. Words sounded really difficult but don't sound so frightening now. Now I understand when the teacher talks about phonemes. I know what they are, rather than a blank look coming over my face.

In addition, some respondents reported progress in generic skills such as having the confidence to work in groups and learning from and supporting one another, which, as we have reported, are commonly observed practices in FL classes.

Just mainly sort of gaining confidence again, talking to adults and not children. Being able to work as a team, as well, because obviously over the weeks we've kind of got to know each other and we do a lot of pairing off in teams, like discussions and so on.

I think our group had such a big range of people [...] From people who didn't take any exams and hardly went to school, to people who are doing degrees ... and childminding courses and English, and all sorts of people. I was somewhere in the middle. I'd done a few exams, a long time ago. But yeah, there was such a wide range. And everybody helped everybody. There was no – oh well, I'm doing level two, and you are doing level one. There was none of that. Everybody just helped everybody. And that's what was so nice. It was such a nice group. Well, it still is, because the same group has gone on to do maths. And I think that's given people the confidence to go on. Those who may have been a bit hesitant on their English have thought – well, I can do the maths. And they've gone on and done the maths.

As respondents regarded parenting as their prime role, it is not surprising that they particularly enjoyed activities such as reading, playing and making things with their child, and especially having 'one-to-one time'. However, interviewees were also aware of play as a means of helping their children to learn, and reported their pleasure in seeing their child grow in skills and confidence.

I just find it so rewarding, and watching her flourish, to do it, is just fantastic, absolutely brilliant, I love it.

The social aspects of the course, such as meeting other parents and making friends, were also important to some.

Challenges

A total of 86 parents responded to a question about things that they found difficult, but the vast majority of these said that they did not experience any difficulties on their course. For those who had experienced challenges, these related to confidence (anxieties about attending the first session and meeting other people), practical issues, and the course itself. These findings confirm those from previous research that for many providers the greatest challenge is to get learners to turn up for the first session (Swain, 2005; Swain and Swan, 2008). However, tutors were aware of the crucial importance of the first meeting between tutor and parent and the need to

create an informal, relaxed atmosphere, which meant that any initial apprehension was generally short-lived:

I think it was just going back to being told by the teacher and thinking you were going to be stupid, and thinking you was going to be the oldest one there. But actually, when we did get there we was all similar ages.

Turning up for the first session was the most difficult. Thirty minutes into it we were all fine.

Practical difficulties revolved around organising family life to ensure good time-keeping, setting aside time for homework, and committing to regular attendance. In terms of the course itself, challenges focused largely on learning about grammar, punctuation and spelling, with a few interviewees having difficulty with tests.

Benefits

A total of 97% of interviewees (N=94) reported gaining some kind of benefit from the FL course, and 96% (N=89) thought that they had continued to benefit from attending the course. Benefits are consistent with motivations and useful aspects of the course. They included: parents' improvements in their literacy; better awareness of how to support their children; improved confidence and self-esteem; changes in their sense of identity; and benefits to their children.

Literacy skills

Respondents commonly mentioned improvements in their own literacy skills such as reading, writing, grammar and punctuation. A few referred to gaining qualifications or changing their behaviour, for example, by reading more as a result of improved skills.

When I was at school I was classed as dyslexic. So I have always thought that all my life. But I went to [...] College and did a sort of a test, and she said – you are not dyslexic, you just learn how to understand it. So that literacy course learnt me how to break words down and read them better, and know how to spell words out. (Since the literacy course I have read more myself, things like) leaflets properly, things outside. I don't read at home as much. I never used to ... I learnt how to understand the newspaper. I started to [read a book], and then I give up. If I read a book and I read it in my head it didn't sink in, the way I used to read it. But now when I pick a book up it sinks in, because I have learnt to slow down...

Supporting their children

Indications of improvements in supporting their children were reported as having a better understanding of how their children learn and are taught at school, and how to develop strategies and activities to help support their children. Some interviewees specifically mentioned having a better understanding of how to interact, play or converse with their children. As a consequence they felt more confident about supporting their children and, in some cases, had increased the time spent reading with their children or helping them with homework.

I feel now that I'm working with the school, and when he brings home books I can understand the way they want to teach reading. And his reading has come on lovely. Yes, I think it's really helped. Because I was teaching him, initially, in a totally different way. The way that I thought I'd been taught at school, but they teach so differently now, don't they? With the phonics and everything. But I think I was working more against him really. But now I feel like I'm working with him, and with the school.

Being able to sit down and help the children with their homework and what have you. [...] I make time in the day. [...] listen to them read, and what have you, but now I get them to express the story, what it was about, and their feelings on it, and get them to tell me what the story is about, after they've read it, as well. They read every night (with her). They read for about ten, fifteen minutes, and we all sit together, read together. And then one will read the book and explain what the book was about, and the other one will, and vice versa.

Confidence and self-esteem

In total, 76% of interviewees (N=71) said that they had changed as a person since taking the FL course, and 24% (N=23) said that they had not. Most described personal change in terms of increased confidence in their own literacy skills and their ability to help their children, and improvements in communicating and working with others, including teachers. Increased confidence is the most commonly reported effect from similar relevant research (Schuller *et al.*, 2002; Ward and Edwards, 2002). Many of those who reported increased self-confidence also referred to the negative effects on their self-confidence of being at home with children and/or not having an outside life. Some interviewees referred to increases in self-esteem, well-being and motivation.

I think it brought me out of myself a bit more. When we was talking in groups, and things like that, especially when I didn't know people, I'd go maybe a bit ... I didn't have confidence in meself, because I'd think in my head that it be right, but I wouldn't dare to say it, just in case it wasn't right... and then other people was coming out with answers. And I was sitting there thinking – I thought it was this. And then they'd say – oh no, it is this. And I'd think – oh yeah, I was right. So then that gave me a bit more confidence to say my own opinion. Like, we did a few mock exams and things like that. And I thought – oh I am not as daft as what I thought. You know, things like that.

I felt proud of myself, whereas as at school I didn't.

Interviewees also reported feeling more confident in social situations and benefiting from forming new friendships.

I have become more confident, like I can talk to you now. I would never have done that twelve months ago, because I have always been in me own little bubble, never really lived in the real world, sort of thing. And then going along to the school, and just meeting other people, it brings the confidence out.

Becoming a student

Some parents were also beginning to take a pride in their studying and identifying themselves as students. The identity of being a student is an important one, and as Rogers (2003) writes, how the adult positions him/herself in the teacher–student relationship will have a fundamental effect on their learning. Part of identity formation comes from people telling each other who they are claiming to be:

I feel a lot more brainier. I didn't know anything before. I say to people, when they say to me – what do you do with yourself? I say I am not at college, but at school, and they say – what are you doing? And I say a [family] numeracy [or literacy] course. And they are like – oh, I couldn't do that. I was thick at school. And then I explain how I was. And it gives them a bit of encouragement.

Benefits to their children

Some interviewees identified benefits to their children as well as to themselves; most of these benefits related to improved skills and interest in learning, and increased confidence both in their skills and in mixing with and forming friendships with other children.

Basically it's brought out to me a little bit more confidence in meself, and in me child, because he was a very, very shy boy, me son. He didn't mix with people. Obviously, with everything going on he didn't get time to mix with friends, after school and that, it was a quick in and out. [...] But now, when we went on to that course, because I was going to school with him, he was made up because mummy was going to school, and he met so many friends through it. There was like seven children, or nine children, and five of them are still his best friends now, we go to each other's houses and things, so actually I've become friends with the mums, and [her son]'s become friends with the children in that group.

My daughter loved the course, she couldn't wait for Friday. She seems more confident at school now and sits and reads with me at home for longer than before. She wouldn't read very much at home before the course.

Further courses and training

The interviews suggested that parents were continuing in learning, with 55% of interviewees (N=53) saying that they had been on another course since FL and 45% (N=43) reporting that they had not. They had continued to learn on a range of courses designed to contribute to their personal development or their functional or vocational skills. Family numeracy/maths, literacy/English/ESOL and computing/IT were commonly mentioned, and in some instances interviewees referred to the Level (1 or 2) or a specific qualification. Personal development courses were also popular and included first aid, childcare/child development and parenting. Most of the few who referred to vocational courses were doing teaching or classroom assistant training, and it important to recognise that this enables them to combine their work with childcare arrangements.

Only a few interviewees specifically identified FL as the reason for them doing further learning. However, choice of courses and the indication that many interviewees were continuing their learning with the same group and tutor suggests that FL and/or local provision were important influences. This interpretation is reinforced when the location is taken into account, as many interviewees reported continuing their learning at a school or Children's Centre.

A total of 84% interviewees (N=81) said that they were thinking of taking another course. While some had already enrolled, others were at the stage of thinking about continuing learning. The subjects they were interested in followed the same pattern as those mentioned above, and suggest that they continued to be primarily motivated by their parenting role. However, the skills they would develop are also likely to support their employability in the longer term. Employability is discussed below.

Enabling factors and barriers to continuing with further study/training

For most interviewees the ideal provision would be free, based at a local venue, preferably at school/pre-school, have free crèche facilities, and run during school hours. Other enabling factors (which were also cited by tutors in section 4.10.6) included relevance/interest and knowledge of local provision.

We had somebody come in last week and show us all the different courses that we can do. So we've all put our names down, and we are going to sort it out when we get back after Easter [...] I've put my name down for about half a dozen. Which is things like health and safety, childcare [...] first aid

Barriers largely mirrored enablers, with concerns about cost, distance from home, childcare, and timing of provision being commonly mentioned. There was some indication that interviewees associated these barriers with college-based provision.

Employment

36% of parents (N=33) who responded to the question about employment said they already had a job before they took the family literacy course, and 64% (N=58) said they did not. Most of those who gave their job title seemed to be in relatively low-paid, part-time jobs and had not changed jobs since they finished the family literacy course. As their motivations for joining a family literacy course, indicates, most of those who did not have a job were not looking for work as they gave primacy to their parental role.

I am not looking for work at the moment; too busy looking after children.

Not looking for a job. I'm a carer to my kids.

At the time of the interviews, the great majority of parents seemed content to seek further opportunities to train or study (particularly within school hours), but were reluctant to seek employment till their children were older and well-established at school full-time.

A total of 15% (N=22) of interviewees said they thought that attending the family literacy course had given them more options for finding a job, and seven said they did not think it had. This is not surprising as employment was not a short-term priority for most interviewees.

Involvement with school and the community

64% of interviewees (N=61) said that since taking a FL course they had become more involved in their child's pre-school or school and 36% (N=34) said they had not. Some of those who had not become more involved explained that they had already been involved prior to the course, or that their involvement was constrained by jobs or childcare responsibilities, rather than lack of inclination. A few specifically stated that they would like more involvement.

Parents who had become more involved, worked as volunteer teaching or classroom assistants, helped on school trips, attended special events such as parents' evenings/mornings and sports days, and/or talked to teachers more:

I spend lots of time talking to the teachers and the parent mentor. We speak on a daily basis and [they] involve you in things that are happening around the school.

Two interviewees had applied to become school governors.

Supporting children's learning at home

As well as the open question about benefits, interviewees were asked specifically about whether they did more with their child at home when they were on the family literacy course. Of the 90 parents who answered this question, 90% (N= 81) said they did.

Respondents described playing games, making things, singing, reading, spelling and helping with their children with homework. Some parents reported the main change as being in the *quality* of their interactions with their children, rather than the time they spent together. They described setting aside time for playing or learning, applying ideas gained from the course to help their child learn, and using games and daily activities as learning opportunities:

I do think we've always been fairly active, trying to encourage them to do their homework. I suppose it was, yes, finding things, learning new ideas, that actually you can get them reading and writing not by literally sitting them down and saying – right, you must do your homework. It's things like my son loves writing my shopping list for me. Things like that, you can actually bring in the learning side of it at home, without him realising that actually I am testing his spelling, or things like that. So, yeah, I suppose it has encouraged us to try and give more chances for that.

Some also talked about their partners taking more interest in their children and being more involved in their children's learning:

I've said to him [her partner] we need to sit down playing games, and just that bit more one to one.

He's [her husband] never really read them stories. He leaves that to me. But I know he's always started writing down the alphabet, and they'd copy, or he writes words and they copy that. He does more, so I'd say that has changed since doing the family learning.

Accredited tests

Interviewees were asked if they had taken tests and, if so, what they felt about doing so. Of the 74 who responded to this question, 54 said they had taken qualifications and 20 said they had not. Many parents mentioned taking national tests at Levels 1 and 2, and almost all of them reported their willingness and desire to take tests.

Wasn't fazed by it. Glad I was given the opportunity to gain an updated qualification.

It was nice to put yourself through an exam at the end, to test yourself.

Some identified conditions that made them feel more comfortable about doing tests such as not being pressured, doing practice tests and being tested in small groups.

We did a few mock exams. They give us a few, because they said – with you not being at school, it makes you prepared. Because lots of us haven't had any exams since we've been at school. But I quite enjoyed it.

The few who reported failing were not discouraged and intended to re-take. However, a few interviewees were (at least initially) anxious about taking tests and a few others could not take tests because of other commitments.

4.12 Children's perceptions of their literacy practices

Introduction

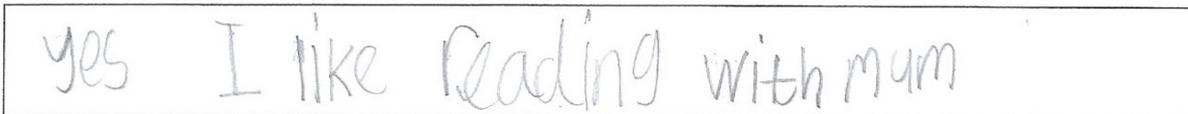
The project team wanted to ensure that the children had a voice in the research, and were interested in their perceptions of literacy interactions both in the school setting and at home with family members. While researchers did not expect young children to provide comprehensive insights, the analysis shows that young children are able to provide valuable information about who and what is most salient in their literacy experiences.

The semi-structured interview schedule built on work by Nutbrown and Hannon (2003). Questions were based around an evaluation of the programme and family interactions with reading, writing, singing and indoor games. The interview was usually administered to children, both individually or in small groups, by their teachers as near to the end of the course as practicable. The conversations usually lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

Early years teachers recorded children's comments by hand, although a very small number of (usually older) children were able to provide their own written responses (see Figure 17 for an example).

Figure 17: A child's written responses to Questions 1 and 4

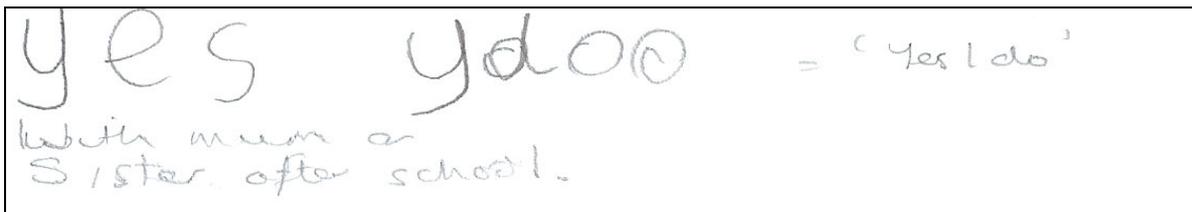
Q1. - Did you enjoy coming here? **Prompt (if possible):** What are some of things that you like most about the course? Are there any things that you don't like?



yes I like reading with mum

[DOB 25.03.03; 6:6 at date of interview]

Q4. - Do you read books with your family? (Follow up: who with: When do you read, what time of the day? **Prompts:** at bedtime, when I come home, lots of different times)



yes ydoo = 'yes I do'
with mum or
sister after school.

[DOB 20.03.03; 6:8 at date of interview]

Data were available for 276 children across short and standard courses.

Evaluation of the course

The first question asked the children to provide a simple evaluation of the FL course, that is, to say whether they liked attending the course or not, and, if possible, to give reasons. Ninety-nine percent (N=272) told their teachers they enjoyed the course, and 20% (N=56) said they liked it a lot. The most popular activities, for both boys and girls, were the games they played, and the children also commented that they particularly liked being with, and working with, their parent (generally their mother).

I really enjoyed the laptops and computers. I like Mummy coming too. I liked everything.

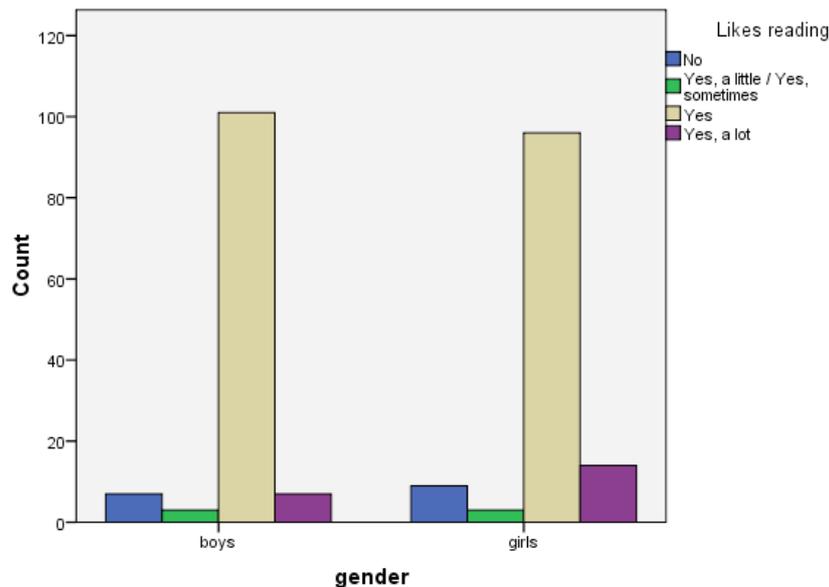
I liked playing bingo with numbers and words. I liked cutting and making books games. I really enjoyed working with Mum.

I loved the trip and ball pit. I liked having Mummy and my sister at school. I liked all the making things and doing sounds in my sound box and my puppet.

Reading

Ninety-one percent (N=249) said they enjoyed reading. Further analysis using data from the child profile showed that 92% (N=108) of the boys liked it compared with 90% (N=110) of the girls (see Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18: Children's reading enjoyment by gender



Almost all the children (93%, N=259) mentioned they had a favourite book, and 88% (N=233) were able to give the title. The main reasons children gave for liking a particular book were the characters, the subject area, the pictures and/or because they found it funny.

The Hungry Caterpillar, because it's got lots of pictures. I like it when it grows fat.

The Hairy McLary books. I like all the names of the dogs. I think the stories are funny. I like the rhymes. The pictures are really good.

Reading habits

Eighty-eight per cent (N=242) commented that they read with their families. This was either with one of the parents (32%, N=89), with both parents and siblings (26%, N=72), or with family without specifying or at home (29%, N=81). The most popular time for reading was at bedtime, and almost half of the children reported reading at this time (42%, N=93), mostly with their mother.

Mummy and Daddy read [to me] at bedtime everyday – lots of stories. Then Mum and Dad read their own books.

When it's time to go to bed, I read loads of different characters and Mummy reads. Mummy reads but sometimes I like to read in my head.

I read with my mum. We read mostly at bedtime but also at other times too. I have recently started reading alone.

Songs and rhymes, and indoor games

80% (N=179) mentioned singing songs or saying rhymes at home, although only a small number of these appeared to be songs or rhymes learned on the FL course. Most of the children also reported enjoying playing indoor games (97%, N=252), although, again, only a very small number mentioned playing games that they had been taught on the FL course.

Yes, Favourite song 'come on do the bump' [sang in school play – has it on DVD]. Likes 'five little ducks went swimming one day'. Sings with mum.

Yes, Hide and sike with mum and brother. Likes playing on laptop with mum. CBeeBees.

Writing

A high proportion of children told their teachers that they enjoyed writing (82%, N=220), although only a very small number were enthusiastic enough to comment that they liked writing 'a lot'.

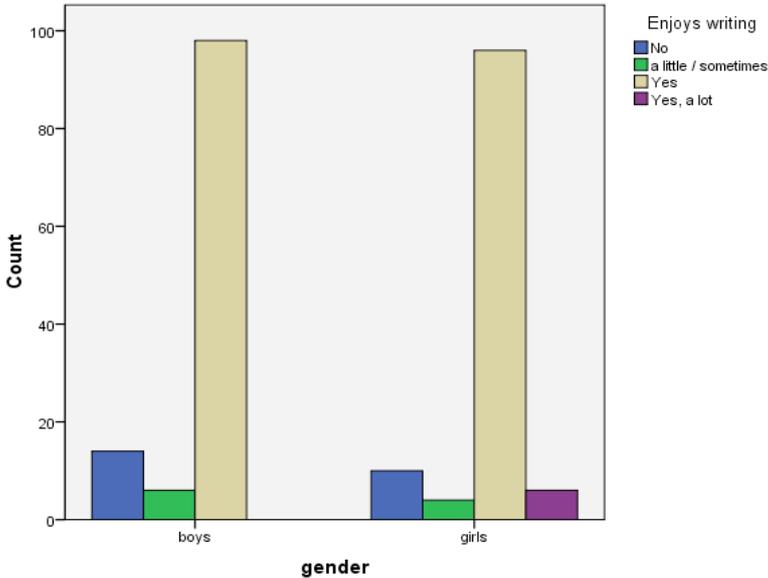
I like to write about Spiderman. I draw spider webs at home with Mummy.

Likes writing letters/words she can sound out. Likes writing with mum at home and sometimes independently.

I like to write my name. I write Tyler's name and Emily's name.

Slightly more girls (88%, N=102) than boys (83%, N=98) reported that they liked writing (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19: Children’s writing enjoyment by gender



4.13 Tutors’ and early year teachers’ views on family literacy programmes

Introduction

The section begins by looking at what tutors and early years teachers consider to be the most common and effective teaching approaches they use in the classroom. This is followed by the enabling factors which, they judged, contribute to the success of FL programmes, and also the constraining factors and challenges they faced. The tutors were also asked to suggest ways that these courses help parents to support their children’s literacy, and also to propose ways in which FL courses can lead to progression, either on to other study and training and/or into employment. Copies of interview schedules can be seen in Appendices P and Q.

In addition to the 124 interviews/questionnaires that were returned by tutors and teachers, 13 in-depth face-to-face interviews were carried out by researchers, seven with tutors and six with teachers.

4.13.1 Findings from tutors’ and teachers’ survey

Ninety per cent (N=62) of the tutors and 78% (N=62) of the teachers who took part in the evaluation supplied information about teaching approaches, and enabling and constraining factors. Questions were open-ended, and researchers used a mixture of qualitative textual analysis and quantitative statistical analysis. It should also be noted that some tutors and teachers used their experience of teaching FL courses in general, and so not every response applies directly to courses evaluated in this

project. Nevertheless, the data provide a good indication of a number of issues and enable a picture to emerge of what happens inside an FL classroom.

4.13.2 Common and effective teaching approaches from tutors and teachers

Tutors

The tutors produced a large array of responses to this question, some of which were actually more concerned with organisation (e.g. working in pairs) or resources (e.g. using dictionaries) than pedagogy, as the question had intended. Nevertheless the data allowed researchers to delineate the most common practices found in a FL classroom, and to summarise what tutors themselves considered to be the most effective approaches.

It is also not entirely clear if tutors regarded these approaches as being primarily for teaching the parents, or to show parents how to support their own children, or both. What is particularly interesting, though, is that the tutors' list is far more diverse than the teachers', which suggests that there is less of a coherent pedagogical approach in the adult classes than in the early years classes (see Chapter 6 for a further discussion of this). For instance, it is difficult to tell from these responses whether the tutors mainly used transmission (direct) teaching against more investigative or guided discovery methods. Although the next section (4.13), based on classroom observations, provides more of a clue about this, those data come from a relatively small sample based on 14 visits.

Overall, data from these interviews/questionnaires strongly suggest that methods tend to be practical, hands-on, interactive, collaborative and responsive to the learners' (particularly parents') needs. The most frequently reported activity was using games, which parents make and play with their children during the joint session and use to support their children's literacy at home. This is not to say that the other tutors did not do this, rather that these particular tutors rated this as a particularly effective approach.

Just under one third of tutors reported that they focused on the same aspect of literacy for children and parents, and linked this to the children's learning in school.

We tap into the desire that parents have to support their children's literacy; this raises awareness of areas where they need to develop. [...] All areas of adult literacy covered are linked to what the children will be learning in school.

The approaches were generally parent- or learner-centred. Some tutors were responsive to parents' needs, and said that they started from where the learners are and built on parents' knowledge from their own cultures. They also said that they concentrated on building up parents' literacy skills.

In terms of organisation, almost two-thirds used collaborative small group work (including pairs), with discussion, although just over a quarter stated that they thought it effective to teach parents individually, while a minority taught the whole

class together, for at least some of the time. The extract below suggests that tutors use a mixture of organisational strategies at various times.

Have used group, paired and individual activities. Pair work has worked well as I paired together one learner with limited English with a more confident, British-educated learner.

Almost one fifth of tutors said that they used ICT, including the internet.

Teachers

Although these data also supply few clues about the pedagogic approaches being employed in these classes (e.g. transmission, connectionist, discovery, etc.), in contrast to the tutors' approaches, the teachers' comments showed a much greater homogeneity and coherence. Most followed the (previous) government's 'nationally recognized Letters and Sounds' approach (DfES, 2007) (<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84969>), which is designed to teach children 'how the alphabet works for reading and spelling' (p.2) by focusing on speaking and listening skills and teaching synthetic phonics. Unsurprisingly, the main approaches reported were also synthetic/Jolly Phonics and included speaking and listening exercises and writing, and using such strategies as flash cards, games and puzzles, role play, rhymes, shared/guided reading and concentrating on CVC words (consonant-vowel-consonant, e.g. 'but', 'cat').

I used a variety of mostly practical, participating approaches to vary the activities whilst consolidating and developing basic concepts. These included synthetic phonics, flash cards, individual whiteboard work and using props as a stimulus for writing, sentence construction and word work such as rhyme verb, adjective and adverb work.

It became apparent early on that this group had poor speaking and listening skills so this became the initial emphasis. We began each session with a 'Newsround' where each child told us one thing about the last or coming week. The rest listened and answered questions.

A common resource was the use of large print, or 'big', books, and a popular activity in the joint session was the story sack where the parents and children make activities and props around a theme, which they used at home.

Indeed, books in general were a key resource:

I use books to develop children's literacy and language skills. I choose books which are very good for teaching children early reading skills. They have repetitive texts or are stories which have a strong rhyming content. Books that are written in a way that early readers can quickly feel success. We can then make our own little books with simple text to read at home. We can then act out the stories. We work on rhyming words and play games. Individual children can be asked an easy or difficult question, depending on their ability. Every week we re-read stories and the children feel good about themselves as they feel they are reading well.

Sometime, an EYT decided to use a different approach:

As synthetic phonics and flash cards happen every day in class I try to provide something different – an experience they would not get in a class. If I were to prepare individual work around phonics or high-frequency words (as I have done on previous courses), it takes hours and I am paid for 3.5 hours a week which includes talking to the tutor. I also have other demanding roles in the school so I do not have the time.

This quotation also alludes to difficulties that can occur when teachers are not given enough time to plan and prepare.

4.13.3 Enabling factors that contribute to the success of a FL course

Tutors

The most important factors for the tutors were the parents themselves, and the need to secure and maintain a positive relationship with the main provider, which was usually the school. Two-fifths mentioned enthusiastic and/or committed parents with consistent attendance, while over a third cited the relationship with the school. Good accommodation with high-quality resources, including a free crèche, and an informal, safe atmosphere were also deemed important.

Accommodation in the Children’s Centre provided a good environment for learning. Parents had use of kitchen facilities, e.g. to make toast, comfy furniture, resources that they could help themselves to. This helped them to take ownership of the course.

The relations between parents were also key, and the need to get them working as a team. The joint session and integration of joint activities were also seen as integral components, as was effective planning between the tutor and teacher.

The children’s involvement was very important, it gives parents the chance to really see what their children are learning in school and how they are being taught, which gives them much more confidence to families when working from home. The support that can be given by the parents is more effective as they understand what they can do to support their own child. The joint time also maintains motivation of both the adults and children involved.

The joint time gives the child something to look forward to and they really like the fact that they have a special person to come into school and work together with them – this affects their attitude to learning and shows that learning is valued by the parent. Additional time spent with the child each week allows parents and children to develop relationships and this is particularly important to some parents who have younger siblings, some with additional needs, that take time away from the older child. Children concentrate better and work more when they are at school; often at home they are tired and don’t want to sit and ‘work’.

Interestingly, giving the parents the opportunity to gain an accreditation was also only quoted by a small minority of tutors.

Teachers

Many of the factors mentioned above, such as the need for committed and enthusiastic parents and the joint session, were also cited by over a third of the EYTs.

It is important for young children to know that their parents are involved in their education. The mothers coming to school to work with them has a real confidence boost. They really enjoyed the joint activity, which was to reinforce the subject matter of the session. They were able to spend quality time with each other, to create something together that they could take home. The children wanted to show their teachers too.

There was also a great importance given to the need for a good rapport between teacher and tutor, and the need for effective planning between them.

Teacher/tutor communication was crucial to the smooth running of the course, so that we had shared aims and expectations and agreed areas of responsibility. Regular communication speeds the settling-in period. It is important to establish a routine.

The need for the parents to use the activities at home to support their children was also seen as important, and around a quarter of teachers also mentioned the benefit of working with small groups of children.

The small group numbers are important in allowing the children the opportunity to relax and take 'risks' in a relaxed setting.

However, the requirement for good accommodation had less urgency for the great majority of teachers, who generally worked with children in school classrooms.

4.13.4 Constraining factors that militate against the success of the course

Tutors

Although, in some ways, the constraining factors reported by both tutors and teachers were corollaries of the enabling factors listed above, a number of different ones were mentioned. It needs to be acknowledged that the most commonly cited factor was the time taken up by this research project, which tutors saw eating into the valuable teaching and learning time. This was alluded to by almost one third of tutors. This harks back to an issue identified in section 3.1, namely the tension involved in getting the right balance between making sure that a project secures sufficient data to produce robust evidence and conclusions, and asking participants to gather too much information and so running the risk of losing their support and participation.

Far too much paperwork for parents whose basic skills are lacking. Additionally, too much time taken with the project, which has 'robbed' us of doing more interesting things, including pressure to get parents through national tests.

Another tutor had a particular issue with the Go! reading assessments with her particular learners.

The learners who were at a higher level could just about cope with the booklets but still found them very cumbersome. The lower-level learners found the booklets very difficult to work with and it put some of them off early on in the course.

The next most frequently mentioned factors (in order of frequency) were all connected to parents: keeping parents motivated, parents working at a variety of levels, retention, inconsistent attendance, poor accommodation, recruitment, and ESOL learners who needed extra support.

It is important to remember who the targeted parents really are on FL courses, and acknowledge that many of the families have difficult and turbulent lives that impact on their own and their children's learning. This is demonstrated from the following quotation from a tutor, and reveals some of the issues they have to deal with that lie behind figures on retention:

One parent is being treated for cancer so he and his wife missed sessions for his treatment. Three parents identified themselves as dyslexic to various degrees and needed different strategies to help learning. One mother suffered with untreated depression that started just after her son was born and she never bonded with him. She has relationship difficulties, and during the course parted from her son's father, started living with a female partner, that relationship broke down and she is now living with another female partner. Another parent found it really difficult to be in a group situation and often missed sessions, preferring to come in early (8 o'clock) for one-to-one tuitions so that they could take work home.

Teachers

Although many of the factors listed were, once again, the same as those mentioned by the tutors, some were different, and of course they applied mostly to the children rather than the adults. Once again, the extra time needed to complete the project evaluations was the most frequently cited factor, by one fifth of the sample. This was followed by the need to cope with a wide range of children's ability in some classes. This problem may be particularly acute when the children come from different classes, as these two extracts exemplify:

Trying to cater for a wide range of abilities of children who range from foundation to Year 2 (5- to 7-year-olds). Some children are becoming accomplished writers and storytellers while others are still unsure of letters.

The children can come from several different classes. I cannot replace what they are doing in class and class teachers do not have time to talk to me. They [the children] are all doing something different. I have tried taking the children out in smaller ability groups for a shorter time on previous courses. This is absolutely impossible for the class teachers and very disruptive to their classes.

4.13.5 Tutors' ideas on how FL courses help parents support their children's literacy

This question was obviously only addressed to the tutors. In order of frequency, the factors cited were:

- Parents gain a greater awareness of how their children are taught at school (e.g. synthetic phonics)
- Parents are provided with a set of resources and ideas for home activities, and also learn to support their child rather than take the lead
- Parents gain in confidence, which means that they not only feel more capable, but actually become more capable of supporting their children
- Parents see and learn the importance of speaking and listening skills
- Parents see tutors and teachers model good practice (e.g. in reading a story)
- Parents have quality time to spend with their children
- Parents improve their own literacy skills
- Parents become more aware of how their child develops.

4.13.6 Tutors' ideas on progression

This extra question was requested by the funder at a late stage in the project (January 2009), and resulted in fewer than half the tutors providing a response (N=29). The main ideas which tutors had found to be effective for learners' progressing onto further courses and/or employment were as follows:

- Bring in an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) speaker or a Careers Advisor into FL class towards the end of the course to provide learners with information on further courses and employment opportunities
- Work with other partners to identify support (e.g. NextStep, Local FE College)
- Present learners with short 'taster' courses at the end of the FL course (e.g. in family numeracy)

- Offer learners follow-up courses which are held in the same setting (e.g. school or Children’s Centre).

Many parents need to complete the school run and without transport are unable to get to adult education centres. This means that progression can be blocked by some of the barriers that family learning breaks down – for instance, travel costs, fees for joining courses, time to get to college and return – thinking of lunch times and nursery morning collection times as well as returning to school times to collect and drop off children.

Very similar ideas to these were also offered by headteachers – see section 4.14.8.

4.13.7 Further issues arising from the face-to-face interviews with tutors and teachers

This final section looks at six themes that arose from the 13 in-depth interviews, and is divided into the four headings of issues, questions, further observations, and strategies highlighted for practice. While we are not claiming that their views are necessarily representative of or generalisable to a larger population, they nevertheless highlight a number of areas that the project team feel are worthy of further consideration, and are included with the purpose of promoting further discussion. For the most part, this section is presented in the tutors’ and teachers’ own words. In the extracts below, ‘Tu’ refers to tutors and ‘Te’ to teachers.

Issues

- 1.** It is generally harder to achieve a homogeneous age range in a smaller school.

Whilst it is not impossible to teach different age groups, it needs to be acknowledged that it is more difficult. There is an added tension when there is also the competing imperative to achieve the maximum numbers to make a course viable.

Tu *What we’ve tried to do, we tried to start with a smaller focus, so we invited the parents of foundation two children, for instance, starting off with the reception children. If we didn’t manage to recruit enough learners we then spread it out to foundation one, or up to year one. But we try not to have too wide an age range.*

Te *If you get three children in reception and three children in year six to come into a group, to do some kind of group activity with them, they are too different in age range, aren’t they, to teach the same thing to. So it’s easier if you’ve got one age group, but then you are limiting the amount of people you will attract to the course. In a smaller school it’s harder to get the numbers.*

- 2.** Many parents want to study or train while their child is in Key Stage 1, and will seek employment later. This issue picks up a recurring theme and adds to the evidence presented from the parents’ data in section 4.10.

The extract below also draws attention to the fact that, in many ways, young children can be disadvantaged when their parents work long hours.

Te *I've got very mixed feelings about that [parents working full-time], as well, because even though, right, not directly related to the family literacy, working in the children's centre, where I see that parents of very young children are placing their children in the day care setting for often very long hours, and I feel very sorry that they feel under pressure to...well, to be at work, basically.*

Tu *To work so many hours when their children are young, I do agree, yeah. I don't like working full-time, and my kids are six and nine, you know what I mean? I still feel, sometimes, when it's Sports Day and I'm not there, you know? Or if they have a trip, and they are all going on a trip with their kids, and I can't do that because I am at work. But that is my choice. But while my kids were toddlers I did stay at home with them, and I wouldn't have gone to work while they was little, do you see what I mean? So I think, that's why, again, I say it's a good time for training. I've trained for years, and been a volunteer for a lot of years, while my children were little. But now that they are older and they've gone to school I've got to work, if you see what I mean.*

Questions

1. Should parents who have qualifications at Level 2 and above be allowed to attend FL courses?

T: *If you was at level two, for example, for example, when my [her own] children were young, I've already got a degree, so I wouldn't be entitled to come on the course because it's under level two, but that doesn't mean to say that I can't benefit my child from coming on the family learning course, because you don't know what they are learning in school, you don't know what they are aiming for, you don't know how they learn at school, and you have to think more about the child then...*

In many ways, this quotation gets to the heart of what FL is, or should be, about. If the core purpose of FL is to give parents access to the school curriculum and learn the ways their children are taught so that they can better support them at home, then the level of the parents' education may be of secondary importance. Allowing parents to join FL classes with qualifications at or above Level 2 may be a further option, particularly when numbers of currently targeted parents are low.

2. Is there a need for a more coherent, nationally based, training programme in pedagogy for tutors?

While many tutors celebrate the diversity and range of practice in the adult sessions, and see the flexibility to respond to parents' needs as being a key and necessary element, there are others who recognise the stark contrast in pedagogy between the adult and EYT sessions, and advocate the need for a more consistent approach.

Personally I think it [FL] would benefit from having a more homogenous, you know, method of teaching. But because most tutors are not trained school

teachers and the adult core curriculum is a fairly new thing in comparison with the school national curriculum, and they are not intensively trained in the same way. I mean, I am a school teacher, and I teach as a school teacher. That doesn't necessarily mean that I'm a better teacher than an adult tutor, but it means that I teach in a very recognised way, because I was trained to teach in that way, and that's where the difference lies. Now, I do synthetic phonics with my students, my adult students, I will use flashcards with my adult students, if it's appropriate, but that's what I get from school teaching.

Further observations

Modelling practice to other parents does not just come from tutors/teachers. Ways of interacting with children come from other parents as well.

We've seen some very difficult children on the course, and I think for some parents there were very good models there of other parents that they could follow, and I think it was very important for them to be able to model the teacher and the way that the teacher dealt with behaviour, so I think that was a very useful insight into the school for them.

Strategies for practice

This extract provides ideas of how to create a non-threatening atmosphere, initiate group bonding and introduce a non-threatening strategy of initial assessment:

I do find at the beginning they are not particularly forthcoming, they are a bit too frightened. The first session tends to be an ice-breaker, where they all ask really lightweight questions of one another, and they have to speak to everybody in the group, and then we try and compile information about everybody in the group. So to start with some of their information about their educational backgrounds, etc., will come out there. A lot of them have been to the same schools and are happy to discuss that. And we try and bond the group that way. I also ask them to do a piece of personal writing for me. And that work I take away and analyse. That's part of my initial assessment, although there are more standard assessments that we use, later on in the programme, I don't like to give them anything at the initial session. I don't want to put them off.

4.14 The family literacy classroom

Introduction

Although research has been able to demonstrate the profound effects of FL in a number of areas, there is a lack of information about what actually happens inside FL classrooms. In other words, the classroom setting, where the crucial interactions between teaching and learning take place, still generally remains a black box. One of

the objectives of this project is to take the reader inside an FL classroom and delineate common forms of practice. It is also the intention to record examples of innovative FL practice, to disseminate and share with policy makers, LA managers and practitioners. Another aim has been to uncover and explore issues which occur in the 'real world' of the FL classroom.

Four researchers made 14 visits to 12 FL classes in 10 LAs between May 2008 and April 2009 – see Table 4.18.

Six standard courses and eight short courses were observed, and this included nine adult and joint sessions, two early years and joint sessions, two adult only sessions¹⁵, and one joint session. In three cases, the same course was observed twice at different times. The average number of parents enrolled per course was 11 (against around an average of nine for the whole project), but only seven parents on average attended classes on the days of the observations, although in some instances regular attendance numbers may have been slightly higher. The average number of children attending was seven (against around nine for the whole project). Sometimes, there were extenuating circumstances for the relatively small adult numbers, such as a class trip on the day of the researcher's visit, and there was also a lot of sickness during the late autumn term. Although the drop in the number of parents attending (56, down from 152 who enrolled to 96 who attended on the days of the observations) suggests attrition to be a perennial problem in FL programmes, it is important to remember that around 84% of learners remained on their courses in the project as a whole. The number of fathers observed during the 14 visits was one, and he withdrew from the course shortly afterwards. Of course, many parents drop out for legitimate reasons and some actually find employment, which can cause a tension when figures appear to dent retention but are actually the result of progression (Lamb *et al.*, 2008).

During the visits, researchers took the opportunity to interview adult tutors, early years teachers, and headteachers. They also spoke informally to parents, children, crèche workers, parent mentors/liaison officers and teaching assistants, and both observations and conversations revealed a great deal of useful information and highlighted a number of recurring issues. During the teaching sessions researchers wrote a detailed descriptive commentary with the prime foci of concentrating on teaching approaches, teacher-learner relations, activities introduced and learner responses to these. It was not the primary intention to comment on the effectiveness of the various approaches, and researchers tried to describe events, rather than make value judgements. Nevertheless, in section 4.14.3 the report presents seven scenarios of what the project considers to be typically good practice in order to communicate these to the FL community and promote further discussion. The next part of this section provides data on two issues that arose during these observations, and are discussed elsewhere in the report (see section 6.3). Finally, the section ends with some strategies which were observed and which the project team believe are useful to pass on to policy makers and practitioners, and have the potential to improve FL practice.

¹⁵ One of these was on an adults-only course without children.

Table 4.18: Details of researchers' observations of FL classes

Visit No.	Type of course and date of visit	Visit No.	Sessions visited	Number of parents enrolled on FL course	Number of parents attending class during observation	Number of children attending class during observation
1	Short 12.05.08	1	Adult, joint	6	2	2
2	Short 17.06.08	1	Adult, joint	12	4	4
3	Short 07.11.08	1	Adult, joint	7	3	2
4	Short 11.03.09	1	Adult	10	8	n/a
5	Short 24.02.09	1	Adult, joint	15	7	7
6	Standard 10.02.09	1	Adult, joint	8	5	7
7	Standard 19.03.09	1	Adult	10	7	7
8	Short 12.03.09	1	Joint	12	10	10
9	Standard 21.10.08	1	Adult, joint	10	6	6
10	Standard 17.03.09	2	Adult, joint	10	6	6
11	Short 04.11.09	1	Adult, joint	16	15	15
12	Short 18.11.09	2	Early Years, joint	16	13	10
13	Standard 01.12.09	1	Adult, joint	10	5	6
14	Standard 09.03.09	2	Early Years, joint	10	5	5
Total	14		Adult sessions: 11 Early years sessions: 2 Joint sessions: 12	152	96	87
Average*				11	7	7

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Rows that are highlighted show courses that received two visits from the same researcher

4.14.2 Types of practice observed

The purpose of this section is to summarise the types of practice that were observed during the adult, child and joint sessions, including the main teaching approaches employed and the most common forms of organisation and practices. Although in many ways they confirm the practices delineated in the previous section from the tutors' and teachers' data (4.13), the observations are able to provide more details at a micro level.

Teaching approaches

As we have seen in the previous section (14.13.2), there was considerable variation in the pedagogic approaches observed, particularly in the adult-only and joint sections. Although researchers saw direct, transmission teaching aimed at individuals, on the majority of occasions practice was collaborative, interactive, practical and hands-on. There were many demonstrations of contemporary teaching practices in the children's sessions, based on the government's *Letters and Sounds* programme, e.g. synthetic phonics, using Jolly Phonics and flash cards, looking at how children learn to read, and showing reading and spelling strategies and techniques. This meant that parents could recognise aspects of children's learning, and be more aware when supporting literacy skills at home. The explanations and demonstrations during the adult-only session were then put into practice with the children in the joint sessions.

A summary of frequently observed themes can be seen in Appendix T.

4.14.3 Examples of teaching practices observed in FL classes.

The first four examples are set in adult-only sessions; the next two examples in children-only sessions; and the last example in a joint session.

KEY to narrative commentaries:

T = Tutor

EYT = Early Years Teacher

P = Parent

C = Child

WB = Whiteboard

[Information inside square brackets is background information]

Example 1: Tutor leads an interactive session encouraging discussion

Tutor invited the first team [of parents] to explain their activity to the group and tell them how many questions they had identified. The team working on phonemes asked the rest of the group how many phonemes there are in 'initial'. This led to a discussion led by the tutor. She reminded the group that a phoneme is an individual sound. One of the parents asked the group to count the phonemes in 'photograph'. After this, the tutor asked the class to move places so that everyone was working on a new task with someone they did not know very well. She checked that everyone knew what they were doing and encouraged them to adapt the games and to think about how the games could be played with their children. One of the parents suggested that it would be easy to draw the snakes and ladders game. Another suggested asking their child to make up a sentence about the word they had landed on. An exchange of ideas and suggestions between the parents then ensued.

Example 2: Tutor shows parents how difficult it is to learn to write for beginner learners

Tutor drew parents' attention to different forms of writing that have different purposes and different degrees of formality.

T explained the first activity and handed out pens, paper and a printed text typed using an elaborate, archaic typeface (H1). Ps were asked to copy the text as closely as they could using the hand they did not normally use for writing. They were given a range of pens (e.g. thick markers, crayons) and a variety of materials to write on, e.g. dark paper, padded envelope, graph paper.

T – How are your hands feeling?

Ps – Aching, feels weird, can't do that, no wonder the children get frustrated.

T – What do these comments remind you of?

P – This is what Cs say. Can't remember what it felt like not to be able to write.

T – This helps you to understand how Cs feel. What would make it better for you?

Ps – Better pens; doing it how we would do it, rather than copying; lines; knowing which hand to use.

This was followed by a discussion about writing in straight lines and having the right tools. T explained that some pencils and crayons are shaped to make writing easier, e.g. chunky pencils and those that are three sided, rather than cylindrical. She suggested using blue tack at holding position on normal pencil if Ps don't want to buy special pens and pencils.

Example 3. Tutor shows parents how to support their children at home in letter formation

Tutor went through the handout and gave out another with tips for Ps (e.g. importance of tracing patterns and letters). She suggested using dots to show Cs the pattern of letters if they can't copy words. One P said that she writes faintly and then asks her C to write over her writing. T suggested writing in sand or salt. She explained kinaesthetic learning and how tracing letters on a C's back would be effective for C who preferred this learning style. She also suggested encouraging very young Cs to play with jelly and flour as this helps them to develop manual dexterity.

Example 4: Tutor uses ICT, making literacy relevant to the particular learners in her class.

The tutor uses her laptop to show photographs that she has taken with her mobile phone from around the local community. These show spelling mistakes that learners are asked to correct, e.g. ITS TO BIG. She has obviously taken a lot of effort to do this. Of course one of her examples was a 'greengrocer's apostrophe': TOMATOE'S

Example 5: EYT brings in real fruit used in a story she is reading to stimulate descriptive skills in speaking and to encourage listening

EYT reads the story [Handa's Hen] to the children. The story mentions various fruits (e.g. avocados) and the EYT has brought each fruit into the classroom. They are cut up on a large plate. As the plate is passed round each C takes a piece and is asked to describe the feel and the taste, e.g. [for the avocado], 'rough', 'bumpy', 'green', 'squidgy'.

Example 6: EYT uses drama to encourage speaking and listening

EYT asked children to sit in a circle on the floor. EYT spread a number of blue and green cards on the floor. Each card had one high-frequency word printed on it.

EYT: We are going to do another drama. We are going to pretend that we work in a shop. What do you think it is called? It is called the Word Warehouse. What do you think it sells?

C: Words

EYT: I am a person who likes to collect words. Every day I ring the Word Warehouse to ask for words.

EYT: Who answers the phone at home?

C: I do

EYT: What do you say? For the drama, you have to say, "Good morning. Word Warehouse".

All Cs practised pretending to pick up the phone and saying, “Good morning. Word Warehouse”.

EYT: Who shall I choose to answer the telephone?

All C put their hands up and EYT selected one C who was given the handset. EYT called from her mobile. C answered but then hung up and said that he didn’t want to answer. Another C volunteered.

EYT: I am looking for a word. I would like a green card that says ‘and’.

Several Cs point to the word to help the C who has answered the phone.

EYT: I want someone to deliver the word to me. Will you choose someone to send round?

C gave the card to another C. Second C delivered it to EYT who asked what the word was. C read the word and EYT repeated it. The same C then answered the phone, selected the next word requested by the EYT and chose a ‘delivery person’.

The game continued with the EYT asking for increasingly difficult words/ several words in one call. She made sure that all the Cs were included, e.g. by asking a particular child to find a word; asking for lady to deliver a word. EYT encouraged C to answer the phone as she had instructed at the beginning and praised them for successfully selecting and pronouncing words. I heard one C say quietly, “This is great fun”.

Example 7: EYT models for parents how to use the correct terminology when talking about a fiction book

Joint session

EYT explained that they were going to talk about non-fiction books.

She displayed a big book “The Lion and the Mouse” on the flipchart and asked the Cs “What sort of book is this?”

EYT prompted Cs to come up with the answer. As it was not forthcoming, a P said “story book”.

EYT turned to the title page and asked the Cs “What is the writing on the front?” A C replied “title”. EYT continued to elicit from the children the meaning of words “illustrator” – “draws it”, “author” – “he writes it”, words on the back cover – “blurb”.

EYT displayed non-fiction book on the flipchart to check C’s understanding of terms “contents”. EYT demonstrated concept of contents by asking the Cs “What’s making the noise in a maraca*?”; “What’s the contents of your mum’s handbag?” Ps replied along with their Cs to help them. EYT showed how the contents page works in the non-fiction book.

EYT continued to elicit meaning of words – index, glossary from the children and used non-fiction book to find the relevant pages.

EYT displayed the non-fiction and fiction books together and asked the C to say what the difference was. After prompting, a C said “It’s about information.” EYT explained to Ps about using the correct terminology for the different sections of a non-fiction book.

* A maraca is the musical instrument filled with seeds.

4.14.4 Issues that arose during the observations

This next section presents and discusses two issues. Although only the first issue came as a direct result of the observations, it was during these visits that the second issue began to become apparent and assume greater importance. The project team believe both issues will resonate with many LA managers and practitioners, and will be of particular interest to policy makers.

1. Accommodation is a key factor in successful learning.
2. The actual amount of teaching contact time can be lower than assumed.

Issue 1: Accommodation

The physical and cultural environment where FL classes are held is of crucial importance to the success and effectiveness of the provision, a point that has already been forcefully made, particularly by tutors (see section 14.10.3), and will be backed up by managers and headteachers in sections 4.14 and 4.15.

Researchers rated the teaching environment for adults as either 'good', 'adequate' or 'poor'. Out of the 12 settings visited, the adult accommodation was rated 'good' eight times, 'adequate' once, and 'poor' three times. The children-only sessions were not visited on a sufficient number of occasions to make a meaningful judgement.

In one LA, the tutor told the researcher that she was teaching six FL classes in the spring term (2009) and the physical accommodation was poor in five out of the six cases, in the sense that there was no dedicated room for the crèche or that the class was asked to end early, or that it was very noisy and made teaching difficult.

However, two-thirds of the 12 settings that were directly observed were judged as being 'good'. An example of this appears below:

<p>The classroom is very well resourced. It is a dedicated room for FL and FN and there is a sink and tea and coffee making facilities. The parents are able to come here before and after sessions and most of them have their lunch together here. This all helps to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The chairs are 'upper junior' size (for 9- to 11-year-olds), which are not too small and uncomfortable. There is a portable whiteboard and a selection of about 50 children's and 50 adults' books on two shelves, which parents are allowed to sign for and take home each week.</p>

The main difficulties or challenges that researchers found (and which sometimes overlapped) were associated with (1) excessive noise, caused by a number of reasons such as parents coming to class with sick babies; (2) crèche workers turning up late; and (3) teaching and learning occurring in generally unsuitable spaces such as school staffrooms and canteens/dining halls and staff rooms. Both the adult and early years FL classes were taught in this space during one visit. This third theme also includes the chairs that adults are often required to sit and work on. They are designed to be used by reception-age or Year 1 children, and consequently are very uncomfortable for adults. This becomes particularly acute when the adults are engaged in writing activities, including taking national tests.

Excessive noise

In one class the crèche was situated within a small classroom, which was about 12 square metres (4m x 3m). At one stage, there were 14 people in this space: three crèche workers, three babies, three parent learners (including one with a baby on her lap), a teacher, a support teacher, the researcher and an FL manager. The noise of the crèche was very loud and made teaching extremely difficult. The teacher coped brilliantly and told the researcher 'You just have to get on with it'. Nevertheless, the noise was a persistent and obvious barrier to good teaching and learning.

The noise level is still high and now Parent 3 is bottle-feeding her child, which she has on her lap, in order to try and keep him quiet. Parent 1 perseveres and carries on reading. The story is about her childhood, and, in particular, her school days. Parent 3's baby is crying loudly.

Crèche workers turning up late

Crèche worker are key individuals, and without them FL classes are not able to function. Partnerships are vital in FL and it is important that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities if FL is to work effectively.

Before the session began, the T found out that the crèche worker was going to be late and this meant that, for the first 45 minutes, two of the four parents had their young children (about 15-18 months old) next to them in pushchairs. Although they were generally well behaved they were certainly an added distraction to the mothers and to the rest of the class.

Teaching in unsuitable spaces

Not only did researchers see classes taught in noisy school canteens, and in classrooms that included a crèche, but some found schools were not always able to provide dedicated rooms, and so teachers and learners had to adapt to different spaces on different occasions.

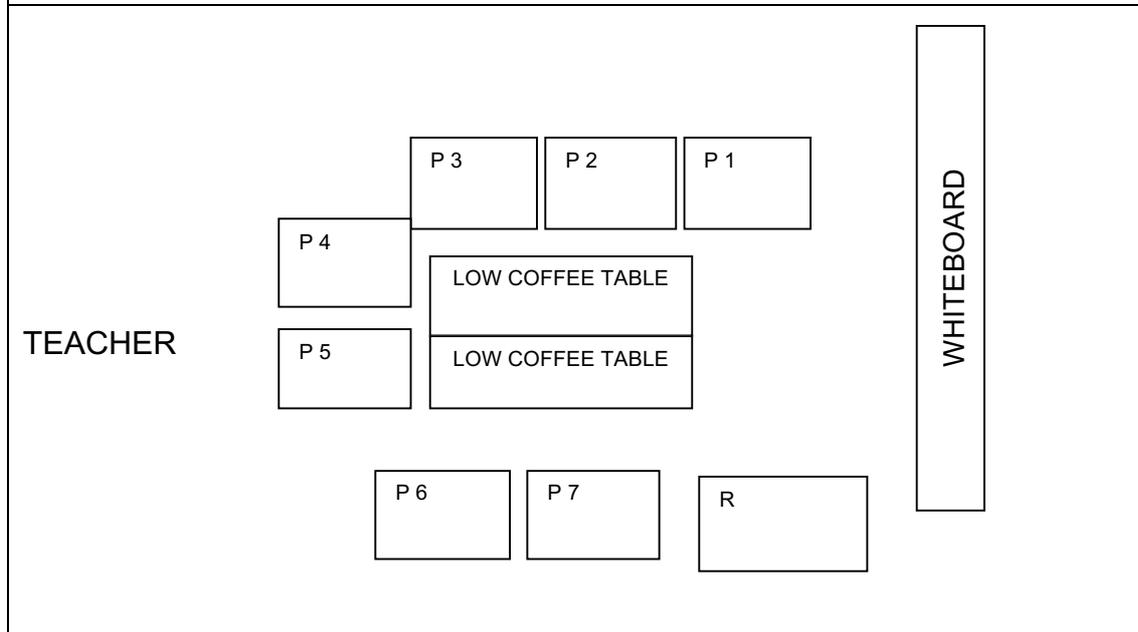
Here is an example of FL teaching occurring in an inappropriate space during the parents-only session. The state of the children's accommodation was not directly observed.

Parents

The session took place in the school staffroom.

Plan of teaching room

P = Parent R = Researcher



We all sat on comfy chairs around two low, coffee-type tables pushed together. The T had a portable whiteboard propped up against the wall. The two low tables were full of clutter. The chairs, and lack of any proper tables, meant that writing would be very difficult, and next week the parents were going to work on writing a letter to their children. The room was large but there were about six teachers near us preparing their work. They were generally quiet but there were also discussions that were distracting.

At 10.25 the group broke for tea and did not resume again till 10.55, when the children arrived. 10.25 was playtime and the staffroom became much fuller, and there was quite a bit of noise. This was not a problem during the tea break but at 10.55 there was a group of about 12 midday assistants left and they were talking quite animatedly about a number of issues. It seemed to be part of a training session. The noise level was quite high. They were disturbing us and we were disturbing them. The leader of the other group came over and asked the T how long we were going to be. After 20 mins the EYT had to abandon the joint session and the children were taken back to their classrooms.

Children

The EYT told me that they had no formal teaching room. On alternate weeks one class had PE and so she used this classroom to teach in. I did not see it but imagine that it was not ideal because the children would probably have left their school clothes on their desks. During the other weeks, the EYT had to use a corridor to teach in, it being the only space available.

The report will return to this issue in sections 4.15 and 4.16 when it presents the views from headteachers and managers. However, an important point needs to be

made here: space is more likely to be at a premium in successful schools where rolls are rising. Researchers saw dedicated rooms for FL in schools that could only be created because of falling rolls. The situation poses a dilemma for LA managers and tutors: does the LA have a 'bottom line' and refuse to run a course where accommodation is deemed as 'inappropriate', or does the LA attempt to do all it can to get the course up and running because it is better to have some FL provision rather than nothing? One tutor told researchers that she would do her very best to hold the course, as long as the room was safe.

T I will teach anywhere. If there's a need how can you say to someone, or a group of parents, who are really keen to learn – I won't teach you – how can you do that?

R Well, some people have said if you haven't got a crèche and it's in the classroom my teachers just cannot operate like this. It's just absolute...

T I will say to them, you know, we need to make sure the room is certainly safe, and let's bring stuff for the children, but we have to work. [...] You just do it.

Issue 2: The actual amount of teaching contact time can be lower than assumed

Information from LA managers on the average number of contact hours for parents-only, children-only sessions and joint sessions has already been presented in section 4.2. However, researchers began to uncover a rather different story behind these figures during their visits, in the sense that the real amount of contact time can sometimes be lower than assumed. For example one class that was observed was billed as being a short, 30-hour course. The course lasted for 10 weeks and each session was 2 hours, 30 minutes long. This comes to 25 hours, with an extra five hours for home activities. However, a 20-minute break was built in, making each session 2 hours, 10 minutes long, or 130 minutes. This is 1300 minutes or under 22 hours, over 10 weeks. Many courses, including this one, have sessions where learners practise and then take an accredited test. In this example, week 9 was used for practising and week 10 was reserved for the exam itself. So, if a further five hours is deducted, the parents-only contact time works out at around 17 hours for the course in total.

The team are unable to say how typical or widespread this practice is, but provide two further concrete examples. The first (A) is taken from a session on an adults-only course, the second (B) from a children-only session. A fuller discussion of this issue can be found in section 6.1.

A: The adults-only class ran for 2 hours each week for about 12 weeks = 20 hours, beginning at 9.15 and technically ending at 11.15. However, the class often had to finish early because the school needed it for phonics work with the children. RML sessions (Ruth Miskin Learning¹⁶). (There were two sessions going on with children that I could see when I made my visit.) This meant that the class often finished around 10.30 and the parents had to move into the entrance lobby and sit on comfy

¹⁶ Ruth Miskin is an advocate of synthetic phonics and author of synthetic phonics materials.

chairs. Not ideal for learning, particularly if the parents were doing a writing activity like today (we had to leave the adult classroom at 10.40 today). This would mean that the total parent contact time may be around 90 minutes per session or 15 hours over the whole course.

B: The children also only sometimes got around 20 mins teaching (rather than their hour entitlement). This was because some of the children were in Reception and some in Y1. The EYT usually collected one group and took them out for 20 mins and then took the other group out for the same amount of time. Sometimes she took both groups out for about 50 minutes but this had only happened on two occasions so far in this course.

In one LA researchers found that children had no session dedicated to themselves. The school would only release the children for the joint hour, and therefore they were only getting one hour of contact time per week. This can be explained by the fact that the schools ran its literacy hour for the first part of the afternoon, and only released the children during the second hour when there was a 'creative/free' time session. However, this seems to be an exception.

4.14.5 Useful strategies to pass on to policy-makers and practitioners

The final part of this section presents four practices which were observed and/or talked about. While most practices will already be familiar to many managers and practitioners, the project team believe that at least some of the extracts may prompt other LAs and policy makers to consider them.

- It was noted on many occasions that, when a parent was absent, the child was also not allowed to take part in the children-only and joint sessions, and this has the potential to affect the child's development. In one setting, the school used a teaching assistant (TA) to work with children whose parents were absent, which avoided them missing a session and so falling behind the rest of the group.
- One FL course was seen building in a 30-minute discussion and evaluation slot into the end of each session involving the tutor, EYT and the parents. Often, points of learning were recapped and plans were made for the following session. In the slot that was observed by one researcher, the tutor flagged up the family numeracy course that she wanted and 'expected' everyone to attend the following term. She asked the parents if any of them had any anxieties about numeracy and talked these through with them.
- One setting was seen initiating the national six-book challenge organised by the Reading Agency for parents and children. Children had to read a book-a-week during the six weeks of the summer holidays; parents had to read six books between 10 March and 1 June. The books were 'Quick Reads', accessible, around 180 pages long with large text – a mixture of fiction and non-fiction (e.g. autobiographies of famous people such as Richard Branson).

- In the same setting as above, the tutor told the researcher how that particular school was trying to measure the progress of the FL children in reading against a group of 'similar' qualities, i.e. in three bands of ability. Although this could not be termed as a control or a matched-group, quasi-experimental design, it may be a possible model that other schools might like to adopt. The project team recommend that the practice of measuring children's progress in FL classes against other groups of similar children in the school in an attempt to ascertain the effect of the FL provision should be more widely adopted. It could also form a powerful part of the school's recruitment policy.

[Note added in October 2013: The NRDC currently under way is a large-scale test of this idea, using a matched-groups design.]

4.15 Headteachers' views on family literacy provision

During some of the classroom observations, researchers took the opportunity to interview the headteachers in schools that were running FL programmes, in order to gain further insights and explore some of the issues that were arising. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix U although, as some new questions were added as further issues and new areas to explore emerged, not every headteacher answered every question. In total, nine headteachers were interviewed during the spring term of 2009, six face-to-face and three by telephone; six were women and three were men. Seven of the schools had a tradition of FL embedded into the school, and two were running a FL course for the first time.

Although the project argues that the whole school needs to be involved in the effective running of a FL programme (including teaching staff, office staff, parent liaison officers – if employed – and the governing body), the headteacher has a particularly crucial role to play in both setting up and maintaining a successful FL programme. In many ways headteachers are the figurehead and a contact point between the LA and the parents. Many of the findings presented below reaffirm the messages and findings from tutors and teachers in Section 4.13, and are further validated by the LA managers in the following section, 4.16.

4.15.1 Reasons for schools running FL courses

The first question asked headteachers why their school had become involved in FL. The six main reasons given were:

1. To improve results and standards
2. To support pupil progress for greater achievement
3. To improve parental links and school involvement
4. To get more parents more involved in their children's learning
5. To raise the aspirations of parents and children
6. To promote literacy within families at school.

An analysis of the responses shows that the first two reasons come from the contemporary neoliberal policy agenda that prioritises the performance indicators of

'standards' and 'excellence' (Ball, 2003; Francis *et al.*, 2009). Schools are part of a quasi-market in education whereby they are required to 'improve achievement' and results are published in league tables. The third and fourth reasons are also part of a policy based on the long-established importance attached to parental involvement, which is seen as having a positive impact on their children's school achievement, and therefore again, also on improving school standards (see, for example, Plowden, 1967; Macbeth, 1989; National Commission, 1994; Chrispeels, 1996). The last two reasons are situated within the debates around poor literacy skills and social inclusion (see, for example, Parsons and Brynner, 2002, and Bird's report for the *National Literacy Trust*, 2004).

Many of these reasons are encapsulated in the following quotation, which show the necessity for all schools to have strong parental support if they are going to thrive as effective institutions of teaching and learning:

From the outset we realised we had to improve the standards, but to do this we had to get parental support, so it was part of that across-the-board project of sort of attracting the children into the school, so it became fun, so learning became fun. It was also to try to raise parents' aspirations, and the aspirations of the children, because they didn't value education, they didn't value the school, it was us and them, and that's one of the reasons it went into special measures. There weren't close links. And you've got to get the parents involved on your side, otherwise you are on a never-ending battle.

Many headteachers said that they particularly wanted to target FL parents whom staff hardly, if ever, see in school, specifically parents whose qualifications were at Pre-entry or Entry Level. However, as we have already seen in section 4.1, these parents were actually a relative rarity on FL programmes. This issue is further discussed below in section 4.15.5.

4.15.2 FL Funding

The second question asked headteachers how FL programmes were funded. It was interesting that a significant number of heads were not sufficiently aware of the LSC funding arrangements or conditions associated with supporting family literacy, namely that courses are *Skills for Life* programmes aimed at, and designed for, parents with literacy needs. For example, some were unaware that, as part of the funding requirement, 40% of learners on standard programmes should successfully complete the national test in literacy (Family Programmes Guidance, 2009/10, LSC), and the lack of clarity in funding relationships around the objectives, eligibility criteria and funding conditions may reduce the impact of FL.

4.15.3 Recruitment

The third question focused on recruitment. The eight main strategies these schools used were:

1. Personal contacts from teachers working in the school
2. Personal contact from the headteacher
3. Personal contact from parent mentors
4. Personal input from FL tutor at open day and/or parents' meetings
5. Advertisements from flyers (translated into first languages if needed)
6. Letters sent home (translated into first languages if needed)
7. Past and present parents on FL courses acting as 'FL Champions'
8. Short courses (e.g. Keeping Up with the Children), which can introduce parents to learning and pave the way to progression onto longer FL courses.

Analysis showed that some of the most effective strategies for recruitment came from personal contacts. One of the report's recommendations is that, where possible, schools should use one of their own staff to act as the FL early years teacher. This means that the parents and children already know the teacher, and it is therefore likely that they will feel more relaxed and more trusting in his/her company than with an outsider. It also means that the teacher can work in conjunction with the reception or foundation stage teacher (or the teacher of whichever class the children are recruited from), and directly target potential recruits. In one school the early years teacher is the SENCo, who covers when the reception teacher is out, and so builds up contacts and relationships with the children and their parents. She also knows and understands many of the issues that the parents have. In another school, all the parents meet with the class teacher about two weeks after their children start school, and are signposted to a FL course at that stage if it looks as if the family would benefit from it.

One of the schools also had a parent mentor, and another had a person titled a 'pastoral coordinator'. The headteacher explained how the parent mentor worked:

The nursery teacher works closely with K. [the parent mentor], and is a line manager in many ways of K., so she will be directing and putting a little bit of an input, who will benefit from this and whatever, and we then send K. off attracting them. We set her loose on them.

He also outlined the benefits that she brought to the school in general, and to family learning in particular:

The parent mentor is the key link, who knows the parents very well, and is approachable, and knows where to go, where to direct them to, because you've got to have that understanding, haven't you? And that's what she does, because she's experienced. They meet as a group, the parent mentors, they meet regularly, lots of the schools around here have them, and from there they will pick up good practice, shared good practice. I just think without that person, I haven't got the time to do that, there is nobody here who could support the parents, and that's the value of the parents mentor.

The headteachers also recognised the importance of their own role, although only one related how she speaks to parents in the playground and 'badgers' them till they agree to sign up. The role of the headteacher is also important once the course has started. Parents in one class told a researcher how they appreciated the visits from the headteacher, which showed how much he valued the course. Nearly all the

headteachers also spoke of their role in promoting FL through celebration assemblies where the children saw their parents presented with certificates, often with accreditations.

Although the majority of the schools used supplementary letters and flyers (translated into first languages where appropriate), one headteacher told us that they found letters home were not a very effective way of highlighting the FL courses and that 'it was stigmatising to approach certain parents in the playground'. She also said that,

Word of mouth between parents is now very successful and the Family Literacy course is just seen as one of the Family Learning activities on offer at school.

The successful tactic of using past and present parents on FL courses is well known (NRDC, 2008), and, as we have already seen, was promoted by some of the parents (see section 4.13.2) They can be used as 'learning champions' and, as peers, can sometimes have more credibility with other parents than can the staff, with their associations to the 'official' school culture.

The second part of the quotation above makes the point that parents are more likely to be attracted to an FL course where there is a tradition of family learning embedded into the school culture. As one headteacher said:

Family literacy is part of Family learning programme, which is available in some form or other throughout the year. Parents know about it.

4.15.4 Benefits of participation

The next question asked headteachers to list the main benefits parents and children gain from participating in FL courses. Twenty-five reasons were analysed from these interviews, and, although some overlap, they have been grouped under the headings of parents, children, school, and community.

For the parents

1. Parents learn to support their children's learning (particularly at home) and become more capable in their ability to do so
2. Parents gain an insight into school life and systems, and develop a working relationship and form better relations with staff when their children are at a young age and at the beginning of their school life
3. Parents develop language and ways of talking together in a way that they do not do at home
4. Parents gain in confidence and self-esteem
5. Parents gain higher aspirations
6. Parents enjoy classes and their attitudes changes as they begin place greater value on education and learning
7. Parents become more interested in developing their own literacy skills
8. Parents meet each other and form social and supportive networks, which are maintained as their children move through the school
9. The courses give parents opportunities for progression.

For the children

1. Children see their own parents learning and see them as role models
2. The children enjoy seeing their parents in school and the course is a natural way to link school and home life
3. The children are proud when they see their parents receive a certificate in assembly
4. Children benefit from small group work with teachers
5. The teacher gets to know the parents much better and this greater understanding also benefits the children
6. The children have quality one-to-one time with their parents and gain in confidence as learners
7. The course helps give children a sense of purpose, and a common interest for learning
8. Children's achievement in reading and writing is raised, although this is hard to quantify
9. Children's oral, listening and social skills improve, although the evidence for this is largely anecdotal
10. Children make new friendships, some of which are maintained inside and outside school.

For the school

1. The school has better links and relations with parents
2. The course helps to build a sense of community
3. The school has higher standards and rates of achievement
4. The attitudes towards learning from the children is maintained throughout their school career
5. The effects of the FL course are seen on siblings of children who attend the course.

For the community

1. FL courses link the families to the local community.

As one headteacher told us:

Family Literacy courses link the families to the town. The visits and trips on the course to the Tate, library, museum, beach, celebrating simple things outside to do with the child introduce the families to new possibilities which they continue to do after the course has ended.

This includes visits to the local library, which help to form literacy dispositions for both parents and children, and the report recommends that they should become an essential component of all FL courses. Looking at these themes above, we can see that they include the six reasons headteachers cited for running FL courses under question one. Among benefits 'for the school', the discourses of 'higher standards' and 'rates of achievement' again feature prominently, and among the reasons grouped under 'for the children' many of the benefits are also concerned with children's learning and higher rates of attainment. Implicitly, all the benefits listed enhance the effectiveness of the school, although perhaps only the first three reasons under 'for the parents' directly benefit the school in terms of standards and progress in rates of achievement, and most are for the parents themselves.

Some of the other points listed above are encapsulated in the three quotations below:

I think enjoyment, the children's enjoyment is key, they buzz off it, buzz off seeing mum come along, and they come and talk to you about it. So there is a big success there. I think the big success is developing parental links, getting the parents in and changing the attitude. They do feel they value education. That has been a big plus for us.

The main gain for the parents is a gain in confidence and self-esteem. The course makes them feel more capable. Before the course they feel vulnerable because they cannot keep up with the children as they go through the school.

The course is a catalyst for their own education with a chain reaction.

4.15.5 Key challenges and concerns

The main concerns headteachers had were:

1. Funding
2. Attracting a sufficient number of parents to make courses viable
3. Breaking down barriers and widening the number of parents by including greater numbers of Entry level learners
4. National tests
5. The ability to run standard courses.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, funding was the main issue, both in terms of it continuing and, if so, being raised to at least keep up with inflation. One headteacher told us that his level of funding had only increased very slightly over recent years, and did not cover the true cost of running the course. Although he was prepared to use the school budget to top it up for the moment, he could not do this indefinitely and so, inevitably, he felt some cuts would have to be made. The issue of funding reappears amongst the managers' concerns in the next section (4.16).

Other headteachers were concerned with recruiting enough parents to fill places, which is another issue that the managers comment on in the next section¹⁷.

All the headteachers were aware of the profile of the parents they were seeking to attract. As one headteacher put it:

Parents have negative memories of education and learning; few have national qualifications; many are bringing up children in one-parent families; and some are working in several low-paid jobs to make ends meet.

This was particularly pertinent with parents working at pre-Entry and Entry levels, who, it can be argued, are the very parents FL should be targeting. Indeed, the low

¹⁷ At least six LAs had to withdraw from the project because there was an insufficient number of learners to run the course.

percentage of these learners on FL courses in the project (19%)¹⁸ reflects the reality of how difficult and widespread this problem is. One reason that may partially explain the relatively low numbers of Entry level learners is connected to accreditation, which is very different at Entry Level (i.e. assignment and task based). This means that it needs very specific teaching and, as the activities are not necessarily relevant for Level 1 and 2 learners, the differentiation in class becomes very difficult. Just sitting a generic test at the end of the course is much easier to manage as far as the tutor is concerned.

Headteachers had mixed views on the benefits of parents taking accredited tests. While some thought that the offer of taking and gaining a nationally recognised qualification was a major attraction to some parents, other headteachers were concerned that testing acted as a powerful disincentive. The latter view is put persuasively by a headteacher in the following extract:

Before the course they [the parents] feel vulnerable because they cannot keep up with the children as they go through the school. [...] And many think they are not clever enough to join. The exam can put parents off from joining. If there wasn't a test involved on the course, more parents would enrol. They feel threatened by the test and it requires a great deal of selling. It is a real shame that it's part of the course as many parents have a school phobia and bad memories of their time at school. It is noticeable that a creative sewing course for adults, run through ACL this term in school with no qualification, attached attracted many parents. They loved it and did not feel threatened.

Although this opinion is also echoed by some tutors and managers, this is very much a minority viewpoint, and as we have seen in section 4.13, the vast majority of parents had a very positive view of accreditation.

Only one headteacher spoke about the difficulties of running standard courses, arguing that these made recruitment and retention more difficult:

In the early days we felt that the intensive/standard course was a big commitment for the families – some found it difficult to attend all the sessions. The short courses work well (one morning a week in school) – parents tend to stay to the end of course now.

Other headteachers, though, found that parents preferred standard courses, and in some cases had extended short courses into a standard length at the parents' request,

4.15.6 Key factors needed to run a successful FL course

The headteachers cited a range of ingredients that they thought are needed to make a successful FL course. Although it was not possible for every school or learning centre to have all of these in place, the project argues that the more factors in place, the more likely it is that a successful FL class will be running. Many of these points

¹⁸ The percentage is probably higher due to the high numbers of parents who were not sure of their qualification. Also, some data were missing.

overlap with the findings presented in the tutors and teachers section (4.10). The main factors here from the headteacher interviews were as follows:

1. A commitment by school and governors to involve parents
2. An established timetable to include family literacy/numeracy within a wider programme of family learning which runs throughout the year
3. The early years teacher works in the school
4. Staff time specifically allocated to recruiting and delivering family literacy/numeracy, with built in time for planning
5. High-quality tutors and teachers who have good relations and act as a team
6. Parent mentors
7. High quality resources and materials
8. Specially designated space in the main school building.

4.15.7 Advice to other headteachers

Question seven asked headteachers what advice they would give to their colleagues who were perhaps thinking about running an FL course for the first time. One headteacher enthused:

You can't lose by running a family literacy course. There are no negatives. It helps build a sense of community. I often get letters of thanks from parents after the course.

While another said her message was:

Do it, it will change your life. Family Literacy has had the biggest impact on school improvement, effectiveness and improved children's achievement and confidence and broadened attitudes and values. Involving parents is now central to the way we work.

For another headteacher, FL had played a part in the school's improvement:

We now have closer links with the parents, we have more support from the parents. They seem to be, touch wood, on our side now, which it wasn't...they never came in. [...] This [FL] is playing its part, it's helped, because we opened the door, we welcomed them in. Many of them may have had poor experiences of school, so they don't want to cross the door, but sometimes now you've got to drag them away because they want to come in and sometimes you've got to show them how it's done really. But it's played its part in taking us forward.

Many of the benefits have been summarised earlier in section 4.15.4. However, a summary of the advice appears below, analysed from the headteachers' responses to this specific question:

1. A FL course will improve parental links and relations. It helps to get parents, particularly of a young age, over the threshold and into school, and to see how it works and what teachers do.

2. A FL course will change and improve parents' attitudes, in that they will begin to attach a greater value to education and learning.
3. It will improve school standards, with children achieving higher literacy levels. The benefits of this continue beyond the early years into Key Stage 2.
4. FL affects other family members as well, not only the parents' partners but also the siblings of FL children. So, potentially, an FL class of eight could be benefiting a far greater number of pupils, like a 'rolling ball'.
5. People and personalities matter. Relationships between tutors/teachers and parents are key. Tutors and teachers need to be very patient and have a sense of humour.
6. Effective strategies for recruitment are vital. The headteacher needs to be actively involved, not only 'selling' FL but also gaining parents' trust by maintaining a regular interest in the course while it is running. The early years teachers, who have the daily contact with the parents, can also play a crucial role.
7. FL courses provide CPD for teachers. They develop pedagogic and organisational skills through teaching adults who have different needs and skills.
8. Stick with it. Take a strategic view and do not expect success to be visible straight away.

4.15.8 Progression from FL courses

This question was added towards the end of the fieldwork and so not every headteacher was given the chance to respond. Once again, much of the advice that arose was similar to that proffered by tutors (see Section 4.10.6).

1. Holding further adult courses adjacent to, or on, the school site, with child care arrangements in place
2. Need to signpost further courses and training or employment options so that parents can see clear progression pathways
3. Involve other agencies and graduates from previous Family Literacy courses who are now studying, volunteering or working
4. Build in a visit by an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) officer
5. Highlight link between qualifications (can lead to) more opportunities (can lead to) increase in salary.

This section has looked at the views of nine headteachers towards FL, and found that they play a crucial role in setting up and maintaining effective FL provision. While some are more hands-on and involved than others, all are very clear about the enormous benefits that accrue from FL, not only for the school itself, but also for the parents and children involved. It is hoped that other headteachers can learn from and act on the advice they proffer to other colleagues about FL, including a list of successful strategies for recruitment.

4.16 Managers' views on family literacy provision

Introduction

Part of the evaluation included the views of FL managers. These were gathered through survey data and individual interviews in order to gain a deeper insight into the issues that managers deal with, including planning and delivering courses or working in strategic roles.

The first phase of the fieldwork was carried out from September to November 2008 and explored the different experiences in 33 local authorities. Thirty-two of the managers were women. The areas covered by the survey questions were: strategies used to integrate family literacy, working in partnership, communication, mainstreaming and resource implications (a separate write-up of the survey has been provided in Appendix V, and the questionnaire used is reproduced in Appendix M).

The second phase of the data collection, from February to May 2009, consisted of follow-up telephone interviews with a subset of 10 managers from the sample. They were selected based on the information they provided in the survey and on geographical spread (see Table 4.19). The interviews expanded on some of the themes raised in the survey, and explored a number of new issues that had begun to emerge. Interviews were conducted by two researchers and lasted on average for around 50 minutes (a copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix N). The information was analysed thematically, as often the responses covered more aspects than were asked for in the questions.

Both phases of the study were conducted in the following regions.

Table 4.19: Summary of manager interviews

Region	Number of returns	Number of interviewees
East	3	1
East Midlands	2	0
London	3	2
North East	2	0
North West	13	3
South East	2	0
South West	3	2
Yorkshire & Humberside	3	2
West Midlands	2	0
TOTAL	33	10

The following summary captures the key themes from the interviews and survey: planning and delivery; relationships and partnership working; environmental constraints; learning and training needs; support for parents; evidence of impact on children; and wishes for the future.

4.16.1 Theme 1: FL planning and delivery

This theme focuses on planning and delivery processes. FL courses are organised and co-ordinated by the person or team, usually within the LA, with responsibility for FLLN. This person will be responsible for managing the LSC funding available for family programmes, and for organising the teachers who will be running these courses. In some of the best practice, the planning is part of the area-wide plan and contributes to the national and local widening participation agenda, as well as a range of local plans and strategies

When asked about strategies used to integrate FL in the LA, most managers identified successful integration in terms of inclusion of FL in local and/or national strategies such as Skills for Life, Every Child Matters and the Children's Plan.

Just over half of the 33 questionnaire respondents described successful integration, while the rest reported more limited success. A small number of managers identified considerable success in some respects, with limitations in others:

We very much feel part of a larger organisation. Within the LA, we are recognised as having an impact on raising pupil achievement by the School Improvement Service and the Advisory Service although the links are not really formalised. For the past six years, we have worked very hard to try and integrate FL to a greater extent within the LA but this has been very challenging, due to the shifting of directorates. Adult Learning was assigned to Adult Social Care Directorate and our position away from Children, Young People and Families has had a damaging effect on our status and networks.

It is not clear from other respondents whether or not FL had been successfully integrated into the LA. Where integration had taken place, it was evidenced in terms of FLLN being a key element of wider authority strategies such as Skills for Life, Widening Participation, Lifelong Learning, Parenting Support, and contributing to local targets and annual performance assessments, and to national strategies such as Every Child Matters and the National Primary and Early Years Foundation strategies.

Several managers noted the importance of responding to requests for programmes and customising courses to meet the needs of learners, venues and schools' targets, and the need to be flexible in terms of delivery day and times. Following the pattern reported earlier in Section 4.2, the majority of LAs run more short courses than standard ones, and the vast majority of provision is in schools. From their own practice perspective, some of the managers explained why they offered short courses. Comments often referred to the challenges of setting up courses in schools and Children's Centres:

I think one of the main problems that we have had is the school releasing the children... and it's releasing their teachers, as well.

I think the main concerns are space... finding enough space for parents, children, and a crèche.

However, one manager cited the standard course as the preferred FL model in their LA.

The standard courses work for us, so we do more standard courses rather than a combination of the two...you need that length of course to make the impact that we want.

One of the critical issues FL managers face is balancing given resources with demand and opportunities. Changing national targets have contributed to the growth of work, and managers are working under a great deal of pressure. Concern about how to manage the growth in FL was mentioned more frequently by managers than any other concern.

One respondent reported:

Demand outstrips funding capacity. We are now active in over 100 schools, in particular those in the most deprived neighbourhoods where we know we can make a real difference.

Some interviewees indicated that there were challenges and tensions involved in implementing the LSC guidelines, concerning funding and accreditation.

In some ways we are setting up this strategic joined-up way of working, but actually we can't deliver the goods, because our funding criteria restrict us to be as universal as they would like us to be.

They [the tutors] felt very pressured last year when the expected outcomes were that on a 36-hour course learners would achieve an accredited outcome. It was quite a tough...I felt, morally, that that wasn't the emphasis of what this was about. It was, of course, part of it, but it wasn't 'Come and do family learning and get a qualification'.

The programme's targets and timescales were criticised for being unrealistic, and many managers argued that there should be a greater acknowledgement of local variations and recognition of the importance of flexibility. For example, while some managers said they adhered strictly to the LSC guidance and would not run courses with numbers under nine, others were more flexible.

What we aim for is to enrol at least nine learners...if you talk to providers up and down the country, that figure of nine is very challenging. What we aim for is to get as close to that as possible, as a borough average. So in other words we look at our average numbers on the courses across the borough. And the reason we do it like that is because schools' circumstances are very different. We have got schools, falling rolls is a huge issue in [name of LA]. So if you are a one form entry school, with, say, twenty on roll in reception, the chances are you are going to struggle to get nine, compared to, say, three form entry schools, with ninety on roll. So again, you have to use common sense, discretion. But we are very mindful of the LSC's guidance; it's interpreting it in an intelligent way, to be honest with you. And in actual fact, we do get a good

average number, usually around eight learners per course, across the borough.

Many respondents identified a shortfall or problems associated with static funding in the face of increasing costs. More funding was needed to

- Collect evidence on impact
- Publicise and raise awareness of family literacy
- Meet demands and government targets
- Engage hard-to-reach learners
- Provide cover so that tutors and teachers can plan and evaluate joint sessions
- Develop staff skills.

For some managers the lack of tutors was an issue even when funding was available. Managers who identified the financial implications of FL provision for LAs pointed to the cost of staffing, including the cost of: planning and running joint sessions; training and development; management and programme development; building and maintaining partnerships, particularly with Children's Centres. Working in partnerships costs time and energy, so providers need to work with organisations where the benefits outweigh the costs.

The following quotation illustrates one manager's frustrations:

Children's Centre staff are not very keen on literacy and numeracy courses, to be quite frank. We have a massive battle. We are delivering Step as much as we can, to try and get the message across, but they have the stigma and the barriers about literacy and numeracy, not the parents. My personal view is that a lot of Children's Centre managers have a social work background. We find if we have a Children's Centre where the manager has an education background then they want literacy and numeracy projects.

There appeared to be a number of ways in which managers had developed their practice since the reorganisation and the introduction of Extended Services in 2007. One respondent reported that replacing the LEA with the Directorate of Children and Family Services has created the right context. Another reported that the move of FL from Children's Services to Recreation and Heritage had shifted the sphere of influence from working with parents and children's centres to partnerships with libraries and museums. A third identified the advantage of being positioned in the CYP Directorate where Every Child Matters is championed. A fourth described as successful a model whereby FL is located in the Schools Branch of Department for Children and Education alongside the advisory team (which includes Sure Start, Early Years and Extended schools) and the school improvements team. This structure promotes joint strategies and planning.

The transition from the directorate to a children family service is actually really important. And has generated additional strategic support for what we do.

However, not all managers found the new structures beneficial. We have already seen that one manager felt that the assignment of Adult Learning to the Adult Social

Care Directorate had damaged networks and the status of FL. Another reported that restructuring resulting in FL becoming part of Community Learning and Well-being Service had lead to:

Lost contact and credibility with school advisors... [and that it had] taken years of hard work, passion and commitment to re-gain recognition.

4.16.2 Theme 2: Relationships and partnership working

All effective family learning requires collaborative working. Even the most modest schemes require joint activity by staff from different disciplines or specialisms. (Ofsted, 2000)

This theme focuses on the managers' perceptions of the key ingredients for successful FL provision. The two most frequently mentioned factors for delivering effective FL services were relationships and partnership working. The LSC expected providers to work in partnerships to plan and deliver courses, and working together with other agencies can bring considerable benefits to FLLN providers, the parents and the wider community.

Most respondents reported working with a range of partners, with varying success. The number and range of partners and the way in which partners work together also varied. Partners included schools, colleges, libraries, Extended Schools, primary and parenting strategy teams, Children's Centres, Sure Start teams, museums, Ethnic Minority, Traveller and Achievement Service, statutory services and voluntary and community organisations.

Schools were the most commonly cited partners. In some cases FL was delivered jointly by schools and FL staff; in others school staff were trained by FL staff, or other partners (see colleges below) were contracted to deliver provision. Schools also play an important part in providing resources, recruiting parents and contributing to the design of FL programmes.

Our partnership with schools is at the heart of our work, and we have been able to develop this partnership further especially in the last two years with external funding (NFER) [National Foundation for Educational Research] which has enabled us to work more flexibly and creatively with schools who had not previously offered FLLN, or where we needed to work hard to become better established and engage more families.

One manager spoke about the importance of building up the right kind of relationships.

I've run family literacy courses where you've gone into a school with a supply teacher, and that doesn't work as well, because you don't have the relationship with other teachers within the school.

Relationships with schools were developed over time and were reported as requiring the capacity to be flexible in terms of delivery and offering training to school staff.

Other arrangements included basing FL workers in school part-time and having formal agreements with schools:

Schools are asked to appoint a Family learning link worker which aids communication, this is often a Learning Mentor or Family Link worker who recognises barriers, knows parents and builds up good relationships.

The benefits and dividends accruing from these posts are highlighted in the next chapter.

The energy and enthusiasm of FL staff and their use of personal contacts to build relationships with school staff were cited as important in engaging schools. Using EYTs in delivery of adult and joint sessions may contribute to success, as schools have ownership of the FLLN course, and courses link directly to the school curriculum. This approach also draws on expertise and resources of EYTs. Even where schools are not involved in delivery, they were identified as important in recruiting parents and developing learning programmes to meet local community needs and providing on-going support for parents. Providing courses that respond to learners' needs was also seen as important in success.

Some respondents commented that some schools can, initially at least, be unreceptive to the idea of taking children out of class to attend FL sessions, and there are concerns over children missing literacy (and numeracy) hours, which potentially can affect the school's results at Key Stage 1.

We do find that actually really quite difficult. Especially on the longer programmes, primarily because we are trying to take the children out at the same time each week, and they are missing work that is going on in class.

There were also some concerns raised by the interviewees about the difficulties in accessing support from some teachers for FL.

We ask for teacher involvement on the short courses and the involvement of the children and what's difficult is the release of the teachers....they've got such responsibilities these days that time out of the classroom is just very difficult for them.

A further issue concerning relationships arose between tutors and EYTs, with some managers suggesting that the level of information sharing between tutors and EYTs was at best limited. One manager discussed the difficulties for staff delivering FL in rural or remote areas.

The rural situation means that somebody that is working eighteen and a half hours a week actually physically can only deliver two to three sessions a week, So if there is two hours delivery contact, two hours travelling, and there is also two hours planning and prep and peer support time. The challenge is that they are not all often here at the same time...we have what we call our admin week, where everyone comes together, but that is an area of real concern, everybody is so busy doing their own stuff. You know, it's a real challenge for us to ensure that people get time to share and develop and

discuss, and I would say the discuss one definitely just doesn't happen. There's no staff room to eat off, if you like.

One urban interviewee, in a very different location, described a different approach for supporting FL staff, with built-in paid time for planning:

This is why we don't start our courses until January, it gives us that term to do all this preparation every year... we do two separate days to make it easier to timetable, we will plan and deliver a joint planning session with tutors who are going to be delivering on our programmes....they are timetabled from the community college to come on that training...when schools tell us what day they want to run their course on, the manager in the college will then assign this group of tutors to individual schools, and they will then meet with their class teacher and they spend half a day with them planning out the structure and the content of the course.

A key factor in the effective and successful school partnerships centred on commitment from headteachers.

Partnerships with schools/head teachers have been essential in setting up successful family literacy programmes. The head teacher's support is essential even if the main contact person at the school is the PSA.

If you can't get the headteacher on board you cannot move any further with the school.

Colleges were also cited as valuable partners with a role in delivery, seconding staff to FL, providing access to high quality SFL tutors, and progression opportunities for FL learners.

Partnerships also enabled FL managers to identify hard to reach groups, share good practice across the authority and raise the profile of the service. The majority of the interviewees indicated that they had good networks within their own sector and beyond. However, given the number of agencies, some said it was very difficult to be fully aware of each other's work and remits.

It's partnership work at a strategic level and at practitioner level, and with a whole range of partners...it takes with setting up and development meetings, and listening to people's agendas and trying to adapt programmes to suit everyone's agenda.

4.16.3 Theme 3: Environmental constraints

This theme focuses on the main challenges in setting up FL courses in schools/ Children's Centres and the impact of environmental constraints such as time and space and extraneous noise. As we have already seen in Section 4.14.4, members of the research team observed classes taught in noisy school canteens and in classrooms that included a crèche; some found schools that were not always able to

provide dedicated rooms and so teachers and learners had to adapt to different spaces on different occasions, including corridors.

As part of the study, interviewees were asked about how they planned and managed the learning environments for FL in schools and Children's Centres. The managers described a variety of experiences, mostly negative, in organising appropriate environment in schools/Children's Centres. The shortage of space was a serious concern for all respondents, as the following comments illustrate.

I think the main concerns that we've had are space. Obviously finding enough space for parents, children, and a crèche. A lot of schools haven't got adult facilities in terms of chairs and tables. Working on small, child friendly tables. ICT, things like interactive whiteboards, computer equipment. Most of the schools have IT suites, but they are constantly booked out. So we have to book sessions in with the IT and it's not always possible in some schools. So they miss out on some of the IT that we could be providing.

...obviously these parents have young children that we need to put into the crèche in the children's centre, but the crèche cannot start until ten o'clock. We have parents arriving at nine o'clock with their primary school children...Now that takes a lot of planning and a lot of effort on a lot of people's parts, to make that work.

I mean, really a lot of the challenge is about space and a lot of the challenge is about suitable space. We have quite a lot of problems in quite a lot of our Children's Centres have been built, or have adopted venues, that are very small. And they are OK for perhaps, you know, three or four parents, but we have the minimum nine, and they are not big enough to have nine adults and nine children in the same room.

It's a nightmare, it's a nightmare trying to find space. It really is. And we say that we really don't want classes that are sessions going on in classrooms. I think that's really poor. But what do you do? You've got a very, very deprived area, you've got a headteacher that's really keen, and you've got parents who say – we don't mind, we'd rather have the course here than not at all.

This last quotation raises the issue that, whereas some managers have a bottom line that means they will not run an FL course if the space is deemed unsuitable, others are prepared to teach 'almost anywhere', as long as it is safe, in order to get a course up and running.

4.16.4 Theme 4: Learning and training needs

This theme discusses some of the challenges in providing staff development and training.

One of the emerging things is, with this increased relationship with schools, and the expectation of us meeting their agenda as well as our own... it is the up-to-date knowledge of the primary and secondary curriculum, and us

managing the fact that we are adult education family learning tutors, we are not primary teachers, and we are not there to teach the primary curriculum.

Although the managers saw the benefits of participating in CPD, the drive to build capacity to deliver programmes has put an added pressure on staff managing provision. The most common CPD activities include opportunities to attend national seminars and conferences, involvement in SfL improvement training and training for primary school staff, and receiving input by LA literacy consultants and experts in subjects such as the Early Years' Foundation Stage. One respondent referred to FL teams delivering CPD events to LA staff and school-based staff, and another referred to delivering induction training to new members of the children's workforce.

The costs of staff development activities were a concern for some managers.

One interviewee said:

Years ago, we had sort of capacity-building sessions, where we went out of the workplace. We don't tend to have those any more; there isn't the funding for them. The obligatory training is safeguarding children, and equality of opportunity, equality and diversity, and then we have an induction to the council as a whole. You sit down with somebody for an induction to family learning, but ideally I think we could do more.

When asked about current and future training needs of new and existing FL staff, interviewees mentioned data management, family finance, IT, online testing, early years foundation stage training, supporting ESOL learning, equality and diversity, specific learning difficulties, Step In to Learning, phonics, creative writing and Level 5 literacy/numeracy. The impacts that most interviewees identified CPD as having were the development of skills and knowledge and increased awareness of FL and school issues. Barriers to engaging in CPD are time, funds and competing demands.

I do feel that nationally we should have had training. But what we've tended to find is the national training you have to have so many tutors, or so many people, attending the training...we just haven't got the capacity to send people out to training.

Many respondents were offering their staff some support with training costs but there was also evidence of some staff attending training days unpaid.

4.16.5 Theme 5: Support for parents

This theme focuses on the managers' views about the needs and aspirations of parents on courses. Overall, responses suggest that only a small number of FL managers have up-to-date information on the scale of need, especially among adults. Those who commented on this issue said that having information about need would be helpful.

Some questionnaire respondents described successful strategies for engaging hard to reach learners. These included:

- Targeting areas with high take-up of free school meals
- Working through community workers, community initiatives and school improvements officers;
- Having a coordinated approach and working in partnerships
- Attracting learners through less formal activities such as First Steps and Family Cooking providing lunch and incentives.

Other respondents reported needing more training and guidance to help engage hard-to-reach groups.

If anyone has a successful strategy for engaging the hard-to-reach within the family literacy budget, I would be delighted to hear about it!

Improving engagement with fathers represents a major challenge across all FLLN programmes and local authorities nationally, and the findings in this project show that male participation is low at 6% an average across all courses. Three barriers to engaging with fathers in FL emerged from the interviews: limited access to provision, traditional roles and responsibilities, and female environments.

Some interviewees discussed the difficulties that working fathers and non-resident fathers may have in accessing FL provision as most courses run during school hours. A number also said that some of their family groups see the mother as the primary carer and father as the main breadwinner.

It's a cultural thing as well, because the kind of groups we've got ... the men are quite happy to go out and work, and they want their wives or partners to be totally dedicated to bringing up the children...

Most interviewees mentioned that the vast majority of tutors, teachers and practitioners in early years settings and FLLN are female, which might lead some fathers to think that learning is a female activity.

To use the words of two of interviewees:

I just think if you go on the playground, quite often most of the people on the playground in the morning, dropping kids off, would be mums. Most of the teachers in the school will be women, most of the classroom assistants will be women. So, in terms of the staff and the people who turn up, they are quite sort of female orientated. I don't think they try and exclude men; it is just the actual presence, the numbers.

I think there is a danger that some of the school venues and children's centres can appear a bit feminised. I think that's particularly so of children's centres actually, even though children's centres are actually doing a lot of work around things like dads groups, when you actually walk into a children's centre you've got posters about breastfeeding...

As regards access to qualifications, results from managers confirmed findings from earlier sections (see Section 4.10.2) that the majority of parents took some form of accreditation during FL and were very happy to do so.

For some parents, just that opportunity to take a test again, and to think – actually I can face my demons, I can do this, I am not somebody who can't cope with this - is really important.

The extract below shows the possibility of progression.

I've been following a group of parents for about three years now...I spoke to one yesterday, and she'd come on a wider family learning programme when her children were a bit younger, she then went on to do a numeracy level one with us, then she took literacy level one, also, with us. Then we passed her on to the college, she's done her level two, and having spoken to her yesterday she's also done her maths and now she's a teaching assistant. She went off to another college, done her level three, and then that makes you realise why you do the job you do.

However, when the 10 interviewees were asked their opinions about the government's policy to improve parents' employability and its impact on FL, half expressed concern about the social and financial pressures on parents, particularly mothers.

The following three quotations highlight these concerns:

What we've found in terms of employment is that unfortunately at the moment, because of the recession, everybody's trying to get anything, anywhere, so sometimes they are having to actually go out and look for work when in fact they may have, you know, preferred to stay at home longer. I think when their children get to seven, eight, that's when we are finding a change. Up until then parents want to stay with the children and do as much as they can for them.

I think the government have got two competing agendas. I think they've got the respect agenda, which is about being a good parent, and then they've got the economic pressure that, to deal with, they are encouraging parents to get out to work. So what we are finding is a lot more parents are working, and, in fact, are having one or two jobs, so they have very little time. So they have this huge guilt around – I actually do want to be a good parent, but I'm not able to, because I'm not there.

When they've got very young children, I don't really think a job is particularly on their radar, apart from the fact that they are told it has to be. You know, when they are claiming benefits. And I think they will go back to work when their children are older, but at that time that is where they are at, parenting is where they are at that point in time

4.16.6 Theme 6: Evidence of impact on children

This theme focuses on children in FL and the data LAs use as evidence of impact.

As part of this study, interviewees were asked about the impact of their FL programmes on children and the data they used to acquire this information. Although schools cite family learning as a key component that contributes to children's achievement, much of the evidence for this remains anecdotal. Although a number of managers identified the need to develop more robust and systematic ways of collecting data on children, so that they can measure the impact of provision over time, the general impression is that there is a lack of consistency in gathering data across the LAs. One of the interviewees highlighted the difficulties in collecting data from schools and assessing the impact of FL:

I have to say some of them [teachers] are quite reluctant to give it [baseline data] to us. But at the end of the day we are not moving milestones, we are doing small steps and we are making a contribution towards the children's attainment levels. But there is no definitive way of saying family learning has moved this child on...

4.16.7 Theme 7: Wishes for the future

This theme focuses on hopes for FL provision now and for the future. When asked about their wish list, some interviewees had more things to say than others. They were encouraged to suggest ways in which national policy might potentially support FL services. Here are some of those wishes and suggestions.

I'd wish that it was far less employability and qualification driven, and that they just recognised that developing a relationship between parents and their children, and that support factor, was very important.

Let us use our own professional judgement.

My wish list is a budget that would increase rather than stand still. I would like government to join things up at government level and to put family learning on the map, just as they have been doing with parenting. That's what it needs, it needs a higher profile. And I'd also ask them to have a look again at FLIF. The premise on which FLIF was designed is sound, but what they've actually put in place is inflexible and doesn't meet what we need.

Whilst I am in support of having guidance I think that there are so many local issues that affect your ability to be able to work to those guidelines. The local picture needs to be acknowledged.

If the profile of family learning was raised, and raised to be equal with other support services then that would make a huge difference.

We need to have, rooms fit for the purpose of teaching...with almost every technology, like the white interactive board... where the parents don't feel

threatened by moving from a very safe environment like a Children's Centre or a school, to almost just not more than five minutes walk to an adult ed centre, and from there I am sure they would excel and go very far.

Formalise booklets, endorsements, requirements to return data, recognition that actually family literacy and numeracy is about the cheapest intervention that any school will ever engage with. To be honest, if things come from the government they (schools) are more likely to listen to it than something coming from an adult literacy tutor.

Half of the 10 managers interviewed were highly or very optimistic about the future of FL.

I am very optimistic actually, I am very optimistic. Probably more so than ever, actually, because I think of the impact our partners are now recognising, it's gone wider than the adult learning sector.

I am certainly optimistic about the value of it, and so long as that, fingers crossed, carries on, carries through, and that's why a lot of the recent moves towards some more penetrating research, giving us more evidence of impact, fingers crossed that will be fairly powerful.

Others were not so sure:

I know they do their best and I understand that, but the government are leading this agenda for family learning, and they know where it wants to go, but it's a bit like, you know, I said before, they've got this dual agenda for parents, they've almost got this dual agenda for family learning as well - meet your targets, you know, get us qualifications, contribute to the economy and the skills agenda, however, work with those most difficult to reach. Doesn't pan out, does it?

4.17 Summary of research findings

This section provides a very brief overview of some of the findings that have been presented in this chapter. For a more comprehensive presentation and discussion of the project's findings, see Chapter 6.

Parents' reading and writing

Overall, the parents appeared to make only an insignificant amount of progress in reading. However, there seems to have been a ceiling effect: the average scores of those on standard courses and of those with English as their first language were already high at the beginning of the courses, leaving little room for improvement. By contrast, parents on short courses and those with English as an additional language did make some progress on average

On average, the parents made a small but statistically significant gain in writing. No subgroup analyses were attempted

Children's reading and writing

On the whole, the children's writing developed considerably during the courses, and this growth was seen for most subgroups (type of course, gender, English as a first and additional language, and school settings).

On average, children improved their reading during the courses. It was not possible to state any findings on whether subgroups (e.g. boys and girls) made similar or different amounts of progress.

Parents' assessment of their child's literacy

There were statistically significant changes in almost all the parents' assessments of their child's home literacy activities between the beginning and the end of the courses.

Parents' assessments of themselves and their children as learners

There were statistically significant gains in parents' confidence in all areas they were asked about. There were also statistically significant positive changes in the parents' perceptions of their children's literacy skills.

Parents' evaluations of FL courses

Parents had very positive views of their FL courses. The most frequently used word was 'enjoyed'.

Parents' views 3 months after the courses

Parents were continuing to benefit from their courses in a range of areas. Over half had progressed onto another course, although few parents were seeking employment.

Children's perceptions of their literacy practices

Nearly all the children said they enjoyed the FL course. A high percentage liked reading and writing.

Tutor and teacher findings

Pedagogic practices were more diverse in tutors' sessions. Early years teachers tended to base teaching around the government's *Letters and Sounds* programme. Practice in parents' sessions tended to be practical, interactive, collaborative and responsive to learners' needs.

Headteachers' views on FL

Headteachers were very aware of the benefits FL could bring to their school, particularly in improving parental links and involvement, which, in turn, helped to improve results and standards.

Managers' views on FL

Managers identified relationships and working with a range of partners as being the key ingredients of successful FL provision.

The next chapter looks at one LA which is presented as a case study.

5. A case study of one local authority

Five case studies were undertaken, one of a LA, four of FL programmes. They were chosen in order to exemplify good or interesting practice; illustrate and bring to life problems and challenges; and inform other providers working in similar contexts and with similar client groups. However, because of constraints of space, only one case study is reported here; the other four appear in Appendix W. However, the main conclusions and implications for practice from all five case studies have been integrated into Sections 6.2 to 6.5.

Rationale

The case study is based on one FL course but, although the main unit of analysis is this one course, there are also lessons to be learned from the way FL is organised within the LA as a whole. It is written in the first person and includes the researcher's personal views and value judgments. Researchers wanted to find out some of the reasons why some LAs found it difficult to run FL courses and others were able to run a lot. For example, this particular LA ran 20 standard FL courses in 2009, and another LA involved ran 14 short and six standard FL courses in 2008-09.

Course: Family Literacy: Standard course, running from January to July 2009 in a primary school.

Sources of data:

Focus group interview with parents: 04.11.08

Interview with manager: 04.11.08 (face-to-face); 20.03.09 (by telephone)

Questionnaire with manager: October 2008

Interview with adult tutor: 19.03.09

Interview with early years teacher: 19.03.09

Interview with headteacher: 19.03.09

Classroom visit: 19.03.09

Introduction

The research team were keen to see what lessons policy makers and FL managers and practitioners could learn from how the courses are set up and run. This case study differs from the other four in that the LA did not take a full part in the project, in the sense that no FL courses were fully evaluated. There is no record of changes in parents' or children's attitudes and habits towards literacy, or any record of parents' or children's progress in reading or writing.

The setting: Parkview Primary school

The school has been running FL courses for about eight years, and was also currently running a 3-hour family numeracy class (FN) in the morning. Due to falling rolls, the school is able to have dedicated spaces for the parents and children. There is also another building, next to the school, that holds adult classes in a number of subjects, including literacy, numeracy and ICT, aimed at learners working up to Level 3. This makes it easier for parents to continue their studies, without going to another,

potentially more unfamiliar and formal institution, which also might involve travelling some distance. The school also employs a dedicated 'parent support officer' who liaises with parents. As a parent of a child at the school herself, she understands many of the parents' issues and concerns.

The FL course

There is an issue around the course in terms of its length. It is categorized by the LA manager as a standard course, that is, according to the LSC Guidance (2008), it runs for 60 hours or over. In practice, this course ran for 20 weeks for 2 hours per session, which makes 40 hours in total. It is therefore, technically at least, a short course. As half of each session is a combined hour for parents and their children, this means that the parents are only receiving a maximum of 20 hours' contact time from the adult tutor. In fact, it is much less than this, once the two trips (one to the library), and the 'practice-test' and 'taking the test' sessions are taken into account. The morning courses can offer around an extra hour of adult learning time per session as they can run from 9.00–12.00.

The classroom

The space was a dedicated room, with 'upper junior' sized chairs that were not too small for adults to sit on. There was a series of tables, arranged in a large rectangle, that provided a 'good' working surface, which parents were able to write on, and have the space to make games and other activities. There was a portable whiteboard, which the tutor/teacher could move around and gain the best position to teach from. There were tea/coffee making facilities and a sink. Parents used the room to socialise and to eat their lunch in. There were two bookcases: one with about 50 children's books, the other with about 50 adult books. Parents were encouraged to sign out and take home books from both sets each week.

The parents

There were usually nine parents, but two were absent on the day of my visit. All seven present were white women – the average age was between 30 and 40. I was made to feel very welcome: they knew that I was coming and who I was. Almost all the parents had attended the FN class in the morning so it was quite an intensive learning experience. It was evident that they were a very tight-knit group, who really supported and cared for each other. Some of them told me how worried they had been when they first returned to learning in this class, but how quickly the tutor had put them at ease and made them feel relaxed. All of them said that they had grown in confidence since January. This is exemplified by one story of one parent who, when she joined the class (about eight weeks ago), said that she was dyslexic and very low on confidence, but who was now prepared to read text from the whiteboard to the whole class. All the learners were happy to take a national test. Most had already taken and passed Level 1 during the first few weeks of the course; at least two had taken a Level 2. Some (I have no exact numbers) told me that they already had a GCSE in English but I do not know the grades. The learners completed a diagnostic paper during the first few weeks of the course; however, they will take their Level 1 or 2 exam or complete their Entry Level assignment at the end of the course.

The children

All the children came from the foundation stage (aged around 5-years-old), although they were from more than one class. I did not see the children on the day of my visit as there was no joint session. This was unusual.

The two teachers

The adult tutor was a trained primary teacher; the Early Years teacher worked in the school as a SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) and also taught in the foundation year.

The headteacher

The headteacher had been in the school for about three years and had been appointed during a time when the school was in special measures. He was very supportive of FL programmes, and saw their main benefit as improving and maintaining positive school-parental relations. He had a warm and engaging personality and was not the sort of headteacher who would sit in his office all day; he made it his business to mix with the parents as much as possible. He recognizes that some children need small group work to make better progress, and FL classes provide this opportunity.

The Local Authority

FL has been well established in the LA for a number of years. The population is mainly white, working-class, and is relatively stable and homogeneous. The headteachers in the schools know each other and the all the positive aspects of FL programmes are spread by word of mouth.

The LA manager

The LA manager has worked for the LA for many years. As an ex-primary school teacher, she understands how schools work, and the pressures they are under from their various constituents. It also means that she can find relationships with headteachers easier to form. She also recognises that schools have a different agenda from the LSC's; that is, they are more concerned with being inclusive with parents, enhancing school-parent relationships and promoting parental involvement. She is highly intelligent, hardworking and has excellent communication skills. She says he likes to keep things simple and stick to a formula or model that appears to have been working for many years: therefore the LA does not run introductory courses such as 'Keeping Up with the Children' or 'parenting skills' but concentrates her energy on running standard courses. This year the LA is running 20 FL courses and 10 FN courses. These are set up in the autumn term and then run for 20 weeks from January to July. She only runs standard courses, as she believes these have the greatest chance of maximizing change and progression. Almost all the courses take place in schools. One of the manager's strengths is her ability to be flexible and to look at the larger picture. For instance, she recognizes that some small schools (with say 20 on roll in reception) will find it difficult to recruit the minimum number of nine parents per course, as stipulated in the guidance from the LSC, against larger schools, perhaps with a three-form entry with, say, 90 on roll. She therefore takes the

overall average numbers from courses across the LA to bring out the average to around nine parents per course. Although she will not allow courses to start if there are under six parents, she believes that if a small school has a particular need, the overall benefits are worth it. In effect, she is prepared to subsidize the smaller settings. She also recognizes that the partnership with schools is key, and is also prepared to maintain programmes in a school year when numbers of adults are low so that the school will stay on board for future years.

Although she recognizes that schools can find the physical accommodation difficult, she has a bottom line in that she will not sanction a course if the school is unable to provide dedicated teaching rooms for both parents and children.

Factors for success in the LA

- The manager is an ex-school teacher: she understands how schools work, and this also makes her more trusted by headteachers, and means relationships are, potentially, easier to form.
- The manager is hardworking and dedicated, flexible and proactive, and has excellent communication skills.
- The manager will maintain programmes in a school year when numbers of adults are low so that the school will stay on board for future years.
- The LA sticks to a well-tried and tested model, running only standard courses (as opposed to short courses) which have a greater chance of maximizing change and progression.
- Courses run from January to July, which means that the autumn term is given over to negotiating entry and planning.
- The LA has built up excellent relations with schools over a number of years. This has taken patience, persistence and flexibility.
- The LA uses school staff (teachers) in the delivery of adult and joint delivery (with adult tutors) of combined sessions. The LA gives the school money to buy in supply cover.
- The LA provides a one-day course for training FL tutors. There are also additional courses provided to look at new literacy strategies for teaching children. Supply cover is provided for tutors and Early Years teachers for one and a half days to plan and prepare for the course.
- The LA has an excellent partnership with a Community College, which enables it to have access to a bank of quality *Skills for Life* tutors for FLLN
- The LA runs a series of short courses such as 'share family cookery' and 'active dads', which give parents an informal and non-threatening entry route into learning.
- The LA promotes the full range of outcomes from FL (not just test results) at an LA level, and these are fed into LA annual performance assessments.
- The LA promotes the success and advertises FL activities and achievements through bulletins and annual learner celebration events.
- The LA records and formally evaluates courses so that it can learn lessons and improve provision further. This includes holding focus groups of parents.
- At a strategic level, the recognition of the need to support the whole family, has been made easier through the change from LEA to Directorate of Children and Family Services.

Factors working for success in the FL class at Park View Primary

- Dedicated and well resourced classrooms for parents and children (this was made possible due to falling rolls)
- A crèche
- A Parent support officer, working at the school, who, as a parent with children at the school, understands many of the issues and concerns that parents have
- A very supportive headteacher, who recognizes the benefits of FL
- A well-qualified and trained adult tutor, who is a good practitioner. She is warm and reassuring, has a strong sense of humour, and is able to create a non-threatening environment and put parents quickly at ease.
- An Early Years teacher who works as a SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) at the school. She therefore knows the children in the foundation and reception years, and also their parents. This makes recruitment easier and potential recruits to the FL class are frequently reminded about future FL classes
- The Early Years teacher's class is covered by money provided by the LA for supply cover. However, the school usually covers the class internally
- An adjacent building where parents can continue their studies at a higher level in a non-threatening and informal setting
- An LA manager who is very supportive of the FL programmes in the school.

The next Chapter presents and discusses the main conclusions from the research.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Introduction

The final chapter of the report discusses the main findings from the research in more detail. Before the project presents the main findings and conclusions, there is a brief discussion on some of the research's limitations and possibilities for generalisation. Section 6.2 presents and discusses the main research findings; 6.3 summarises some of the key themes and issues that have recurred throughout the research and presents a series of six questions for further discussion; 6.4 considers the factors that both enable and militate against successful FL provision; 6.5 offers key messages for policy and practice; 6.6 offers four suggestions for further research; and the final section, 6.7, offers some concluding thoughts.

6.1 Limitations and generalisations

The research used a mixed-methods design, and the authors argue that, while the sample sizes that used quantitative methods to assess parents' reading (N=379) and children's writing (N=301) contain large enough numbers to make conclusions sufficiently reliable and robust, the findings based on the numbers for parents' writing (N=121) and children's reading (N= 81) need to be regarded with more caution.

Qualitative research methods

In addition to the quantitative methods, qualitative approaches were also used. These were chosen because researchers wanted to uncover and explore themes and issues that were salient in the lives of parents, children, tutors, teachers, headteachers and managers. Researchers wanted to uncover these people's values, beliefs and experiences, and explore them from their own perspectives. Indeed the FL learners, FL teachers and FL managers are placed at the heart of the research, and some of the key themes and issues that have emerged are illustrated by these people's own words. The project also contends that research based upon insider insight and situated knowledge has the potential to produce bottom-up evidence (Appleby, 2004) that is not only useful for individuals' personal and professional development, but can inform both policy and practice.

Limitations

There are some limitations that the project would like to acknowledge. For example, those respondents who volunteered to be interviewed, whether parents, teachers, managers and so on, may have been more positive than the population as a whole, although that can be neither verified nor disproved. As far as the parents were concerned, it must be remembered that, first, these were the parents who stayed to the end of the course, and the research did not investigate the experiences of parents who dropped out of courses and the reasons that they were unable or unwilling to continue. Secondly, learner evaluations are notorious for generating

positive results, particularly when they are gathered from people whose previous negative experiences of education have led them to have low expectations.

Generalisations

The report is aware that some of the sample sizes in the qualitative research were also relatively small. Although researchers formally interviewed 101 parents¹⁹, and surveyed 62 tutors and 62 teachers, there were only 33 LA managers and nine headteachers. This means that there are obvious limits to the possibilities of generalisation and, although wider structures that affect FL provision are often reflected and highlighted in the micro worlds of the individuals, the research is unable to claim that the findings are representations or representative of a larger population. However, although this study can only detail a small part of the wider world, it can still be used to paint a picture of the wider society, and the report, therefore, argues that these experiences can become *moderatum* generalisations (Williams, 2000, p.211) that not only can form the basis of wider theories of understanding but also have a direct link to, and impact on, policy and practice.

6.2 Research findings

The first part of this section is mainly based on the project's quantitative research

Settings

- 85% of the children (N=345) attended FL in school settings, and 12% (N=56) attended nurseries. There were only three Children's Centres in the evaluation.

Type of courses

- 59% (N=44) of FL courses evaluated in the project were classified as short and 41% were standard.

Length of time of courses

- The average number of hours was 31 for short courses and 53 hours for standard courses.

Length of teaching contact time for parents

- When initial assessments, outside visits and the practising and taking of tests are taken into consideration, the amount of contact teaching time with parents was often considerably lower than is sometimes assumed. For example, on some 30 hour short courses, the amount of contact teacher time was less than 20 hours.

Recruitment, attendance and retention

- The average number of learners recruited was around nine parents and children on both short and standard courses. The average attendance for

¹⁹ An additional 159 parents also provided written responses (see section 4.10).

parents and children was around 79%, and the average retention rate was around 84%.

Number of parents achieving qualifications

- The average number of parents achieving a qualification was 56% on short courses and 71% on standard courses. 73% (N=54) of the parents who were interviewed said they had taken qualifications on the course. While the majority of these were national qualifications in literacy at Level 1 and Level 2 the project does not have detailed data on this.

Parents' demographic profile

- 94% of the parents involved were women (N=477), and only 6% (N=32) were men.
- 96% (N=384) were parents or carers to the children in the sample and 4% (N=16) were grandparents.
- Almost half the parents were in their 30s (47%, N=235).
- Three-quarters (N=374) were white British. The next largest ethnic group was Pakistani (7%, N=34).
- 78% of parents had English as their first language.
- Thirty-one languages other than English were reported as parents' first language.
- Very few parents reported having a learning or physical difficulty.
- 36% (N=153) of parents had stayed on in education beyond the age of 16.
- At least 23% (N=114) of the parents had a qualification in English or literacy at Level 2 or above. The actual percentage is likely to have been higher because the figure given does not include parents who reported their highest qualification as being a GCSE, which could be Level 1 or Level 2.

Children's demographic profile

- The gender balance for children was about equal, 51% (N=237) girls, 49% (N=231) boys.
- Almost exactly half of the children were aged between 4:6 and 5:5 at the outset.
- Almost three-quarters were white British (73%, N=337) and 12% (N=51) were Indian or Pakistani.
- About four-fifths of the children had English as their first language.

- Thirty-one languages other than English were reported as children's first language.
- Very few children were reported as having a learning or physical difficulty.

Note: It appears that the courses evaluated in this project were serving families of a rather higher socio-economic and educational profile than in the Demonstration Programmes of the mid 1990s.

Tutors' profile

- 96% (N=66) of the tutors were women.
- The average number of years teaching in FL was 4.9 years.
- Two-thirds (N=33) of the tutors were qualified to degree level or above, and most of the rest had 'legacy' qualifications, either generic (Teacher's Certificate) or basic skills-related (e.g. City and Guilds).

Teachers' profile

- All the early years teachers were women.
- The average number of years teaching in FL was 3.2 years, and around a quarter was teaching FL for the first time.
- Three-fifths (N=29) of the teachers were qualified to degree level or above, and most of the rest had either a Teacher's Certificate or a Level 3 qualification for working with young children.

Parents' reading

- Overall, the parents appeared to make only an insignificant amount of progress in reading. However, there seems to have been a ceiling effect: the average scores of those on standard courses (some of whom had higher previous qualifications) and of those with English as their first language were already high at the beginning of the courses, leaving little room for improvement. By contrast, parents on short courses and those with English as an additional language did make some progress on average, though this reached statistical significance only for those with English as an additional language. There were no differences in attainment between age groups. Intriguingly, parents who attended with a son made more progress than those who attended with a daughter.

Parents' writing

- On average, the parents made a small but statistically significant gain in writing. No subgroup analyses were attempted.

Children's writing

- 301 children took a writing assessment at both Time 1 and Time 2 and made considerable progress during these courses. The improvement in average stage for these children was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). The average improvement of about three quarters of a stage (out of a possible seven

stages) compares well with that observed in previous evaluations. In the researchers' judgment this represents more progress than would have been expected in the absence of the courses.

- All the differences in average score between the beginning and the end of the courses were highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), except for children in nursery settings ($p > 0.05$). From the other results it seems that the course had worked well for children in school settings, and equally well for boys and girls, and for children with English as the first or an additional language.
- The amount of progress on standard courses was not significantly different from that on short courses.

Children's reading

- 81 children took the Literacy Baseline test both at the beginning and at the end of their courses. Their progress was estimated using raw scores, standardised scores and reading ages. On all three measures, children appear to have made substantial progress in reading during the courses. However, it was not possible to state any findings on whether subgroups (e.g. boys and girls) made similar or different amounts of progress.

Changes in parents' assessments of their children's home literacy activities

- There were statistically significant changes in almost all of the parents' assessments of their child's home literacy activities. The greatest positive change occurred in relation to their children's writing activities, using the computer, looking at newspapers and reading various forms of texts together. Parents aged 40-49 noted more positive change than those in other age groups, and parents whose first language was not English noted more positive change than those whose first language was English.
- Parents attending standard courses showed a greater amount of individual change in their perceptions on average, compared to parents on short courses.

Change in parents' views of themselves and their children as learners

- There were statistically significant gains in parents' confidence in all areas that the parents were asked about. These gains were approximately the same across all areas.
- There were also statistically significant positive changes in the parents' perceptions of their children's literacy skills.
- Parents attending standard courses showed greater individual change in their perceptions on average than parents on short courses.

Parents' evaluations of their courses

- The majority of responses to the programme were positive, and the most frequently used word was 'enjoyed'.

- A large number of parents stressed the benefits of being able to teach their children at home now – because their self-confidence was raised and/or they were now familiar with how their children were being taught, in comparison with their own schooling.
- Much emphasis was placed on the friendships formed and communities strengthened by interacting with other parents, especially those from their children's schools.
- Time spent with their children was also very important to the parents. Many parents appreciated the additional one-to-one time the course provided in the classroom, and were pleased to be able to actively translate this to their homes.

Tutors' and teachers' pedagogical approaches

- There was a more diverse set of pedagogical approaches in adult classes than in the Early Years classes.
- Methods in parents' sessions tend to be practical, hands-on, interactive, collaborative and responsive to learners' needs.
- Researchers observed teaching that was highly imaginative and innovative, including use of drama and ICT.
- Early Years teachers based most of their teaching on the government's *Letters and Sounds* approach, which focuses on synthetic phonics.

The remainder of the findings are based more on the qualitative research and are presented under the headings of LAs, courses and managers; the school (or other setting), tutors and teachers; parents and children.

LAs, courses and managers

- LAs had generally benefited from new structures such as having a Directorate of Children and Family Services which recognises the need to support families.
- FL provision appeared to work best when it was embedded as part of a wider family and adult learning programme to encourage engagement via short FL courses and enable progression.
- Relationships and partnership working were the two most frequently mentioned ingredients in the delivery of effective FL services.
- The drive to build capacity to deliver programmes had put an added pressure on staff managing provision.
- Only a small number of FL managers appeared to have up-to-date information on the scale of need, especially among adults.

- Few LAs appeared to collect systematic data on the progress of FL children against other groups of similar children in the school.
- Some school teachers were reluctant to provide LAs with baseline data on children.
- Some managers expressed concern about the social and financial pressures on parents (particularly mothers) around issues of employability, and the potential deleterious effects this could have on their children.
- Almost all managers supported parents taking accredited qualifications. Most felt that this had been a major factor in raising the profile of FL. There was a minority view that national tests could put parents off joining FL courses.
- Many managers cited a need for increased funding in order to run successful FL programmes. Many were concerned that FL budgets appeared to be standing still.

The school (or other FL setting) and the tutors/teachers

- Relationships between LAs and schools were key. Schools played an important part in providing resources, recruiting parents and contributing to the design of FL programmes.
- A key success factor in school partnerships was the commitment from the headteacher, who is crucial as an advocate and supporter of FL.
- The headteachers interviewed in the project recognised that FL has a powerful effect on improving parental links and school involvement, which is linked to improved results and standards.
- Schools were not always able to provide dedicated rooms and so teachers and learners had to adapt to different spaces on different occasions. The shortage of space/appropriate accommodation was a serious concern for all respondents, and had a powerful effect on successful and effective FL provision. In general, it was harder to find space for dedicated teaching rooms and crèches in successful schools where pupil rolls were more likely to be rising.
- Smaller schools generally found it more difficult to achieve a homogenous age range of children in the Early Years classes.
- Smaller schools generally found it harder than larger schools to recruit parents to FL courses.
- Using Early Years teachers in delivery of adult and joint sessions may contribute to success as schools have ownership of the FL course, and courses link directly to the school curriculum.
- FL courses were more likely to be more successful and effective where dedicated and paid planning time between tutors and teachers was built into the course.

- Parent support (or liaison) officers appeared to be very effective in recruiting parents and understanding their local concerns and issues.

Parents and children

- The prime motivation for participating in FL for all parents was to support their children's learning skills, rather than develop their own. They wanted to find out what and how their child was learning at school in order to know how to support them at home.
- The vast majority of parents were positive about their experience of FL. A total of 97% (N=94) of parents reported in interviews gaining some kind of benefit from the FL course, and 96% (N=89) thought that they had continued to benefit from attending the course three months on.
- Although recruitment practices may run counter to policy, interviews with parents and classroom observations indicated that better educated parents helped and encouraged their less well educated peers.
- Attending the first session of a family literacy course was a challenge, but those who addressed this successfully had positive learning experiences, gained skills and enhanced their social networks.
- The great majority of parents prioritised their parental role, at least in the short term. They sought and gained parenting skills, and were concerned with spending quality time with their children and supporting their children's learning, rather than developing their own literacy skills.
- Fellow group members played an important role (alongside tutors/teachers) in helping other parents to enjoy learning and to progress.
- Modelling practice to other parents did not just come from tutors/teachers, but also from other parents who showed ways of interacting with their children.
- Parents particularly enjoyed the joint sessions and the opportunity to work with their child on a one-to-one basis.
- Parents changed their interactions with their children, which to some extent had a positive impact on the wider family and contributed to positive family relationships and confidence in the family environment.
- Parents had a positive view of taking a national accredited qualification
- Parents reported gaining literacy skills – and in some cases qualifications – which are likely to support later attempts to seek employment.
- The majority of parents wanted to progress to further study and/or training while their child was in Key Stage 1 and would seek employment later.

- Many parents had completed further courses and/or intended to continue learning after completing FL, suggesting that FL had helped them to develop an interest in learning and refreshed their skills about how to learn. 55% (N=53) of interviewees said that they had been on another course since family literacy, and it was noticeable that many parents mentioned that this was with the same tutor in the same setting. A total of 84% (N=81) of parents said that they were thinking of taking another course.
- Parents reported developments in their personal attributes, particularly in terms of confidence and self-esteem, and to a lesser extent in their social skills through increased interactions with others and involvement in school and the community. They also reported educational progression subsequent to completing a FL course. As economic progression was not an immediate goal for most interviewees, it is unsurprising that this was less evident. However, the development of personal and social skills is a prerequisite of educational and economic progression.
- 64% (N=61) of parents in interview said that since taking a FL course they had become more involved in their child's pre-school or school.
- In total, 76% (N=71) of parents said that they had changed as a person since taking the FL course. This generally meant that they felt more confident but this also meant that they became more capable across a range of areas.
- Not having to incur any cost was important for parents and is especially likely to be so for those in the target group.
- Children appeared to benefit from seeing their own parents learning and saw them as role models.
- Children appeared to benefit from small group work with teachers and having quality one-to-one time with their parents.
- 99% (N=272) of children said they enjoyed the FL course. They particularly liked working with their parent making and playing activities and games.
- 91% (N=249) said they liked reading, and most were able to cite a favourite book. The response rate was very similar for boys and girls.
- 88% (N=242) of children read with their families. They mainly read with their mother at bedtime.
- 82% (N=220) of children reported that they liked writing.

6.3 Themes and issues arising from the research, and questions to raise further discussion

6.3.1 Themes and issues

During the research a number of themes and issues began to emerge, and these can be seen appearing throughout the report at various points. The themes and issues are grouped under the four headings of courses, schools, tutors and teachers, and parents.

Courses

The need to recruit nine learners can have implications for recruitment. This issue is discussed more fully below in section 6.3.2.

Accreditation built into FL courses has been generally regarded as a positive policy by the vast majority of FL's constituents. This issue is discussed further below.

The need to engage fathers still represents a major challenge across all FL programmes. Only 6% of the parents in this project were fathers. While some LA managers suggested running 'fathers-only' courses, others felt that this is a form of segregation and does not seem appropriate to the ethos of FL. It seems that daytime courses, which are necessary to match school hours, are likely to be a considerable barrier for fathers, given that many are still the main breadwinner in families.

Learners working at Entry Level are underrepresented. Only around one fifth of the learners on courses either had no qualifications or a literacy qualification at Entry Level, and it can be argued that these are the very parents that FL should be targeting²⁰.

Schools

Smaller schools, with smaller rolls, can find it harder than larger schools to recruit nine parents for each course. For example, it seems a little unfair to compare two schools, one, say, with a one-form entry and the other with a three-form entry, and expect them to recruit the same number of parents. We have seen that some LA managers take an average number of nine throughout the LA, but not all managers adopt this practice.

Some schools can find it difficult to find space/dedicated accommodation, which can have a deleterious effect on FL provision. This can sometimes be particularly acute for the more 'successful' schools, which are more likely to have rising pupil rolls.

²⁰ Once again, it is important to bear in mind that 48% of the sample were either not sure or provided no response.

Some schools can be reluctant to release children, particularly where FL provision clashes with literacy and/or numeracy hours. The report has no figures on this but many LA managers, tutors and teachers mentioned this problem. One way around this is to schedule more FL courses in the afternoon (most literacy hours take place in the mornings), although this will often reduce the potential time from three to two hours.

Tutors and teachers

There is generally a more coherent pedagogical approach in the Early Years classes than in the classes led by the adult tutors. This is perhaps more of an observation than a theme or issue and is returned to below.

The level of information sharing, including planning, can present problems, and this is likely to be more of an issue in some rural areas. Planning between tutors and teachers is key to successful practice, but only some of the practitioners reported that this time was built into the overall programme and funded for.

Parents

There were a significant numbers of parents who had qualifications at Level 2 and above in FL classes in this project.

Only around a fifth of the parents in the project had no qualifications or qualifications at Entry Level.

Some parents repeat courses, particularly when they have another child involved for the second time round. Again, this issue is discussed below

The vast majority of parents want to concentrate on parenthood, rather than seeking employability, until their children are secure in full-time schooling, and often of junior age (seven years and over). Although parents are keen to undertake more studying or training, this can generally be managed around school times.

Parents in low-paid jobs cannot always afford childcare costs when these occur. This is another factor for parents to take into account when considering seeking employment: parents need to assess whether their wages will sufficiently cover the outgoings, including childcare.

Some husbands/partners do not want their wives to work. This issue is generally more apparent in inner-city areas, and may also be connected to particular religious attitudes and beliefs. There may also be some husbands/partners who discourage their wives from attending courses.

6.3.2 Questions to raise further discussion

The authors wish to raise a series of questions, some of which result from the issues and themes outlined above. They are not recommendations, and it is not the intention of the report to provide answers; the intention is to raise a series of

questions in order to open up debate and stimulate further discussion, with the possibility that policy makers will provide further guidance and clarification.

1. What is the core purpose of family literacy?

Perhaps one of the most important questions that needs to be asked is, what is the core purpose of family literacy? For many working in FL, the answer appears to be relatively straightforward: it is to give parents access to the school curriculum and ways of teaching so that they are better able to support their children at home. We have already seen the long list of benefits for parents and children, and for the setting (usually schools) in which provision occurs.

The LSC guidance (2009) also states that courses also need

to provide opportunities for adults to achieve entry level qualifications and/or national tests as appropriate.

This sentence raises a further question:

2. Should short courses encourage learners to take qualifications?

The report found that the average teacher contact time for parents on short courses is 31 hours and this figure is likely to be considerably lower when outside visits, initial assessments, tea/coffee breaks are built in, as well as when time is set aside for practising for, and then taking, national tests (see section 4.14.4 for an example of how learning time can be reduced). The authors are certainly not gainsaying the impact of learners gaining a qualification; one of the purposes of FL is to provide learners with access to gaining qualifications and the project team wholly support this move. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the test (or qualification) is really a means of accrediting prior learning. The authors wonder if national tests are diluting the core purpose of FL provision, particularly on short courses, and perhaps learners should only be encouraged to take accredited tests on standard courses where there is more time to demonstrate progress, and where time taken up with testing has less of an impact. Perhaps another way to think of this is to consider the whole structure of FL provision with its division between short and standard courses. Perhaps courses should have greater flexibility, and better ways to organise courses are those which are simply shorter (without opportunities for accreditation) or longer (with opportunities for accreditation).

There are other subsidiary questions such as

3. What fraction of the adult sessions should be about parents' supporting their children's learning, and how much for parents' own learning?

4. Should all the areas of adult literacy that courses cover be linked to what the children are learning in school?

These questions concern the parents themselves. One of the findings is that over a fifth of the parents in the project held a qualification in literacy at Level 2 or above, and, therefore, technically, should not have been allowed to enrol. The team has

seen that LA managers, tutors and headteachers have differing views on this, and that, while some are more relaxed, others adhere to the rules more strictly. The fact that there were so many of these parents in this project suggests that the former view holds greater sway. This comes back to question one, and again raises the question of what the main purpose of FL is. If it is to help parents learn how their children are taught in schools, so that they can support them better at home, a number of managers and practitioners feel that, although FL courses should prioritise parents who have qualifications at and below Level 1, parents who have qualifications at Level 2 or above should not automatically be turned away from courses, particularly where courses are struggling to make up numbers. Some LA managers use other sources of funding to cover the costs.

They do turn up, and headteachers do insist they have to stay, if they've turned up, but then what we do is we try and work out our register in a way that we account for those below Level 2, but we also get some local authority funding, so we try and meet their needs through that, ...Because you will be surprised how the Level two parents say – no, I want it.

It also raises the question of what having a Level 2 qualification means and whether these qualifications have some kind of time limit before they begin to lapse. For instance, should an 'O' Level taken in the 1970s be comparable with a GCSE taken, say, five years ago? While some managers said that the parents with higher qualifications can have a detrimental effect on the ethos of the FL class, others pointed out that they have a very positive benefit, in that they help support some parents, and 'everyone gets along just fine'.

A further question concerning parents is:

5. *Should parents be allowed to repeat an FL course with different offspring?*

Although the project has no figures on this, researchers found a number of parents who were repeating courses with a second, or even third, child. Again, perhaps if the course is not full, the benefits to both the parent and child of working together one-to-one outweigh other considerations. These parents may also have gained a qualification the first time and now have the chance to show progression by taking a qualification at a higher level.

Finally, the authors raise the question:

6. *Is there a need for a more coherent, nationally based, training programme in pedagogy for tutors?*

Adult tutors are not intensively trained in the same way as the Early Years school teachers, and the authors pose the question of whether they would benefit from having a more homogeneous method of (or approach to) teaching, including, for example, a more detailed knowledge of both the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum and the national literacy curriculum. In many ways, the diversity of practice in the adult classes is something to celebrate and can be seen as a plus. However, as one tutor put it:

Diversity is a plus, but ... training people in the same way to the same standards thoroughly doesn't take away from diversity.

6.4 Enabling and constraining factors in family literacy provision

6.4.1 Enabling factors

LAs

- LAs which have managers with have a strong educational background, and who are able to understand school structures and how schools work
- LAs which have a flexible approach to FL, including willingness to maintain programmes when adult enrolments are low to keep schools engaged
- LAs which have strong relationships with schools, and staff who are patient, persistent and flexible in building relationships with schools
- LAs which are able to provide funding for dedicated tutor and teacher time, including funds for schools to buy supply cover so that school staff can be involved in FL recruitment, planning and delivering FL and attending training courses
- LAs which are able to develop partnerships with colleges, which enable access to good quality *Skills for Life* tutors for FLLN
- LAs which provide funds for free crèches during FL sessions
- LAs which can evaluate courses and promote all outcomes and include them in LA annual performance assessments
- LAs which promote success and advertising FL activities and achievements through a variety of channels.

Courses

- Courses that are embedded as part of a wider family and adult learning programme to encourage engagement via short FL courses and enable progression
- Provision that includes a mixture of short courses for parents who are daunted by the commitment required to attend standard courses, and standard courses which have a greater chance of maximising change and progression
- Courses that have clear progression routes, e.g. into further learning, voluntary work and roles in school

- Courses that have high quality resources and materials (e.g. laminating machines and access to ICT)
- Courses that use local, convenient and familiar venues, appropriately resourced and furnished for FL sessions, and adjacent premises where learners can continue their studies.

School settings

- Schools where there is a committed headteacher who supports FL and recognise its benefits and the role of parents in children's learning
- Schools that employ a parent support officer or pastoral coordinator, who builds trusting relationships with parents and engages them in learning
- Schools that have an established timetable to include FL
- Schools that have a specially designated space for FL in the main school building.

Teachers and tutors

- Well qualified tutors and teaching staff (e.g. tutors who have been awarded a Grade 2 by the inspectorate).
- Tutors and teachers who are committed and passionate about FL, can form positive relationships with learners, and have a good working partnership with one another
- Double staffing so that tutors and teachers can work together in the joint session
- Training and CPD for FL tutors, including courses on literacy strategies for teaching children and support and further training for SfL teachers new to FL
- Built in dedicated and paid time for planning between tutors and teachers
- Tutors (and managers) who understand local cultural norms and attitudes.

Parents and children

- Parents who are committed and attend regularly
- Parents who form good relationships and support each other
- Parents who use the class activities with their children each week to support their learning.

6.4.2 Constraining factors or barriers to running successful FL courses

Although many of these are the corollary of the enabling factors, some are different. While they do not make provision impossible, some of them make it more difficult.

Courses

- Difficulties with recruitment, including the rigid requirement to recruit nine parents
- The requirement to take tests at Level 1 and 2 precludes less qualified and least confident parents
- Insufficient follow-up or signposting of routes to encourage progression.

School setting

- Lack of space /poor accommodation
- Poor quality resources and limited access to ICT
- Schools' reluctance to release children for standard courses, or release children during literacy or numeracy hours.

Teachers and tutors

- Lack of planning time
- Lack of opportunities for CPD.

Parents and children

- A wide range of abilities of parents and children
- Children's class composed of children from a number of different classes
- Inconsistent attendance
- A high drop-out rate, largely due to personal/family commitments and issues and illness
- ESOL learners who can need extra support.

6.5 Key messages for policy and practice

Most of the implications from the project are directed towards policy-makers at national (Government) and local (LAs) level. There are also specific recommendations for schools.

LAs

- Appoint LA managers who have a strong educational background and who understand school structures and systems.
- Build up and maintain key partnerships with schools.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with colleges, which enables access to good quality *Skills for Life* tutors.
- Use local venues that are run during school hours, and include childcare provision.
- Use a convenient and familiar venue and accommodation for continued learning that is as near as possible to the original FL setting.
- Use wider family learning (small ‘taster’ courses) as a first step to engaging schools in Family literacy provision.
- Employ enthusiastic, committed, high-quality teaching staff who have received a Grade 2 or above from inspectorate.
- Where possible, try to use Early Years teachers from within the school.
- Build in dedicated paid time for planning between tutors and Early Years teachers.
- Encourage tutors to set up learner peer support groups which continue working together once the course has finished.
- Recognise the importance of the need to understand learners’ backgrounds and their specific cultural needs.
- Build outside visits (e.g. to the local library) into the course.
- Capture data showing the contribution of FL to achieving the goals set out in: *Skills of Life* agenda, *Reaching Out: Think Family, Every Parent Matters* and *Every Child Matters*.
- Ensure that coherent pathways are available, and provide information, advice and guidance about local learning opportunities and funding support.
- Have the flexibility to extend short courses into standard courses if the parents are keen for this to happen.

Schools

- Use past and present parents on FL courses to act as ‘learning champions’ to attach other parents.

- Make sure that advertisements, flyers and letters are translated into first languages if needed.
- Hold ‘celebration assemblies’ where children can see their parents gain certificates for accredited tests.
- Make sure that headteachers are active and visible in setting up and maintaining the FL programme.
- Employ pastoral coordinator/parent support workers to build relationships with parents and engage them in learning.

Central Government

Provide additional funding to:

- help improve accommodation; enable double staffing in FL sessions; meet childcare costs; run small groups; and engage hard to reach learners
- capture impact data such as more robust and systematic ways of collecting data on children so that LAs and schools can measure the impact of provision over time
- provide more national training for adult tutors in pedagogy, to achieve a greater consistency of approach.

In addition:

- Ensure that new buildings, such as Children’s Centres (or refurbishments), have larger, purpose-built, rooms, which can accommodate at least 10 adults.
- Give more guidance on accommodation, including what LAs should accept as being the bottom line.

6.6 Opportunities for further research

There seem to be at least four possibilities for further research:

- A systematic measurement of children’s progress in FL classes
- Further research into children’s reading using a wider age range of children
- A longitudinal study to assess the impact of FL provision over two years at 6-monthly intervals (6 months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months)
- Research into helping parents support their children’s literacy at home.

1. A systematic measurement of children’s progress in FL classes

This project has been called for by some of the LA managers and headteachers, and would benefit managers, schools and policy makers in general, by providing them

with important data. As we have seen in Section 2.3, Brooks *et al.* (2008) state that there is, as yet, no definitive answer on whether children in these programmes make better progress than they would if they were to remain in their classes, receiving no FL input.

The research question would be: what progress in reading and writing do children who attend family literacy classes make, and how does it compare with the progress made by other children matched with similar characteristics within the same schools?

The project could use both quantitative methods, in the form of assessments of children's skills, and qualitative methods, in the form of classroom observations, questionnaires (with teachers), and semi-structured interviews with children and parents.

It is suggested that children's reading and writing would be assessed at two time points (Time 1 and Time 2) by the Early Years teachers of each class.

The project could use a matched groups, quasi-experimental design. Children in the FL programme/course would be matched with the same number of children who are as similar as possible to those in the FL group. This would be done at an individual level, using the variables of age, gender, ethnicity, postcode and, where possible, ongoing teacher assessments of children's literacy through the Reception year. The whole class or year-group of children containing both the FL group and the comparison group would need to take the assessment tests in reading and writing at the beginning and end of the fieldwork. The design means that in, say, a school that has a three-form entry, all three classes would need to be assessed.

[Note added in October 2013: an NRDC project along these lines, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, began earlier this year.]

2 Further research into children's reading with a wider age range

Children were only assessed in their reading on standard courses. Moreover, because they needed to be between 5:0 and around 5:10 at the beginning of the course to make it possible to derive standardised scores for them, only a few children were eligible to take the literacy baseline reading test, and only 36 were attributed a standardised score at both time points. The suggestion is to use other reading tests with a wider age group. This should produce a larger sample, and conclusions about children's progress in reading would be more reliable and robust.

3 A longitudinal study following up parents' views of their FL courses, over two years

The timeframe of the study precluded an investigation of longer-term outcomes and progression, which is needed to adequately assess impact, especially on social mobility. Many LA managers and tutors told researchers that three months after the course is too soon to assess the effects of the FL provision. It is suggested that parents are tracked over two years at 6-monthly intervals (6 months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months), to assess their progression to other forms of study, training and employment. (The only FL project in Britain which has so far achieved follow-up

at intervals of this sort is the original evaluation of the Basic Skills Agency's Demonstration Programmes: Brooks *et al.*, 1996, 1997. However, a long-term follow-up of a small sample of the original participants in the Birth to School Study of PEEP in Oxford is under way.) The research would also explore whether there had been any family cultural shifts towards learning, and generic outcomes such as sustained improvement in confidence and involvement in children's learning leading to community involvement and a culture of aspiration. This project would also use purposive sampling to contain a proportionate number of parents who have children of junior school age (i.e. over 7-years-old), and who are more established at school, to see if more of this group is seeking, or has found, employment.

4. Research into helping parents support their children's literacy at home

The project has found that the parents' main motivation for joining FL courses is to learn how to support their children's literacy at home. Building on this finding, the authors recommend that a research project is set up which attempts to identify the ways that children learn literacy at home, and the best ways parents can support their children's language and literacy at home. Furthermore, these insights can inform and help develop a FL curriculum that can then be built into future FL provision.

6.7 The final word

This project evaluated the impact of family literacy in England in 2007-09 and found considerable benefits for parents, children and schools. The hook to enrol for many parents was their children but, once they had overcome their initial anxieties, many began to enjoy learning and wanted to improve their own skills. Parents learnt about how their children were taught and became better able to support their child's learning at home. Parents became more closely involved with the school and relations with staff improved. Parents and children enjoyed their experience of learning together, and the research provided evidence that many of the gains lasted well beyond the date the courses finished. Family Literacy has the wide support of government, and the LA managers, tutors, teachers involved in the project were all highly motivated and committed to the cause. Indeed, one of the reasons behind successful provision was the individuals involved. Although structures can be put in place it often comes down to personalities who have to be able to convince people to take FL on board and be empathetic to their needs. As one LA manager told us a lot of it comes down to passion:

I think you, yourself, deep down, if you have got a passion for it you'll make it happen, and that passion needs to be passed on to other members of your team.

In many ways family literacy is a win-win situation. And yet ... and yet things could always be better. Funding is not always sufficient. The expansion of the menu of family programmes over recent years has not been matched by an equivalent increase in overall funding. This necessarily means that funding for each type of programme, including family literacy, is spread thinner. The allocation per course has

increased only very slightly over recent years, and in some locations does not cover the true cost of the course. Moreover, accommodation is still often poor.

The project showed the particular effectiveness of family literacy where it was embedded in a school's core offer of family and adult learning to parents. In some cases this was accompanied by a specially designated family room which allowed for good quality resources, including ICT and permanent displays of families' work. The present funding arrangements work against permanent rolling programmes of family literacy in schools as providers strive to cover high demand on limited budgets. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, these problems may be particularly acute in smaller schools.

At its inception in the mid 1990s, family literacy was seen as a soft tool to engage parents with no formal qualifications into learning while supporting their children. Over the years, its emphasis has shifted, and it is now seen as an important factor in delivering targets for Skills for Life, i.e. national qualifications at Entry level 3, Level 1 and Level 2. It is important to ensure that, as well as continuing to do this, family literacy is also able to attract learners at Entry levels 1 and 2 and continues to offer learning in relaxed and innovative ways to an often totally turned-off group of non-learners but out of which comes huge enjoyment, great camaraderie, some literacy improvement and often the confidence and interest to carry on learning.

Glossary

ACL

Adult and Community Learning

BIS

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

CPD

Continuing Professional Development

DCSF

Department for Children, School and Families

DfES

Department for Education and Skills

DIUS

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages

EYT

Early Years Teacher

FL

Family Literacy

Family Programmes

Family programmes aim to encourage family members to learn together. They are learning as or within a family. They should include opportunities for intergenerational learning and, wherever possible, lead both adults and children to pursue further learning; 'Family' is deliberately not defined, in order to enable adults and children with a range of relationships to participate together.

FLLN

Family literacy, language and numeracy programmes aim to: improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents; improve parents' ability to help their children learn; and improve children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy.

FLLN providers

FLLN providers are organisations who are responsible for the delivery of family literacy, language and numeracy and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses to parents/carers and families.

IAG

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) officer

ILP

Individual Learning Plan

IoE

Institute of Education, University of London

Key Stage or KS

Key stage 1 covers pupils aged 5 to 7. Key stage 2 covers pupils aged 7 to 11. Key stage 3 covers pupils aged 11 to 14. Key stage 4 covers pupils aged 14 to 16.

LA

Local Authority

LEA

Local Education Authority

LSC

Learning and Skills Council. The LSC is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over-16 year olds in England. Its mission is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training. The website (www.lsc.gov.uk) contains a section of downloadable documents, useful links and data on education and training programmes.

LSIS

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service

National Tests

The National Tests are part of the Skills for Life strategy and were launched in 2001. The Tests are available at Levels 1 and 2, and result in a nationally recognised qualification, accredited through a variety of awarding bodies.

NFER

National Foundation for Educational Research

NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

NRDC

National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Ofsted

Office for Standards in Education

Parents

The word 'parents' is used to refer to mothers, fathers, grandparents, guardians and other primary carers.

SATs

Standard Assessment Tasks

SEN

Special Educational Needs

SENCo

A person who has responsibility for coordinating SEN provision within a school

Skills for Life

Skills for Life covers all post-16 learners who are participating in literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) programmes, including those for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from pre-entry level up to and including level 2.

Teachers

By 'teachers' we mean early years practitioners, pre -16 teachers and post -16 teachers. Many, but not all, already teach in the school where provision is set

Tutors

By 'tutors' we mean tutors who teach the adult only classes and joint sessions, and whom are generally employed by local adult community colleges, outreach centres and local authorities

WFL

Wider family learning programmes are those specifically designed to enable adults and children to learn together or those programmes that enable parents/carers to learn how to support their children's learning. They aim to: develop the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants; and help parents/carers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Family Literacy's contribution to policy networks and government priorities

FL contributes to local policy frameworks (most notably the LA Community Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan and the Education Service Strategic Plan) and government priorities by:

- Offering opportunities for parents and children who need it most to improve their literacy skills (Skills for Life, Early Years Foundation Stage/Primary Framework for teaching Literacy, Every Child Matters)
- Involving hard to reach parents more actively in their children's learning and schools (Improving Parental Engagement)
- Encouraging learning in the home (Improving Parental Engagement)
- Tailoring learning and provision to meet the needs of families (Think Family)
- Providing adults with chances to achieve and progress (World Class Skills)
- Giving parents a chance to change their lives (Skills for Life: Changing Lives)
- Linking skills training and employment opportunities (Employability, Social Mobility)
- Promoting partnership work between local providers, schools, community and voluntary organisations.

Appendix B: Data on the Demonstration programmes

Brooks et al (1996, 1997) concluded that children who were involved in four FL demonstration programmes in the mid-1990s made statistically significant advances in achievement in reading and writing, which were sustained nine months later. Sixty-seven percent of the children's groups in the early literacy programmes entered with levels of achievement that would have them 'struggling' at school, and this fell to 35% by the end of the programme (Brooks et al, 1998). In a follow-up study two years later, all these gains were still being sustained. Furthermore, teachers rated 'Family Literacy children' superior to their peers in classroom behaviour and support received from their families, and the FL children were also rated equal to their peers in other academic and motivational respects (Brooks et al., 1997). Initial evaluations of literacy schemes for ethnic minority families also gave positive indications (Brooks et al., 1999).

Further information

The four Demonstration programme (1994-1996) returned 361 parent profiles and 392 child profiles (198 girls, 194 boys.) All but 30 parents and 30 children were of white euro ethnicity, and all but 14 of the parents were mothers

Re number of children tested: 375 children were tested in reading at Time 1 and 316 at Time; 221 children were re-tested after three months and 125 after nine

Re number of parents tested: 366 parents were tested in reading at Time 1 and 309 at Time 2; 188 parents were re-tested after three months and 88 after nine months.

For the follow up research in 1997, 154 parents and 237 children were re-contacted.

Appendix C: Findings and recommendations from Ofsted report on family learning (2009)

Ofsted's small scale survey²¹ of family learning provision in 2008/09 found family learning programmes made a considerable impact on participating children and parents. Children were reported by teachers to have improved communication, confidence and interpersonal skills. All the parents interviewed during the survey were very positive about how their own skills had improved since attending family learning. They also commented on how they were better able to manage their children's behaviour, communicate with them and support their learning at home effectively.

However, despite these positive outcomes, based on the findings from the survey, the Ofsted report (July 2009) made a number of recommendations for further improving the quality and accessibility of family learning, in particular

- the need for the BIS and the LSC to recognise the actual costs of provision and continuous support for families most in need of support
- the need for the DCSF to promote the benefits of family learning to headteachers as a core school activity
- the need for effective systems to monitor progress and outcomes for parents and children
- the need for effective strategies and provision to target, recruit and retain more men with family learning
- the need to develop family learning provision beyond Key Stage 2 to support the important transition stages in children's learning and development.

²¹ Ofsted (2009) *Family Learning: An evaluation of the benefits of family learning for participants, their families and the wider community*. Between September 2008 and March 2009, Ofsted inspectors visited 23 local authority adult and community learning providers and observed 36 family learning classes (LSC funded WFL, FLLN and FLIF). The survey explored a range of delivery models, highlighted examples of good practice and made recommendations for improvement. Family learning providers in the sample were selected on the basis of previous good inspection grades in family learning or other identified examples of good practice.

Appendix D: The research design including further limitations of the research

The original idea was to collect data in three discrete waves, with each wave representing a school term. Wave 1 was to be the beginning of the summer term (May – July), 2008; Wave 2, the autumn term (September – December), 2008; and Wave 3, spring term, 2009 (January – March). However, many LAs had difficulties setting up courses at the beginning of each school term, and the idea of having three contained periods of data collection collapsed. For example, in the autumn term, a number of short courses did not begin till November, and so ran over Christmas, and did not finish till February. Similarly, 17 short courses were not set up till around late February and so it was decided to extend the fieldwork beyond the original cut off point of 31 March to the end of May.

The research used a mixed methods design, and we would argue that, while the sample sizes that used quantitative methods to assess parents' reading (N=379) and children's writing (N=301) contain large enough numbers to make conclusions sufficiently reliable and robust, the findings based on the numbers for parents' writing (N=121) and children's reading (N= 81) need to be regarded with more caution.

Qualitative research methods

In addition to the quantitative methods, qualitative approaches were also used. These were chosen because researchers wanted to uncover and explore themes and issues that were salient in the lives of parents, children, tutors, teachers, headteachers and managers. Researchers wanted to uncover these people's values, beliefs and experiences, and explore them from their own perspectives. Indeed the FL learners, FL teachers and FL managers were placed at the heart of the research, and some of the key themes and issues that have emerged are illustrated by these people's own words. We would also contend that research based upon insider insight and situated knowledge has the potential to produce bottom-up evidence (Appleby, 2004) that is not only useful for individuals' personal and professional development, but can inform both policy and practice.

Limitations

There are some limitations that we would like to acknowledge. For example, those respondents who volunteered to be interviewed, whether they are parents, teachers, managers and so on, may have been more positive than the population as a whole, although that can be neither verified nor contradicted. As far as the parents were concerned, it must be remembered that, first, these were the parents who stayed to the end of the course, and the research did not investigate the experiences of parents who dropped out of courses and the reasons they were unable or unwilling to continue. Secondly, learner evaluations are notorious for generating positive results, particularly when they are gathered from people whose previous negative experiences of education have led them to have low expectations.

Generalisations

The report is aware that some of the sample sizes in the qualitative research were also relatively small. Although researchers formally interviewed 101 parents²², and surveyed 62 tutors and 62 teachers, there were only 33 LA managers and nine headteachers. This means that there are obvious limits to the possibilities of generalisation and, although wider structures that affect FL provision are often reflected and highlighted in the micro worlds of the individuals, we are unable to claim that the findings are representative of a larger population. However, although this study can only detail a small part of the wider world, it can still be used to paint a picture of the wider society, and we therefore argue that these experiences can become *moderatum* generalisations (Williams, 2000, p.211) that can not only form the basis of wider theories of understanding but also have a direct link to, and impact on, policy and practice.

²² An additional 159 parents also provided written responses (see section 4.10)

Appendix E: Ethical considerations

All NRDC projects require an ethics assessment to be undertaken, and details of the project were scrutinised and cleared by the Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee. The project used the Revised Guidelines for Ethical Research, as set out by the British Educational Research Association in 2004. All participants in this report, including the LAs and the schools, have been anonymised, and all participants were given the right to withdraw from the research at any time. All the parents, tutors and teachers that took part in the research signed a consent form, which was returned to the project administrator. The tutors' and teachers' form was counter-signed by the LA manager, while the parents' form was also signed by the tutor. Parents also completed a consent form on behalf of their child/children, and this also provided profile information such as the child's date of birth.

Appendix F: Training and support provided

The research programme was an opportunity for FLLN providers to put research skills into practice, and with structured support, to manage the research process at a local level as well as carry out the assessments. Many LA managers greeted news of the project enthusiastically.

I was so pleased to meet you yesterday at the network meeting. I have read through the documentation and I have to say I am very excited at the prospect of becoming involved, so I hope you will have a space for me. (Local Authority (LA) Manager, July 2008).

One of the underpinning strategies of NRDC is to build research capacity and awareness through engagement with the process itself. To support this, the project set up and delivered an extensive package of awareness and training for local authorities interested in evaluating LSC-funded family literacy programmes in 2008/09.

The first training session was held on 17 March 2008 at NRDC to pilot both the training content and the research instruments. The project originally planned to run four four-hour training events, but these were subsequently extended to cover the nine Government Office regions. Where possible the regional Family Learning Networks and FLLN advisers were contacted directly to gain their support.

In total, 133 practitioners from 77 local authorities were trained to help the research team to collect data from learners on their courses. Between March and November 2008, the project team held seven briefing meetings and 12 full training sessions. The largest number of attendees was 18 but on two occasions members of the project team went out to train individual Local Authorities (LAs).

Analysis of feedback showed an overall rating of 4.25 out of 5 from 80 respondents. This level of satisfaction was supported by comments made at the training events where participants agreed that they found the training useful. Training sessions lasted on average around four hours and, overall, the length and depth of the course was considered to be appropriate. It was suggested that the training could be adapted to accommodate different audience needs.

Appendix G: Interview schedule for parents' focus groups and individual interviews

Activity 8AFL: Questions for interview with 'tracked' Family Literacy parents

ID:

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. As we explained in the consent form, I will be tape recording our conversation which means we can keep the conversation flowing and I don't have to take notes. I hope this is OK with you?

As the invitation leaflet explained, we want to find out how the family literacy course that you attended at (venue) has affected you and your family. I would like to ask what you have been doing since you finished the course, and if you have made any changes as a result of the FL course or programme.

What was your motivation for joining the family literacy class?

1. Thinking back, what were the most useful and enjoyable things about the course?

2. What was the most difficult thing that you found on the course?

FURTHER COURSES/TRAINING

3. Have you been on another course since family literacy?

- Yes No

[If Yes, ask: what course was that? Where did it happen / Who provided it? How long did it last? What did you think of it (enjoyed or not, learned a lot/little, etc)?]

What do you think may have influenced your decision?

Probe for role of Family Literacy course

Did the FL class have any influence on this

4. Are you thinking of taking another course? (Ask All)

- Yes No

Why/why not

[If Yes, ask, Any ideas what kind, and when and where you might take it?]

5. If you wanted to take another course, what kinds of things would make it easier to take another course?

Prompt e. g. crèche facilities?

What kinds of things would put you off or make it more difficult to take another course?

EMPLOYMENT

6. . Did you already have a job before you took the family literacy course?

- Yes No

[If No, ask] Are you looking for work? or
Have you got a job since you started the family literacy course?
[**Probe** for what kind of job?]

[If Yes, ask, Are you still in this job or Have you changed your job since then?]

- Yes No

[If Yes, ask about the change/new job, including, if the parent is willing to tell you, is it better paid? Do you have more responsibility?]

Probe for role of Family Literacy course – has the FL course helped you in anyway

- Yes No

Was the chance of getting a job, or maybe a better job, a motivation for joining the FL course?

Do you think that attending the FL course has given you more options for finding a job?

If yes, can you say in what kind of way(s)?

RELATIONS WITH SCHOOL

7. Have you recently become more involved in your child’s preschool setting or school? (E.g. as a volunteer or classroom assistant; OR: are you speaking to the teachers more?)

- Yes No

[If yes, ask for details] GIVE EXAMPLES

Probe for role of Family Literacy course
Did FL have any influence on this?

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

8. Have you got more involved in any other sort of community work or joined a group?

Yes No

[If yes, ask for details] GIVE EXAMPLES

Probe for role of Family Literacy course: has the FL course had any influence on this?

BENEFITS

9. Have you benefited from attending your FL course?

Yes No

[If Yes, ask, In what kinds of ways] GIVE EXAMPLES

And: Do you think you are still continuing to benefit from your family literacy programme?

Yes No

[If Yes, ask for details; in what kind of ways?] GIVE EXAMPLES

If No, ask, Why not?

[If appropriate:] Have you gained confidence in using English?

[If Yes, ask, Can you give me an example?]

HELPING YOUR CHILD

10. Did you do more with your child at home while you were on family literacy?

- Yes No

[If Yes, ask: what kinds of things do you do?] GIVE EXAMPLES

Are you continuing to do more with your child at home?

[If yes, ask for details]

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

11. Has anything changed in your family since the course? (E.g., relationships with your children and/or partner, helping your children more with school work)

- Yes No

[If Yes, ask, what in what kinds of ways?] GIVE EXAMPLES

IDENTITY

12. Do you feel that you have changed as a person, perhaps in the way you feel about your self (more confidence, greater belief in your self, more motivated, more ambitious) and other things?

- Yes No

[If Yes, ask: in what kinds of ways?] GIVE EXAMPLES

13. Did you take any qualifications? Were you happy to do this? What did you think about this?

Other comments

Is there anything else you would like to say about the Family literacy course?

Thank you very much for speaking with me today. Your views and experiences make an important contribution to our study.

Appendix H: Parental changes in home literacy activities

Activity 3AFL(A): Home Activities PRE Questionnaire for Parents

What do you do with your child/children?

ID:

Does your child do any of these with you?	Never	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month	Once a week	2 - 3 times a week	Every day
Write something like a shopping list or birthday card						
Write his/her name						
Draw/paint						
Use a computer						
Play games						
Play with make believe toys						
Talk about TV						
Talk about nursery/school						
Tell stories						
Say rhymes						
Sing songs						
Read books						

Does your child look at any of these with you?	Never	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month	Once a week	2 - 3 times a week	Every day
Magazines/ comics						
Newspapers						
Books						
Print in books, on street signs and food labels						

	Never	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month	Once a week	More than once a week
How often do you go to nursery/school activities?					
How often do you help with nursery/school activities?					
How often do you talk with your child's teacher?					

Appendix I: Parental changes in attitudes after the course

Activity 4AFL (A): Parent Questionnaire, PRE

ID:

About You

<i>Please circle one number in each row</i>	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Quite confident	Very confident
'When I think about myself as a learner, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4
'When I think about saying rhymes with my child, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4
'When I think about singing with my child, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4
'When I think about reading a story with my child, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4
'When I think about writing a story with my child, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4
'When I think about going on another course, I feel ...'	1	2	3	4

Please turn over

Activity 4AFL(A): Parent Questionnaire, PRE

ID:

About Your Child

<i>Please circle one number in each row</i>	Below average	About average	Above average	Not sure
'I think my child's ability to listen is'	1	2	3	4
'I think my child's speech is...'	1	2	3	4
'I think my child's ability to concentrate or stay with a task is...'	1	2	3	4
'I think my child's reading is....'	1	2	3	4
'I think my child's writing is...'	1	2	3	4

Appendix J: Adult Profile and contact Details

Adult Profile

ID:

Post Code:.....

Gender (Please tick)

Female Male

Date of birth (...../...../.....) (day/month/year)

Relationship to child

Parent Grandparent Other (please specify).....

Ethnic group (Tick one)

- White British
- White Other
- Black – Caribbean
- Black – African
- Black – British
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Mixed heritage
- Other (please specify).....

Year arrived in the UK (if not born in the UK):

Languages

Is English your first language? Yes No

If no, please say what your first language is:.....

Education

At what age did you leave full time education?

How many years of full time education did you attend?

Highest UK qualification awarded in English/Literacy:

Please tick if you are not sure about this qualification

When was the last course you attended since finishing full-time education?

Please tick

Less than 3 years ago

3 – 5 years ago

6 – 10 years ago

More than 10 years ago

Are you currently attending another course at the moment?

Yes No

If yes, can you say what it is called?.....

Learning difficulty

Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty?

Yes No

If 'yes', please give details.....

Physical disability

Do you consider yourself to have a physical disability?

Yes No

If 'yes', please give details.....

MANY THANKS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

Consent Form (Parent/Carer)

ID :

Please tick all the boxes that apply

I agree to take the part in the above project while I am on the family literacy course.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to leave at any time.

I understand all names will be changed.

I am willing for my child/children to take part in the research.
I am willing to be contacted after the course to take part in an interview.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Tutor

Signature

Date

Parent/Carer Contact Details

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Telephone:

Mobile:

E-mail:

Is there a particularly good time to contact you?

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening
- I don't mind

Appendix K. Interview schedule for children

Children's perspectives on Family Literacy

Activity 2AFL: Children's Perspectives on Family Literacy - *Child Interview*

ID:

About You

1. Did you enjoy coming here? **Prompt (if possible):** What are some of things that you like most about the course? Are there any things that you don't like?

2. Do you like reading?

3. If so, have you got a favourite book? Can you tell me what it's called?
(Follow up: can you say why it is your favourite book? **Prompts:** it's funny, I like the pictures, there's a particular character)

4. Do you read books with your family?
(Follow up: who with: When do you read, what time of the day? **Prompts:** at bedtime, when I come home, lots of different times)

5. Do you ever sing any songs or rhymes? If so, have you got a favourite? Do you sing songs or rhymes with your family?

6. Do you like playing games indoors? If so, have you got a favourite? Do you play games with your family?

7. Do you like writing?
(Follow up: If so, what do you like to write about? Do you write things with your family)

Appendix L: Child Profile

Child Profile

ID:

Gender
(Please tick)

- Female Male

Date of birth

Ethnic group
(Tick one)

- White British
- White Other
- Black – Caribbean
- Black – African
- Black – British
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Mixed heritage
- Other (please specify)

Languages

If your child speaks other languages at home as well as English, please list them here.

	understood	spoken
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Education

Does your child attend school or some form of nursery or pre-school provision?
Yes No

Which type of setting does your child attend?

Please tick

- School
- Nursery
- Playgroup
- Children's Centre
- Childminder
- Other (please specify).....

Does your child have a learning disability?

If so, please give details.....
.....
.....

Does your child have a physical disability?

If so, please give details
.....
...
.....
.....

Thank you for completing this form

Appendix M: Managers' questionnaire schedule

Activity 9AFL: Telephone Questionnaire

Target audience: Local Authority FLLN Managers

Purpose: To gather views on local delivery processes

Name:	Job title:
Contact details:	LA:
Role in Family Literacy:	
Sample questions	
1. What strategies have been/are being used to integrate family literacy in your organisation/local authority? To what extent have they been successful, and why?	
2. What partnership models are being/have been developed to support family literacy? To what extent have they been successful, and why?	
3. How are the main messages from family literacy being disseminated? To what extent has this been successful, and why?	
4. Would you say that family literacy is now part of the mainstream in your authority? Where has there been strategic impact? <i>For example:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>nature of top-down support for family literacy</i>▪ <i>effect on key strategies, e.g. Every Child Matters, Skills for Life, parenting, early</i>	

years and primary strategies

- *professional development of staff*
- *collaborations and networks within the local authority*

5. What has been done/do you feel could be done to assist the integration of family literacy?

- *commitment from senior staff*
- *commitment from partners*
- *a local strategy for improving family literacy*
- *information on the scale of need*
- *strategies to engage the hard to reach*
- *resources to deliver the programme*
- *funding body?*

6. What are the resource implications for family literacy at local authority level?

7. How do you think Family Literacy programmes can be enhanced to encourage progression to other courses or on to employment? (i.e. by developing longer term skills, as well as shorter term ones that help them to help their children at school)

8. Please add any further comments you may have.

Appendix N: Managers' interview Schedule

Interview questions: FL managers

Q No.	Area/topic	Question
1	COURSES	How many FL courses are you running this academic year, both short and standard? How many of these involve children aged between 3-7-years-old? <i>They might want to provide this information later by e-mail</i>
2	COURSES	Roughly what percentage of courses are held in schools, children's centres and nurseries (give a percentage for each place) – <i>Again, this information might come later</i>
3	COURSES	Are you planning to expand or reduce the number of FL courses next year? <i>Give reasons</i>
4	EFFECTIVE PROVISION	What are the key ingredients that make for effective FL provision (PROBE/SUGGEST: <i>a long tradition/history, structures, networks, people</i>)
5	FLIF	What effect has FLIF had on your work in general, and on the running of FL courses in particular? <i>Mention that other LAs have had problems</i>
6	SCHOOLS	How do you recruit new schools? How do you try and convince them to take part?
7	SCHOOLS	Has there been a reluctance for schools to release children for FL courses, particularly on standard courses? [EXPAND] – maybe in the morning where there is a clash with literacy/numeracy hours If so, how you try and counteract this? Are any parents also unhappy for the children to be removed from their classes?
8	SCHOOLS	How do you try and maintain relationships with schools?
9	TRAINING NEW TUTORS	What training (CPD) do you provide for new tutors wishing to teach FL?
10	PARENTS	Roughly, how many of the parents take some form of accreditation at the end of their FL course? Are they happy to do this? Do they push to do this?
11	PARENTS	Although the government policy is to improve parents' employability, we are finding that many parents want to spend their time being 'good' mothers/fathers/carers, and will delay seeking work till their children are a little older. Is this your experience?

12	PARENTS	Do you have the odd parent who is actually Level 2 or above on some of your courses? What do you think of this? [<i>PROBE and suggest that this may not be such a bad thing if the purpose of FL is to help the parent support their child</i>]
13	PARENTS	What percentage of men attend FL courses? <i>Again, this information might come later.</i> What are your theories about why so few men attend?
14	REORGANISATION	Has the reorganisation and introduction of Extended services been a good thing? If so, in what kind of ways? What other policies have had a particularly advantageous/disadvantageous effect on FL programmes?
15	WISH LIST	If you could speak directly to the government minister, responsible for FL, what kinds of things would you ask for that would improve things further? What would you wish for? What policy could they introduce to make things even better
16	WISH LIST	Is there anything that the minister should remove, that makes life particularly difficult for FL?
17	FUTURE	Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of FL?

Also, pick up any points from their AFL9 questionnaire, for clarification

Appendix O: Managers' summary of the course

Activity 1AFL: Summary Data Form

To be completed by the named person responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of courses

Course identifier (4 digits):

FLLN project: Record of course type and parents and children's development

1. Name of course	
2. Type of course	
3. Where is the course held? (e.g. school, children's centre, community centre)	

	Intended	Actual
4. Number of sessions per course for parents		
5. Total number of contact hours of the parents-only sessions		
6. Total number of contact hours of the joint sessions		
7. Total time in hours per course for any home activities that count as hours on the course		
8. TOTAL hours for parents (= total of Nos. 5-7)		
9. Total number of contact hours of the children-only sessions		

Typical pattern of delivery	Session	Time
	1:	
	2:	
	3:	

Sometimes, the intended and actual hours may not work out to be the same

	Parents/Carers	Children
Number recruited		
Number female		
Number male		
Number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities		
% attendance [1]		
% retention [2]		
Number achieving qualifications		n/a
Number interested in further learning opportunities (please specify)		n/a
Number of parents who would like more contact with their child's nursery/school		

[1] The percentage of attendance equals the number of sessions attended by each family counted up and totalled, divided by the number of families recruited and divided again by the number of sessions run during the course, all multiplied by 100.

[2] Those who attended at least half the sessions.

Give your estimates of the numbers of parents/carers who:	not at all	a little	quite a lot	a great deal
have increased their confidence in their own reading skills				
have made progress in reading				
have increased their confidence in their own writing skills				
have made progress in writing				
feel more confident about supporting their child's developing reading skills				
feel more confident about supporting their child's developing writing skills				
feel more confident about supporting their child's developing speaking skills				
feel more confident about supporting their child's developing listening skills				
have increased their time with child/children in home activities				

Based on ongoing and final assessments, give your estimate of the numbers of the children who have:	not at all	a little	quite a lot	a great deal
shown a greater interest in reading				
made progress in reading				
shown an improvement in general listening skills				
developed their spoken vocabulary				
shown a greater interest in writing				
developed their writing skills				

Views of parents/carers

Views of children

Name:

Job title:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix P: Tutors' questionnaire and profile

Activity 5AFL: Tutor Questionnaire

Course identifier (4 digits):

1. Which teaching approaches have you used in the family literacy programme which have proved effective in developing the parents' literacy and language skills?

2. How has the programme helped the parents' to support their *children's* literacy and language development?

3. What were the most important factors that made the programmes successful?

4. What were the greatest challenges?

5. How do you think FL programmes can be enhanced to encourage progression to other courses or on to employment? (i.e, by developing longer term skills, as well as shorter term ones that help them help their children at school)

Consent and information form for Tutor

Course identifier (4 digits):

I agree to take the part in the above project while I am teaching on the family literacy course.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to leave at any time.

I understand all names will be changed and anonymised.

I am willing to be contacted after the course to take part in an interview.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

LA Manager/Coordinator

Signature

Date

Tutor/Teacher Contact Details

Name:

I would like to be contacted at work Yes No

Work e-mail:

Work telephone number:

I would like to be contacted at home Yes No

Address:

Post code:

Telephone:

Mobile:

E-mail:

Is there a particularly good time to contact you?

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

I don't mind

Some further information:

1. How many years have you been teaching family literacy?

2. What is your highest professional teaching qualification in English/Literacy? (e.g. L4 subject specific)

.....

3. Have you received any professional development training in family literacy?

Yes

No

If yes, could you supply brief details, including dates?

Thanks very much

Appendix Q: Teachers' questionnaire and profile

Activity 6AFL: Teacher Questionnaire

Course identifier (4 digits):

1. Which teaching approaches (e.g synthetic phonics, flash cards etc) have you used in the family literacy programme which have proved effective in developing the children's literacy and language skills?

2. What were the most important factors that made the programmes successful?

3. What were the greatest challenges?

Consent and information form for Teacher

Course identifier (4 digits):

I agree to take the part in the above project while I am teaching on the family literacy course.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to leave at any time.

I understand all names will be changed and anonymised.

I am willing to be contacted after the course to take part in an interview.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

LA Manager/Coordinator

Signature

Date

Tutor/Teacher Contact Details

Name:

I would like to be contacted at work Yes No

Work e-mail:

Work telephone number:

I would like to be contacted at home Yes No

Address:

Post code:

Telephone:

Mobile:

E-mail:

Is there a particularly good time to contact you?

Morning Afternoon Evening I don't mind

Some further information:

1. How many years have you been involved in teaching family literacy?

2. What is your highest professional teaching qualification?

.....

3. Have you received any professional development training in family literacy?

Yes

No

If yes, could you supply brief details, including dates?

Thanks very much

Appendix R: Challenges encountered during evaluations and data gathering the sample

The original target for the project was to work with 50 LAs and evaluate 250 courses, five per LA. Potentially, this would involve 2000 parents and 2000 children. The final numbers that we secured were 42 LAs, 74 courses, 542 parents and 529 children. At various stages of the project, a number of LAs who had previously expressed strong interest in evaluating FL courses began to inform the team that they were unable to take part. The main reason was capacity – that is, when it came to the time for recruitment there were not enough parents joining courses to make them a viable proposition. The LSC guidance (2009) stated that a minimum number of nine parents were needed for a course to start. A further reason for the lower number of courses participating was that LAs found it difficult to run FL courses that were an exact match to the project requirements. That is, some were only providing parent-only courses; courses involving children who were either younger than 3 years 0 months or older than 6 years 11 months; courses that were running outside the project time frame (e.g. from January to July); or running for fewer than 30 hours. Indeed, many LAs were running shorter, introductory, family learning courses (such as Wider Family Learning) that run for 10 hours or less. Many of these reasons are summed up in the following e-mail received from an LA manager received in November 2008.

I'm very sorry but we are unable to take part in the Family Literacy Research Project after all. I have spent some time trying to locate courses which meet your criteria but have had no luck. A number of courses we had planned for this year haven't recruited well and those that are taking place either do not include children of the age range you are looking for or don't finish until the end of the summer term.

Other reasons given by LAs for withdrawing from the project were various staffing difficulties. This included the problem arising when FL courses used sessional staff, many of whom were often part-time and looking for full-time work with a permanent contract. Sometimes, it was the actual LA manager who had moved post, retired or gone on maternity leave.

There were two additional reasons. First, some LAs were deterred from joining the project because of forthcoming Ofsted inspections and the extra work this involved. Secondly, a number of LAs decided to apply for Family Learning Impact Funding (FLIF), which became available in the summer of 2008, and a number told us that the extra work involved in setting up courses, and finding qualified tutors, also discouraged them from taking part. The following e-mail, which was received in November 2008, came from an LA manager:

I'm mailing to say that we will not now be proceeding with the NRDC/NIACE Evaluation for Family Learning. There are a few reasons for this: we are starting a new ESF programme in January which requires us to track learners over an extended period of time. We are running the Family Learning Impact Funded courses, again from January, with again an element of tracking over three years.

Because of the FLIF funding, the majority of our courses will be Short Numeracy courses in the Spring Term, and therefore couldn't be part of this study. For all of the above, we have taken the decision that the NRDC/NIACE programme will be a 'bridge too far' for us at the moment, and I'm anxious that tutors and learners aren't overloaded.

What became evident during the project was that FL provision was in a state of flux, and both managers and tutors were working under a great deal of pressure. For example, the team frequently found it difficult to contact managers and, to give an example, 26 separate e-mails were sent to one LA over the research period, which in the end did not become involved in the evaluation. We received e-mails from many LAs beginning something like, *Sorry I missed you on Friday - in the middle of a mad few weeks here, or,*

We are struggling with the involvement of the children in the time scale: I am so sorry to have been such a rotten communicator and so elusive. An exploding workload!...

Although many LA managers were incredibly generous with their time and commitment, some were hesitant to give their team additional work. Some of these issues are further exemplified by the following e-mail received from an LA manager in October 2008.

Many, many apologies for not giving you a decision the current problem is we have one member of our team on long term sick leave. Another one about to take Maternity leave and one just left because of family pressures (...). And to top all we are to be Ofsted inspected in November (...) It is a bit difficult to give you a definite answer I am sorry because as you know I am keen to be involved but I can't give the rest of the team anything else to consider at this time. Maybe we could put this on hold but if it would be easier for you if I said no so you are not hanging on then that's fine I know you need to tie everything up and I am unable to say yes just now.

Appendix S: First languages other than English

Parents

Table S.1: Parents' first languages other than English

Indo-European languages of Europe (some spoken much more widely)	N
Albanian	3
Bulgarian	1
French	5
German	1
Polish	1
Slovak	1
Spanish	4
Welsh	1
Sub-total	17
Indo-European languages of the rest of the world	
Aku (English-based creole spoken in Gambia)	1
Bangla Deshi	4
Dari	1
Farsi	1
Gujarati	10
Hindi	4
Patuá (Portuguese- and Malay-based creole spoken in Macau)	1
Punjabi (Mirpuri)	14
Urdu	22
Sub-total	58
Non-Indo-European language of Europe	
Hungarian	1
Sub-total	1
Rest of the world, 1: Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa	
Arabic	4
Ibo	1
KiSwahili	1
Shona	1
Somali	2
Wolof	2
Yoruba	2
Sub-total	13

Rest of the world, 2: Non-Indo-European (Dravidian) languages of south India	
Kannada	1
Malayalam	1
Tamil	12
Telugu	3
Sub-total	17
Rest of the world, 3: Far East	
Chinese	1
Japanese	2
Sub-total	3
Total	110

Children

Table S.2: Children's first languages other than English

Indo-European languages of Europe (some spoken much more widely)	N
Albanian	3
Bulgarian	1
French	5
German	1
Polish	1
Slovak	1
Spanish	4
Welsh	1
Sub-total	17
Indo-European languages of the rest of the world	
Aku (English-based creole spoken in Gambia)	1
Bangla Deshi	4
Dari	1
Farsi	1
Gujarati	10
Hindi	4
Patuá (Portuguese- and Malay-based creole spoken in Macau)	1
Punjabi (Mirpuri)	14
Urdu	21
Sub-total	57
Non-Indo-European language of Europe	
Hungarian	1
Sub-total	1

Rest of the world, 1: Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa	
Arabic	3
Ibo	1
KiSwahili	1
Shona	1
Somali	2
Wolof	2
Yoruba	2
Sub-total	12
Rest of the world, 2: Non-Indo-European (Dravidian) languages of south India	
Kannada	1
Malayalam	1
Tamil	12
Telugu	3
Sub-total	17
Rest of the world, 3: Far East	
Chinese	1
Japanese	2
Sub-total	3
Total	107

Appendix T: Common practices observed in FL classrooms

All of the observations apply to all three sessions (adult only, children only and joint), except where it is specifically mentioned otherwise.

Observations

- Tutors and EYTs were positive and enthusiastic. They were generally good communicators, explaining key points and giving instructions clearly.
- Tutors were responsive to parents' needs. Consulting with parents about the content of the next session (parents' only sessions).
- Tutors and EYTs were flexible and prepared to depart from lesson plans when they judged there was a need to do so.
- There was a supportive, non-threatening atmosphere.
- There were many examples of varied classroom organisation.
- There was a lot of collaborative work and discussion between parents amongst themselves, and between parents and children.
- Parents were highly committed, engaged and supportive of each other.

Common practices frequently observed

- Tutors frequently recapping work from the previous session (parents' only sessions)
- Tutors setting out learning objectives for current session (parents' only sessions)
- Parents completing learning records and ILPs at end of session (parents' only sessions)
- Tutors and EYT using the same ideas and resources in different settings, such as story sacks, where the parents and children make activities and props around a theme which they use at home
- Parents creating journals of their child's development over the length of the course, particularly on standard courses. These journals often contained photographs of child accompanied with parents' written comments. Sometimes there was a photo of the child on most days of the week.
- Learners (parents and children) being encouraged to borrow books

Appendix U: Headteacher interview

Assessing Family Literacy: Headteacher Topic Guide

Interviewer:

Date:

Respondent:

1. Why did you become involved in family literacy?
2. How is the programme funded?
3. How do you recruit parents for Family Literacy?
4. What do parents and children gain from participating?
5. What are the key challenges for Family Literacy in this school?
6. What are the key success factors for Family Literacy in this school?
7. What advice would you give to schools that might be interested in becoming involved in family literacy?
8. How do you think FL programmes can be enhanced to encourage progression to other courses or on to employment?

Appendix V: Analysis of questionnaire returns from FLN Managers

Method

Questionnaires were sent as email attachments to 52 FLN managers on 19 and 22 September 2008 with a return date of 20 October. This sample was selected from LAs who confirmed their participation in the project and/or expressed interest in the project. Consideration was taken into account of urban and rural issues, and the importance of having information from managers in all the Government Office regions. A total of 30 FLN managers returned completed questionnaires by the extended date of 28 October and a further 3 by 7 November. The analysis that follows is based on the total number of 33 returns. The high response rate is probably a reflection of the sampling method.

The questionnaire consisted of six open questions, each with subsidiary questions, and an opportunity for additional comments. Most respondents provided detailed responses

Responses were collated and emergent themes were identified by one of the researchers. A second researcher was consulted about the initial codes. A coding frame was devised to reflect the main themes and used as the basis for the analysis and commentary below.

The numbers in brackets are the local authority identity codes allocated by the researcher conducting the analysis with the purpose of ensuring anonymity.

Respondents

As is indicated by the table below, respondents were concentrated in the north west of England, which may be a reflection of the sampling frame.

Table V.1: Government Office Region

Region	Number of returns
North-West	13
Yorkshire and the Humber	3
North-East	2
East	3
East Midlands	2
West Midlands	2
London	3
South-East	2
South-West	3

Most respondents gave detailed responses to all of the questions.

Question One: What strategies have been/are being used to integrate family literacy in your organisation/local authority? To what extent have they been successful, and why?

Whether particular strategies had been successful was not always clear. In some instances respondents seemed to be describing success in terms of demand for provision and/or impact on children and adults, rather than successful integration into the local authority. Where it is possible to distinguish them, these aspects are identified in the analysis that follows.

Successful integration

Seventeen respondents described successful integration.

“Family literacy is embedded as part of the Children’s Plan, in the Core Offer of the Children’s centres and Extended Schools delivery offer”. (16)

Family Literacy programmes have been part of the LA Family Learning offer for many years (28)

[LA name]...was a Skills for Families pilot authority and this started our journey towards ensuring that FLLN was integrated into the Local Authority systems (3.) Raising children’s achievement; engaging parents in supporting their children’s learning; targeting children who are underachieving; targeting parents with low levels of language, literacy and numeracy skills.

These strategies have been extremely successful, as they not help to raise children’s achievement but impacts on parent’s achievements too. Parents attending the programmes have an opportunity to take accreditation and national qualifications too. This also prepares them for the world of work (31).

Six respondents reported limited success with integration.

“Family Learning has always struggled to have a profile in this authority” (14).

“The success of our LA engaging in a strategic way with FL is very limited. We have tried to promote the provision within the authority, with limited success”. (5)

A few identified considerable success in some respects, with limitations in others:

“Family Literacy is integrated within our Adult Education Service as it is part of the whole menu of provision. Family Learning is a unit which sits alongside the Business Unit, ACL, SfL and others. We very much feel part of a larger organisation. Within the LA, we are recognised as having an impact on raising pupil achievement by the School Improvement Service and the Advisory Service although the links are not really formalised. For the past 6 years, we have worked very hard to try and integrate FL to a greater extent within the LA but this has been very challenging, due to the shifting of directorates. Adult Learning was assigned to Adult Social Care Directorate and our position away from Children, young People and Families has had a damaging effect on our status and networks.” (24)

“Family Learning provision is recognised at various levels within the authority and in some places its strategic role is more widely recognised than in others. (12)

It is not clear from other respondents whether or not FL had been successfully integrated into the LA.

Where integration had taken place, it was evidenced in terms of FL as being a key element of wider authority strategies such as Skills for Life, Widening Participation, Lifelong Learning, Parenting Support and contributing to local targets and annual performance assessments and to national strategies such as Every Child Matters and the National Primary and Early Years Foundation strategies; and FLN managers being represented on strategic groups.

Successful strategies

Responses were grouped into five key themes:

1. Positioning of Family Learning

The structure of the LA and the positioning of Family Learning within the LA were identified by a few respondents as affecting integration. One respondent reported that replacing the LEA with the Directorate of Children and Family Services had created the right context. Another reported that the move of FL from Children's Services to Recreation and Heritage had shifted the sphere of influence from working with parents and children's centres to partnerships with libraries and museums. A third identified the advantage of being positioned in the CYP Directorate where Every Child Matters was championed. A fourth described as successful a model whereby FL was located in the Schools Branch of Department for Children and Education alongside the advisory team (which included Sure Start, Early Years and Extended schools) and the school improvements team. This structure promoted joint strategies and planning.

Structures were not always beneficial. One respondent said that assignment of Adult Learning to the Adult Social Care Directorate had damaged networks and the status of FL. Another reported that restructuring resulting in FL becoming part of Community Learning and Well-being Service had led to:

"lost contact and credibility with school advisors... [and that it had] taken years of hard work, passion and commitment to re-gain recognition". (4)

2. Relationships with other teams

Many respondents reported having informal or less formal links and relationships with other LA teams and departments:

A key strategy is that we have been working increasingly closely with colleagues from the local authority to ensure that our provision focuses on schools who have been identified by them as in need of maximum support and intervention. We are keen to develop this relationship especially in order to be able to access information about children's achievement and progress beyond their FLLN programme in order to demonstrate the impact on children's learning more credibly to our schools partners (33).

These included links with Primary Strategy Advisers and School Improvement advisers, or working with other teams on joint parenting support and family learning strategy and action planning. One specifically noted that working closely with the Primary Literacy development worker ensured that FL programmes were linked to the school phonics programme. In few instances staff worked in dual roles as both FL and SfL tutors or had roles that straddled teams:

The Family Learning Manager has been seconded for 50% of her time to Children's Services to lead on the Parenting Support Strategy & to give support to the Local Authority Parenting Commissioner. This has meant that FLLN is now a key work strand of the Parenting Support strategy. It is ideally positioned to work effectively with the Children's Centre & Extended Services agenda. (3)

Family Learning Action Groups (FLAGs) were identified as aiding integration as they provided the opportunity to advise Family Literacy teams and a forum for sharing information across teams and exploring new ways of measuring impact. Membership of FLAGs included representatives from a range of different teams and services such as Sure Start and library services, the Skills for Life and Early Years and Extended Schools teams, headteachers, literacy and numeracy consultants and advisers, adult learning providers and voluntary sector partners.

3. Relationships with schools

The nature of relationships varied from FL teams promoting provision to schools by letter or electronic information, to joint planning and delivery of programmes. Relationships were developed over time, and were reported as requiring the capacity to be flexible in terms of delivery and offering training to school staff. Other arrangements included basing FL workers in school part-time and having formal agreements with schools:

*"Formal agreement with schools to ensure we work in true partnership
Schools are asked to appoint a Family Learning link worker which aids communication, this is often a Learning Mentor or Family Link worker who recognises barriers, knows parents and builds up good relationships
One member of school staff from school supports FL teacher, this is used as a training opportunity, job shadowing and may enable school to sustain FL/parental involvement in the future....Whole school staff meeting is part of the agreement if we deliver courses. (4)*

A few respondents emphasised the importance of helping school staff understand the relationship between parental involvement and children's attainment. Family literacy was promoted as a next step following family learning programmes, and parents were encouraged to choose joint programmes which involved interacting with children. Several respondents noted the importance of responding to requests for programmes, and customising courses to meet the needs of learners, venues and schools' targets, and the need to be flexible in terms of delivery day and times.

Some respondents commented that some schools were initially unreceptive to the idea of taking children out of class to attend FL sessions, although once provision was established it was successful. A few commented that schools that had once delivered FL now found it more difficult because of staff shortages.

4. Staff

Three respondents commented on the role of staff in integrating family literacy in the LA. One identified the quality of staff in terms of experience, skills and creativity. Non-contact time was seen as facilitating team-building and dissemination of information and good practice. Another respondent referred to the employment of a Family Learning Development Officer for the specific purpose of developing an integrated service, although their work was insufficiently well developed to evaluate success. Training was mentioned in terms of a CPD module which was being developed to help Family Learning and PCDL tutors to understand one another's work.

5. Targeting deprivation

Six respondents described targeting deprivation and/or underachievement, in one case through a multi-agency approach (see above). One cited 'Stay and Play' as a successful model in engaging 'hard to reach' families in deprived areas. Another reported some success in raising the attainment of parents and carers with no or very few qualifications through programmes of at least 30 hours' duration and entering learners for Entry level qualifications or national tests at Level one or two.

Limitations

The questionnaire was based on a topic guide originally intended for use as a guide for interviews with FLN managers. Due to time pressures it was sent to managers for completion and return in their own time. This tactic proved successful in terms of achieving a high rate of return and detailed responses. However, where questions included several dimensions, the meaning of particular responses was not always clear. For example, for question one, some respondents outlined strategies but did not clarify the extent of their success or suggest the reasons. In addition, responses sometimes referred to family learning more generally rather than family literacy specifically.

Summary

Half the respondents described some strategies that they regarded as successful. Most identified successful integration in terms of inclusion of FL in local and/or national strategy such as Skills for Life, Every Child Matters and the Children's Plan. Others described success in terms of take-up and the positive impact of FL programmes.

Of the five main strategies, two seemed to more to do with impact on integration into the LA, and three were identified with impact on delivery and outcomes. Positioning of FL in the LA and relationships between teams within the LA were seen as successfully integrated FL in the LA, although position within the LA structure could also have a negative impact on building and establishing links with relevant teams.

Relationships with schools, targeting deprivation and the quality of FL staff were cited as having a positive impact on successful delivery and learner achievement.

FL managers' questionnaires: report on findings from questions two to seven.

Partnership models

Family Learning programmes depend upon strong partnership models to ensure success.

Most respondents reported working with a range of partners, with varying success. The number and range of partners and the way in which partners worked together also varied. Partners included schools, colleges, libraries, Extended Schools, primary and parenting strategy teams, Children's Centres, Surestart teams, museums, Ethnic Minority, Traveller and Achievement Service, statutory services, and voluntary and community organisations.

Partnerships with schools

Schools were the most commonly cited as partners. In some cases FL was delivered jointly by schools and FL staff; in others school staff trained by FL staff, or other partners (see colleges below) were contracted to deliver provision. Schools also played an important part in providing resources, recruiting parents and contributing to the design of FL programmes.

Success was evidenced in terms of high levels of demand, especially in deprived areas:

Demand outstrips funding capacity. We are now active in over 100 schools, in particular those in the most deprived neighbourhoods where we know we can make a real difference.

Other evidence of partnership working included: effective curriculum planning with schools; recognition by schools' strategic leaders of the high quality courses and their link with school initiatives; and sharing ideas through school clusters. Success factors in school partnerships centred around commitment from head teachers, the quality of FL staff and joint delivery. A key success factor in school partnerships was commitment from the headteacher:

Partnerships with schools/headteachers have been essential in setting up successful family literacy programmes. The head teacher's support is essential even if the main contact person at the school is the PSA.

Headteachers provided practical support in terms of funding, time for joint planning and delivery; crèche facilities and bilingual services to improve access.

The most successful family literacy programmes have been where a FLLN tutor has nurtured relations with a small number of schools and where the heads are enthusiastic champions of FLLN, inspire their staff to commit to FL and are prepared

to sell it aggressively to parents. Too often heads may be interested but [can] not get the rest of the staff on board.

However, as this last comment indicates, success in partnering schools was mixed, with some schools remaining unconvinced about the benefits to parents and children, and reluctant to remove children from regular classes.

The energy and enthusiasm of FL staff and their use of personal contacts to build relationships with school staff were cited as important in engaging schools. Some respondents pointed out that relationships took a long time to establish. In a few cases, involvement in previous initiatives or pilots such as the Skills for Families and Early Years pilots provided the foundation for building positive relationships with schools.

Responses indicated that using school teachers in delivery of adult and joint sessions may contribute to success, enabling schools to have a sense of ownership over FLLN courses and ensuring that courses are linked directly to the school curriculum. This approach also drew on expertise and resources of teachers and early years' practitioners. Even schools not involved in delivery were identified as important in recruiting parents and developing learning programmes to meet local community needs and providing on-going support for parents. Providing courses that responded to learners' needs was seen as important in success. In addition, a few respondents referred to the role of curriculum/FL/literacy coordinators.

Other partnerships

In many cases partners were local authority teams such as school clusters, Early Years' teams, Extended Schools and libraries, although groups that included a wider range of partners such as health and social services, and voluntary organisations were also mentioned by some respondents. For example, one respondent referred to the Family Learning Strategy Group which contributed to effective curriculum development; and increased engagement of priority groups. Sure Start and Early Years teams and Children's Centres were cited as helping with the recruitment of learners, planning venues and supporting FL. In some cases Children's Centres were used to host FL.

Colleges were cited as partners with a role in delivery, seconding staff to FL, providing access to high quality SfL tutors, and progression opportunities for FL learners.

Two respondents reported the value of partnerships with Ethnic Minority Traveller and Achievement Service/Ethnic Minority Achievement Services which enabled the recruitment and engagement of learners from particular groups. Faith groups, a football club and a Fathers' group, parents' support groups and community groups were also mentioned.

Partnerships enabled FL managers to identify hard to reach groups, share good practice across the authority and raise the profile of the service.

One respondent summarised guidance for a successful partnership model as:

- *“establish the desire to work together*

- *work together in a win, win model by being clear what it is each partner needs from the partnership*
- *establish commonality – map provision, areas of work*
- *work out a strategy for future work with an accompanying action plan*
- *meet regularly to monitor progress and if necessary to re-plan”*

Disseminating the main messages from family literacy

Some respondents reported engaging in considerable dissemination activity and using different methods to access different audiences; others reported a lower level of activity. Some respondents interpreted the question about dissemination in terms of advertising and recruitment activity, while others also reported on dissemination at a strategic level.

Target audiences

Respondents reported messages being disseminated to a range of audiences including parents, tutors, teachers, head teachers, Sure Start staff, assistant directors, primary strategy and community learning outreach teams, FL curriculum leaders, managers of Children’s Centres and community and voluntary groups.

Methods of dissemination

Family literacy was sometimes promoted as part of overall message about family learning.

At operational and strategic level, meetings were a commonly cited method of dissemination. Meetings ranged from those involving only FL teams to partnership meetings with PCDL providers and SfL teams, Extended Services, community organisations, libraries and Family Learning Local Authority Groups (FLLAGs). Respondents referred to giving presentations to organisations, strategic groups and others working with parents/carers.

These [presentations] focus on the impact of parental involvement on children’s attainment and highlight the importance of literacy development. Organisations are encouraged to opt for the joint programmes within Family Learning to gain maximum benefit for parents/carers and their children.

Family literacy was promoted through conferences for the Extended Schools team, the Children’s and Young People’s Directorate and school governors. Training events for teachers, head teachers, managers, support staff and new FLLN staff also provided a useful forum for dissemination.

Written activity and evaluation reports were commonly mentioned. These ranged from tutor evaluations of individual courses to local authority reviews and annual reports. Other forms of written material included: family learning newsletters delivered to parents and partner organisations; schools’ newsletter/bulletins; and publicity material including family literacy flyers. One respondent reported using a

family literacy DVD to disseminate key messages and another referred to blogging as a means of communicating with the FL team.

In addition to those mentioned above, a range of methods were used to convey messages about family literacy to schools. Respondents referred to letters to head teachers and chairs of governors; recruitment workshops through the extended schools cluster partnership; and meetings between FL managers /advisers and head teachers. One respondent talked about the FL team attending parents' evenings/ school fairs.

Successful methods

Relatively few respondents specifically identified successful activities or explained the reasons for success. Several reported having limited success or only local success in conveying key messages, and recognised the need for more/different activity and /or evidence on the impact of FL. One respondent thought that impact could be shared more strategically and mapped to policy and targets such as those relating to Every Child Matters. For another the message about the benefits of joint working with teachers of children and adults was the most difficult one to disseminate. A third thought that awareness of FL was high, but questioned whether FL was widely understood.

Word of mouth - both in terms of tutors spreading their enthusiasm and participating head teachers talking to other head teachers - was among the methods identified as successful:

Most effective method is the word of mouth of our team - they are all enthusiasts and really believe they are making a difference so they pass on a great message. I think there is potential to work some more on this area but we would need some more funding to be able to allocate staff time to it.

Two respondents referred to the value of meetings with all the school staff. Such meetings enabled FL staff to explain the link between adult and child aspiration and achievement, and the role of parent as the main educator, and to inform schools about the SfL agenda.

Celebrations and award ceremonies were seen as ways of raising the profile of family learning:

Annual learner celebrations are a great opportunity to advertise achievements and outcomes. They provide an opportunity to invite key strategic players and showcase family learning (including FLLN) in a direct and powerful way.

Individual respondents also reported as successful visits by curriculum leaders to schools and other organisations, and county officers targeting head teachers in target areas to outline benefits and offer courses. Capturing achievements and soft outcomes such as increased confidence and for inclusion in self-assessments and inspections was also identified as a important in disseminating information about family literacy.

Mainstreaming and strategic impact

FL managers were fairly evenly divided between a) those who were positive about mainstreaming; b) those who regarded FL as having as made progress towards mainstreaming; and c) those who perceived FL as having a low profile within their authority.

Respondents identified impact in terms of: support from senior managers and effect on key strategies, the qualifications and development of staff, and collaborations and networks.

Support from senior managers

Some respondents reported that FL was supported by senior managers.

The LA is extremely supportive of family literacy, understands the benefits and would consider it to be mainstream. This has taken a while to put in place.

However, a few said that verbal support was not always translated into investment. Recognition of FL across the authority was thought to be limited

Although a key part of the agenda for children's centres and extended schools, and at the heart of ECM and EYFS, and although very well established locally, family literacy is still not as high on the agenda of the local authority as it could be.

Effect on key strategies

Many respondents identified FL as contributing to key strategies including Every Child Matters (ECM), Skills for Life, Parenting support, Extended Schools, Post 19 skills and Early and Primary Years strategies. Respondents referred to increased awareness of the role of FL in contributing to ECM among staff in schools, Extended Services and Sure Start.

Qualifications and professional development of staff

A few respondents referred to the qualifications held by FL staff. These included postgraduate teaching qualifications and level 4/5 qualifications in Literacy and Numeracy. Worryingly, one respondent referred to Family Learning being delivered by unqualified staff, although the meaning of this was not clear. The same respondent thought that the lack of specific FL qualifications had an adverse effect on recognition.

Respondents described a range of development activities including: opportunities to attend national seminars and conferences, involvement in SfL improvement training and training for primary school staff, and receiving input by LA literacy consultants and experts in subjects such as the Early Years' Foundation Stage. One respondent referred to FL teams delivering CPD events to LA staff and school-based staff, and another referred to delivering induction training to new members of the children's workforce.

Collaborations and networks

In addition to the shared training events, respondents referred to different levels and types of relationships. These included: Service Level Agreements to deliver adult and

family learning; internal LA collaborations on specific initiatives; membership of working, networking and strategic groups for Early Years, Community Learning and Parenting Strategy; and representation on Extended Services' and Schools' Panels.

Factors that assist with integrating family literacy

Respondents were given examples of factors that might assist integration. These included: commitment from senior staff; commitment from partners; a local strategy for improving family literacy; information on the scale of need; strategies to engage the hard to reach; resources and funding bodies. Most respondents referred to the effect of some of these, and some also identified the need to evidence the impact of family learning.

Commitment from senior staff and partners

Commitment from senior staff was reported as important, although not sufficient, in assisting integrating family literacy. Respondents referred to the need for links with, and commitment from other partners, most notably schools.

Encourage schools to allow teachers and children to be released to participate in Family Literacy Programmes. Raising awareness to Heads of the impact that parental involvement has on children and the commitment that is needed at all levels.

We have some very committed partners and some partners are committed when OFSTED is looming!

A few respondents identified people such as schools advisory teams and the Head of FL Service who have a key role in influencing strategic leaders and headteachers.

Family literacy strategies

Having or developing a family literacy strategy was thought to assist in integration, although only few respondents reported having one. A few referred to the inclusion of family literacy in family learning, literacy and parenting support strategies.

Information about need and engaging hard to reach learners

Responses suggest that only a very few FL managers have up-to-date information on the scale of need, especially among adults. Those who commented on this issue said that having information about need would be helpful.

Some respondents described successful strategies for engaging hard to reach learners. These included: targeting areas with high take up of free school meals; working through community workers, community initiatives and school improvements officers; having a coordinated approach and working in partnerships; attracting learners through less formal activities such as First Steps and Family Cooking; and providing lunch and incentives. Others respondents reported needing more training and guidance to help engage hard to reach groups.

If anyone has a successful strategy for engaging the hard to reach within the family literacy budget, I would be delighted to hear about it!

Resources and funders

Most respondents identified the importance of resources. Some respondents regarded LSC funding as sufficient but would like their local authorities to contribute more. Atypically one respondent reported:

Our FLLN budget has increased hugely this year. Implications are: can we spend all this, as in a rural area provision is very scattered? Are they sufficient tutors to deliver?

Many respondents identified a shortfall or problems associated with static funding in the face of increasing costs, targets and demand, and constraints imposed on the use of LSC funds. Longer term funding and more flexibility in targets and the use of funds (e.g. to support smaller groups) would be helpful. More funding was needed to: collect evidence on impact; publicise and raise awareness of family literacy; meet demands and government targets; support advocates; engage hard to reach learners; and provide cover so that tutors and teachers can plan and evaluate joint sessions; and to develop staff skills. For some managers lack of tutors was an issue even funding was available. A few referred to the value of FLIF (the Family Learning Impact Fund²³), although this is not intended to support family literacy directly.

Evidence of impact

The need to gather, analyse and use evidence the impact of family literacy was mentioned by respondents in relation to integration and in response to other questions.

I feel that we need nationally and locally to create a greater understanding of the impact of poor parental literacy skills on the whole family in particular child development and aspirations; poverty and worklessness. Parenting programmes have such a high profile and priority, poor literacy skills are lower down the priority – something that can be addressed after addressing the parenting! I just think that there is very little comprehension of how poor literacy skills impacts on every aspect of Family life.

The research & intelligence at a local level about the impact of programmes is relatively untapped. Funding to cover LA Officer time to research impact would give the sector and government much needed ammunition.

I think that the public profile of family learning is still very low and, despite the obvious successes with individual adults and children, and the support from schools as a result of these benefits, family learning is still low on the LA's agenda and is likely to remain so. It is a very small pot of funding and therefore commands little attention.

²³ During the time period when respondents completed questionnaires (2008/2009), the four strands of FLIF were Family Numeracy, Financial Capability, School Information for Parents and Wider Family Learning. FLLN managers may have been able to use funding within one of these strands so as to develop capacity within Family Literacy although this was not the explicit intention of the fund.

The current research study was identified as having an important role in raising the profile of family literacy and providing evidence of its value:

There is a need for national level research of this kind to support local authorities in their ask of promoting Family Literacy and indeed Family Learning in general to colleagues both and internal and external level and to acknowledge the lasting impact this provision has upon families in to the impact. Whilst local level data and evidence is valuable a large scale national study does bring impact and endorsement as when faced with many other priorities in an education department Family Learning is not always at the top of the list.

Resource implications of family literacy for local authorities

In many cases local authorities were reported as supplementing LSC funding. A few managers said that their authorities did not provide funds, although they may have been referring to *direct* funding. Respondents who identified the financial implications of family literacy provision for local authorities pointed to the cost of staffing including the cost of: planning and running joint sessions; training and development; management and programme development; building and maintaining partnerships. Other cost implications for local authorities were identified as providing childcare/ crèches, evaluating, tracking and monitoring progression, and engaging hard to reach learners.

Individual managers reported using creative, flexible approaches, efficient management and securing favourably rates for Skills for Life as ways of managing limited funds. One reported having negotiated a reduction in their target.

Summary

Partnership models

Schools were identified as key partners in the recruitment and delivery of FL, with commitment from head teachers and teaching staff, and joint delivery being important. Partnerships with colleges enabled good quality course delivery and provided access to progression opportunities. Wider partnerships, especially in terms of involvement of other LA teams and staff in other statutory and voluntary organisations were valuable in terms of sharing practice, coordinating activity and engaging hard to reach groups.

Disseminating key messages

Meetings were commonly used as a means of disseminating messages, along with presentations, conferences and newsletters. Advocacy by tutors and head teachers, FL teams visiting schools and celebrations of family literacy programmes were identified as successful. As a prerequisite the benefits of family literacy need to be captured and attention paid to the parental role in children's attainment.

Mainstreaming

While FL has been mainstreamed in some authorities, less progress had been made in others. Impact at strategic level was indicated by FL having the support of senior managers – although not necessarily across the whole authority – and by family literacy being linked to wider strategies including ECM. The qualifications held by FL

tutors, their access to development opportunities and collaborative activity were also identified as indicative of the status of FL in local authorities.

Assisting integration into local authorities

A number of factors were thought to assist integration of FL into local authorities including commitment by senior managers and partners. Resourcing was identified as important. LSC funds were sufficient for some authorities but additional funds were needed in others particularly for non-delivery activity such as planning and for analysing the outcome data. An insufficient supply of tutors was a concern for some managers. Having a family literacy strategy and information about need would be helpful, although few respondents reported having either. Some managers had developed successful strategies for engaging hard to reach learners, but others needed guidance on doing this.

Resource implications of family literacy for local authorities

Many local authorities provide resources to support non-delivery activities such as management, planning, partnership work, providing crèche facilities, tracking progression and; engaging hard to reach learners.

Appendix W: Case studies

Introduction

Five case studies, four of FL programmes and one of an LA, were undertaken to:

1. Illustrate good or interesting practice
2. Illustrate and bring to live problems and challenges
3. Inform other providers working in similar contexts and with similar client groups
4. Provide an overview for practitioners working on the case study programmes to inform the development of their practice.

Sources of data for case studies

As far as possible, the case studies were constructed using the following sources although not all data sources were available for all cases:

- Objective data about parents' and children's progression and achievement;
- Interviews with FLLN managers, tutors, teachers and headteachers;
- Interviews or focus groups with parents
- Observation reports generated visits to the case study site; and
- Ofsted reports.

Selection of case studies

In selecting cases the team sought a geographic spread, and a mix of urban and rural; standard and short programmes; and school and non-school settings. Two case studies were located in the North West, one in the South West, one in the Midlands, and one in East Anglia. Researcher knowledge of LAs' courses, together with the enthusiasm of teaching staff to engage in the project, were key in making the final selection. The rationale and purpose of the case studies were as follows:

Case study 1 demonstrates how positive relationship work contributes to the successful delivery of FL.

Case study 2 reflects the way in which the LA seeks to embed Family Literacy courses in schools situated in areas of high need.

Case study 3 illustrates how a strong partnership between a school and family learning staff enables recruitment in a challenging socio-economic context.

Case study 4 illustrates successful partnership between an infant school and the Family Learning team

Case study 5 (which forms chapter 5 of the main report) identifies lessons on the way FL is organised within the LA as a whole. The LA ran 20 standard FL courses this year.

X.1 CASE STUDY 1

Rationale

This case study is significant because it demonstrates how positive relationship work contributes to the successful delivery of FL.

Course: 36 hour short course, running one morning per week from January to April 2009.

Introduction

This case study is significant because it demonstrates how positive relationship work contributes to the successful delivery of FL. In this particular LA, the ACL service's partnership with a small number of schools to deliver FL has had an impact that filters through the courses themselves so that the partnership approach has developed beyond the service and the schools to those receiving FL support – the children and parents.

By working closely with these schools and offering them each year we have built up a good relationship with the staff at the schools. They know what to expect and can signpost parents and carers to these courses. We always use a teacher who is known to the school, either the class teacher or a regular supply teacher; the teacher usually remains the same one for years, which promotes a comfort zone for the parents/carers. FL manager

The focus of the study is on 12 parents and their children who attended a course at Bluedove School in 2009.

Setting

Bluedove School is an average sized school located in a deprived urban area. It caters for children aged 4 to 7 and has nursery provision. Most of the children are white British. The percentage of children eligible for schools meals is well above average. Many more children have learning difficulties or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special education need is average, Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below that found normally, particularly children's personal, social and emotional development and in their communications, language and literacy skills. Bluedove is a good example of a community school. It has formed successful partnerships to deliver intergenerational activities and programmes for families.

They have had programmes running over the last twelve years. It's a rolling programme, so traditionally we run family literacy there in the autumn term, and numeracy in the spring term. Adult tutor

The FL course

The short FL course offered a combined programme for parents and their children. It aimed to help the parents and their children to develop their language and literacy

skills both separately and together; extend parents' skills in supporting their children's learning and provide progression routes for returning to learning and employment. The course was planned by an adult tutor from ACL and an early years teacher from the school who were supported by the Head and school staff. 12 parents and 12 children were recruited to the course by the school.

Recruiting is about building relationships, as the headteacher explained:

As well as advertising FL in our school newsletter, we target specific year groups and send individual letters to parents. We started doing this about three or four years ago and it has had a tremendous impact on recruitment. Word of mouth also works really well – if the parents have enjoyed the course they'll talk about it to other parents.

The adult tutor commented:

It has got to the stage with recruitment now where she (teacher) doesn't have to do anything, they (parents) approach her at school, and say when is this next course coming up, and can I come? So to the extent that this year, this particular year, out of about sixty we had twenty eight wanting to come on the course. So we ran two family literacy courses instead of running a family literacy and family numeracy with the same year group.

However, a small number of the parents on the course were qualified at Level 2 and above. The tutor specified and explained the rationale for this:

We don't select parents, we don't advertise to particular parents, we've always advertised to everybody otherwise they feel picked on and identified,most of the parents that we get, if not all, will be people who need the programme. On that last course I had a couple of level two parents, but even they, if you did a spiky profile of their literacy skills, would have significant gaps in some areas, because, for many years, for example, punctuation and grammar wasn't explicitly taught in schools, so they don't know about that sort of thing.

Teaching approaches

The parents' needs were addressed with relevant teaching and learning activities and their progress was monitored.

The tutor said:

The first session tends to be an ice breaker where they have to speak to each other, and then we try and compile information about everybody...I also ask them to do a piece of personal writing for me. That's part of my initial assessment, although there are more standard assessments that we use, later on in the programme. We also do a learning style quiz.

The adult sessions provided information on how language and literacy skills develop, and strategies for parents to use to support their children's learning. The teachers

used creative and imaginative ways to promote literacy, for example, showing ways of supporting reading and sharing stories; providing opportunities for the parents to extend their own writing skills; develop punctuation skills and identify text types. The course also provided advice and support on further qualification and progression to further learning.

As the teacher explained:

Well, in a three hour session the first two hours are spent in separate teacher tutor time. So I have the parents for that time, and my colleague has the children, and then we come together for a joint session, which we would jointly plan the week before. This last term it's been mainly book based, but sometimes it's based on letters or a topic that we happen to both be doing. And sometimes, if the parents ask to do a particular thing, like CV writing, or interview techniques, we can incorporate having the children interview the parents, etc, as well. So we are led by what the programme wants us to do and what the parents want us to do. To start with, because I think it's less threatening, I do talk about the children and supporting the children, and how children learn to read, and then I try and extend it to adult techniques of reading, on the premise that you know all of this, but your children possibly don't, and might have to have it pointed out to them more explicitly.

The work in the children's sessions focused on stories and linked activities. The sessions were fun and creative. The children also had the opportunity to develop their language skills through conversation both one to one and in the small group. The additional sessions for the children were designed to offer a boost to their development. They provided a short period of intensive support away from the classroom.

The early years teacher said:

I try and do things in FL that a class teacher would find difficult to do with 30 children...

However, the group was challenging as a small number of children had Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The teaching environment was also an issue because the children's sessions took place in the corridor (the FL classroom for children is only available in the autumn term).

Adults and children

The joint session activities were the focal point of the course. They highlighted the connections between all three sessions and provided opportunities for parents to practise their skills and support their children's learning.

The preparation for the joint activity occurred before each session and was practical in nature. In one session, observed as part of the evaluation, the teacher read a story to the children and their parents. The session was characterised by the use of 'models' to help the parents use fun strategies to support literacy development, for example, reading aloud, allowing time for the children to study the pictures and to

make comments, encouraging predictions, connecting sounds to letters and learning new words. The families were given the opportunity to reflect and share their experience in conversation and participate in a range of writing and craft related activities. They were also encouraged to share ways in which they could extend these experiences at home.

I think the joint sessions, where we let the parents put into practice the things that we've taught them about how to stimulate children when they read, how to ask, how to vary open and closed questions according to what you want to get out of them. But also particularly successful sessions with the adults as well, because we actually play games, which helped them, so you know, they had fun while they were doing it. Other than that one of the most successful adult sessions was when we played musical instruments to show where punctuation should go. They enjoyed that. This was the parents only, because the children haven't got on to do much punctuation yet. They also enjoyed craft activity, and that gave them a chance to actually speak with their children. That's concentrated more on the relationship than what we would see as straight literacy.

Parents' evaluations of the sessions' content and structure were very positive. For example, one parent commented:

The teacher is brilliant... when she reads a story she gets right into it. I look at her and think the children are enjoying it; I could try that and do what she does at home.

The early years teacher said:

The buzz of having parents in school is very stimulating for the children... they absolutely love the joint session.

Teaching staff

The course was planned and taught by qualified staff and supported by the service's senior management team and the headteacher. The FL teacher works part-time in school and is a good advocate for the programme because when she works in the nursery and talks about FL to the teachers and parents.

The tutor said:

I've run family literacy courses where you've gone into a school with a supply teacher, and that doesn't work as well, because you don't have the relationship with other teachers within the school. I've gone into schools where the teacher is employed, like my current course, and that works much better, because they know where all the resources are. We also have a course where we use a supply teacher that was a regular supply for the school and was suggested by the school, so I think that's quite important, that the teacher is taking the children, if you like, out of the classroom, is somebody that the school feel that they can rely upon to cover the curriculum.

The teachers had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities involved and worked together closely on assessment, planning, delivery, monitoring and reviewing support for the families.

The headteacher said that the key to success in engaging parents in FL at the school is the teamwork between the early year's teacher and the adult tutor.

Impact of course

There was evidence from the course to indicate that many parents and children had demonstrated positive outcomes:

- Improved achievement
- Improved relationships
- Improved social skills
- Improved motivations
- Raised aspirations
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Greater interest in further courses and qualifications.

Parents and staff described how FL has helped families:

I think confidence is the biggest factor – teachers certainly report this for both children and parent (Headteacher)

Some FL parents are more involved in school activities now – one of our TAs started off in FL a couple of years ago - he trained as a teaching assistant (TA) because of the course. (Teacher)

Well, I was nervous, I must admit, because it had been a long time since I'd done any kind of studying or anything like that, so it took a long while for me to actually get used to it, because it had been over twenty years since I'd left school, so it was the first thing I'd done in a classroom situation for over twenty years, so I must admit I was a bit nervous, and I sat there for a few weeks, just kind of...and then slowly the group gets together, you mix, you make friends, and I really enjoyed it, I loved it. (Former FL learner)

Having two children it's difficult spending one-to one time with them. With having S in the crèche and having time with T has been lovely. He loved the course; it was the highlight of his week. He was upset to find out that last week was the last session. (FL learner)

We buy more books now and it's a lot calmer reading at home. T is coming to me and asking me to read with him' ... it's quite a turnaround. (FL learner)
I want to make something of my life now – it's opened my mind up and made things a bit clearer. (FL learner)

I'm really proud of myself. I'd like to take things a bit further now. (FL learner)
My daughter enjoyed being with me and wanted to do more days on the course. (FL learner)

I think every session we've had has been quite helpful. When we're looking at homework, I'm looking at different ways of doing things now – I'm using ideas from the course. (FL learner)

One child after the course kept stopping me in school and said 'I really love FL'. One time he grabbed me and put his arms around me and said: 'Mrs F, you have to do another FL course about full stops!' He was pleading with me...(Tutor).

In the county where this case study was located, 12 adults all took the short length course. For the 10 people in this sample who completed the Time 1 and 2 reading test, the mean was 26 at Time 1 27 at Time 2. This is an increase of 1 point. Thirteen children attended the short courses and completed writing data has been received for 12. The mean score on the writing test at Time 1 was 5, and on the Time 2 test was 6.

Factors working for success

- Relationships are not one-sided, but rather are mutually supportive. 'Friends of the School', a support group for the school, was established by a group of FL learners
- Positive relationships
- The length of the course - short courses work well – parents tend to stay to the end of course now
- The high quality inter-personal style of the tutor and teacher
- Effective team working
- Strong links with the adult and child sessions
- Interactive, practical and enjoyable sessions
- Group, pair and individual work
- Some effective progression routes e.g. to classroom assistant.
- Comments from learners that demonstrated their increased confidence
- Parents were offered information and strategies for supporting their children learning at home
- Home experiences were valued
- There was access to a classroom, an interactive whiteboard and adult sized furniture
- Parents positively connected with other parents
- The early years teacher was a great advocate for the programme because she works in the nursery and talks about FL to the teachers and parents.

Factors working against success

- The intensive/standard course was a big commitment for the families - some found it difficult to attend all the sessions.
- It is easier to involve young children in the programme – working with year 2 would be more difficult for the teachers unless it's a child working below average level
- Promoting progress routes is extremely important but there can be challenges in ensuring there is sufficient and appropriate follow-up
- The children's sessions took place in the corridor (the FL classroom for children is only available in the autumn term).

Implications/recommendations for policy and practice

- The study indicated that a key factor in successful FL was the ability to make and maintain relationships.

X.2 CASE STUDY 2

Rationale

This case study is based on one Family Literacy course and has been chosen because it reflects the way in which the LA seeks to embed Family Literacy courses in schools situated in areas of high need.

Course: Family Literacy: 60 hour Standard course running for one 3 hour session a week from 9.00 until 12.00 from autumn 2008 to May 2009. The literacy test was taken as part of the programme.

Introduction

This LA was chosen as a case study because it had a good track record of commitment to FLLN working in areas of high need. Family learning was contained within several key local authority strategies including those relating to children and young people, obesity, lifelong learning, children centres, parenting and child poverty. The strategy also supported identifying areas of low literacy skills, communities of deprivation and disadvantage, and where there might be low achievement in schools. Engagement with head teachers, children centre managers and community organisations raised awareness of family literacy at local level. Family Literacy courses were often a progression from WFL programmes and had been successful due to the structure of courses, and the awareness and co-operation of venue staff.

Partnerships existed with schools, children centres, libraries, museums, colleges, extended services, Gypsy and Travellers Liaison, health and mental health services, Play for Success, community organisations, BBC RAW. These services complemented delivery and had been extremely successful in engaging parents and children, in raising awareness of other learning opportunities and in encouraging progression in vocational and social skills.

The Setting: Holy Cross Primary School

The school is situated in one of the highest areas of need in [name of county] with high levels of Skills for Life need. There were 180 children on roll, with numbers falling as the population was aging. 48% of children were EAL, with a mixture of nationalities from Eastern Europe and Pakistan in the main, and a number of Czech Roma families who were settled in [name of county] through an asylum seeker dispersal programme.

The school went into special measures in 2006. Under the current new headship, it moved from special measures to good within 17 months and came out of special measures in 2008.

Family Learning was first introduced to the school about 8 years before by the current family learning tutor, then in a different role. After initial scepticism from the head teacher, the changes in attitude to the school by parents involved in the family learning courses convinced him to back more family programmes.

A portacabin in need of repair and situated in the playground was designated for family learning and renovated by the families and the tutor. When the portacabin was needed for playgroup in 2008, family learning was re-housed in the school, with a specially designated family learning room with cooker, sink and computer. A broad learning offer was being offered to families using the family learning room including a rolling programme of Family Literacy/Numeracy focused on Year 1 children, and adult education classes for parents provided by the local college. The school was funding, through the main school budget, a short family learning course in term 5/6 with the parents of children in the reception year as part of the recruitment process for a Family Literacy or Numeracy course the following autumn. Governors and the headteacher valued the impact of family learning.

Family learning was seen as part of a package of support for families. The Ofsted report in March 2008 praised the family learning in the school as “support for vulnerable pupils and their families through the family learning group and the learning mentor has strengthened links between school and home, helping to improve attitudes, attendance and achievement of those pupils.”

The headteacher

The headteacher was female, and joined the school in 2006 as it went in to special measures. She viewed family learning as a vital part of school life and felt that any support for parents was worthwhile and family programmes encouraged parents to come in to school. The course brought parents on board and they enjoyed working with the children. She felt that there were no negatives about the course. It helped build a sense of community and it gave real opportunities for parents to progress. However, because there was a qualification and test involved in the course, it was difficult recruiting parents. Many parents thought they were not clever enough to join. If there were not a test involved, she felt that more parents would enrol as they feel threatened by the test. Many parents had a school phobia and bad memories of their time at school.

The Family Literacy course

Because the school only had 180 children on role and the intake was one class of about 18 children, there were issues about recruiting enough target parents from a year group. It had taken 5 weeks before the course was acknowledged as viable with 6 adults rather than the 8 stipulated by LSC funding criteria.

The course took place on Monday morning from 9.00 until 12.00, dividing into an adult only session followed by a joint session and completing with an adult only session. The children’s session took place at a different time. The early years teacher and adult tutor co-taught the adult only and joint sessions with the children’s teacher taking the main lead in the joint session.

The parents had at first been reluctant to consider taking a qualification, insisting that they were attending because they wanted to work in group with their children. The literacy test and mock test were included as part of the course.

The programme included a whole class trip in to the country and a whole class visit to the local library. A visit by the information and guidance service (CIAS) was built in to the course. Progression was seen as one outcome from the course, and the adult tutor commented that often the realisation that qualification = progression = increase in salary was a great motivator.

The size of the group in joint sessions – 6 adults, 6 children and 2 tutors – allowed for good bonding as a group and within individual child/adult pairs. This gave everyone a chance to join in and share their views.

Recruitment for family literacy/numeracy courses fell into 3 main parts:

- A short Keeping up with the Children type course funded from the main school budget in terms 4/6 with parents with children in reception. This paved the way for a family literacy/numeracy course in the autumn.
- Letters to parents, translated as needed into first languages, with information about the family literacy/numeracy course
- A display about the family literacy/numeracy course and input from the FL tutor at open days and parents' meetings.

There was no targeting of specific families. The school is in an area where adult skills are generally low. There was a fear among some parents that the course would be at too high a level for them, particularly when they heard that there was a national test involved.

The classroom

The course took place in a specially designated classroom with adult size table and chairs, whiteboard, flipchart and a computer. The children joined the adults in this room for the joint session. There were tea-making facilities, a sink and cooker. Parents and children were able to display their work and photos from the course and do a variety of creative activities as well as use ICT. A large display board in the room proclaimed: "Family learning is fun. Welcome" decorated with paper fold-out family strings made by learners on the Family Literacy programme. One child when asked what he most liked about the course replied that it was making his fold-out family.

Teaching approaches

The approaches were collaborative, interactive and investigative enabling guided discovery. The adult tutor reported that he was pleased with the effectiveness of this approach which he had developed more fully on this course.

There were demonstrations of current teaching practice with children, e.g. synthetic phonics using Jolly Phonics and flashcards, how children learn to read, reading strategies and techniques, spelling strategies. with the result that parents/carers could recognize aspects of children's learning and be more aware when supporting literacy skills at home.

The explanations and demonstrations during the adult only session were then put in to practice with the children in the joint sessions.

Learning was offered in chunks with a variety of different activities through the sessions. These included short bursts of brain gym, singing and movement during the joint session aimed at the children in particular.

The adults

There were six adults enrolled on the course, five women with English as their first language who were intending to take the L2 literacy qualification. and one Hungarian woman who intended to take the L1 literacy qualification. One learner was a grandmother and another was supporting a non-related child with the permission of the parents.

The tutor had used the Go! assessments and learners would take the test at the end of the course. After some initial reluctance, all the learners were happy to take the test. In the early days of the course it had been difficult to persuade the learners to continue attending but they had strong input into course activities and all showed great enthusiasm. All the learners completed the course, except that one learner did not come sufficiently often to take the national test at the end.

The children

The children were in year 1. The course gave them lots of opportunities to improve their confidence and spoken communication skills in particular by talking individually in the group including reporting back at the end of sessions. Some children would not speak out at the beginning of the course. They felt special because they were working 1:1 with their parent or adult carer. They made new friends within the group and this is extending to doing activities together in the school holidays.

Staffing on the course

The adult tutor was male and had substantial experience of teaching FLLN and a long-standing relationship with the school.

The separate children's session was staffed by a female qualified children's teacher who also attended and took part in the adult only session. She had allocated time for the development and delivery of FL as part of PPA cover. For several years she delivered the Share programme to parents in school. Two years before she had been instrumental in setting up the current family learning programme under the name "Links".

The LA manager

The family learning manager served as a representative on related steering and working groups. This had meant that FL was seen as a key activity within the LA and supported better planning of service delivery and greater awareness of programme aims and achievements.

She feels that the mainstreaming of FL is, a gradual and on-going process. Although initiatives such as QIA/LSIS regional improvement initiatives and focussed funding streams such as FLIF have given impetus, there remains work to be done to

both embed FL within strategic planning and to recognise that FL is an important element of education and community development in its own right. The Integration is impaired by difficulties in forward planning caused by lack of security of funding. A higher national profile would support local publicity and awareness drives

Impact

The children's growth in confidence and improvement in social and oral skills were seen as the main achievements from the course. They were more ready to take an active part in activities. The family support worker in school has commented on their improvement in communication skills.

All the adults were very positive about the course and talked about what learning to take up next, including enrolling for a "feeding the family on a budget course" provided by the local college and soon to take place in the family room. Two learners were planning to follow an IT course at a local centre and said that they now had the confidence to look for learning outside the school premises.

Because they had been on the course, school now knew them better and they were "front line" for being asked by school to e.g. volunteer to help on school outings. They were all very pleased to be in this role.

Five out of the six adults who enrolled completed the course and took the national literacy test – four at level 2 and one, who had Hungarian as her first language, at Level 1.

Improvement of adult skills

All the adults reported more confidence and a refreshed knowledge of grammar terms and phonics. They felt that school was now more approachable and they no longer felt scared to go and ask a teacher something about their child. They found the social aspect of the course very important and felt that the 1:1 work with their child helped bonding. Doing activities at home with the children was now more fun and they felt more able to support their children's learning as they understood more about the teaching at school.

Comments from the adults:

"Fantastic, fun (the course), I want to come back next term."

"It's the only time that I spend alone with my kid."

"I've noticed my daughter shares more now – with me and other children."

The headteacher reported that course made the parents feel more capable. Before the course they had felt vulnerable because they could not keep up with the children as they proceeded through the school. It helped them develop a working relationship with the school from when their children were young and developed language and ways of talking together in a way that they did not do at home. It gave the parents and children a common area of interest. It built new networks of friends and this gave support to each other as the children moved through the school.

The parents felt more part of the school through participating in the course. This was helped because the family learning room was in school and the parents saw what was going on in class on their way to the room.

In the county where this case study was based, the adults all took the standard length course. For the 6 people in this sample, 4 completed the pre and post reading and writing tests. The mean score on the reading pre-test was 33, and on the post-test was 30. The mean score on the writing pre-test was 24, and on the post-test was 24. For the six children who attended courses here, all on the short course, the mean score on the reading pre-test was 32, and on the post-test was 40. The mean score on the writing pre-test for the four children who completed it was 6, and the mean score on the post-test was 7.

Factors working for success in the FL class at St. Paul's Primary:

- Excellent working relationship between the family learning tutor and the children's teacher
- The size of the group (12 in total) enabled bonding and allowed enough time in each session for everyone to join and share their views
- Course content – activities planned by tutors but with strong input from the adults
- The valuing of parental involvement by the headteacher, school and governors as an important factor in children's learning
- The embedding of family literacy as part of a wider family and adult learning programme
- Established timetable to include family literacy/numeracy
- Staff time specifically allocated to recruiting and delivering family literacy/numeracy
- Specially designated space in the main school building.

Factors working against success

- The initial requirement to have 8 adults on the course to fulfil funding criteria
- The test requirement of the course puts some the least confident parents off from enrolling.

The school had reported difficulty in recruiting for the course and that it felt that the inclusion of the test at Levels 1 and 2 precluded lower level and less confident parents.

X.3 CASE STUDY 3

Rationale

This case illustrates how a strong partnership between a school and family learning staff enables recruitment in a challenging socio-economic context.

Course

Family Literacy: standard joint course consisting of one three-hourly session per week from October 2008 to March 2009.

Introduction

Family Learning (FL) in [name of LA] was delivered by the local Community College on behalf of the adult education service and the schools within the local authority. Tutors attended parts of LA school training programme. FL had been successfully integrated into the local authority and strong relationships had been established with partners such as the libraries, Every Child Matters, the Extended Schools Cluster and the Skills for Life department in [named] Community College. According to the FLLN managers, more resources were needed to engage hard to reach learners, evaluate impact and ensure that the costs of childcare provision were met. Across the authority, learners were recruited through workshops, publicity and flyers for learners, schools and children's centres. Overall, success, achievement and retention rates were above benchmarks.

The setting: Rose Valley Primary School

The school is located near to the centre of [name of city] and catered for children aged between three and 11 years. With 176 pupils at the last inspection, the school was smaller than average. The majority of the children were white. The proportion of children identified as having learning difficulties was well above average, as was the number of children eligible for free school meals. The school was graded at level 2 (good) at the last inspection and praised for its "high standards of care" and "effective education that enables pupils to make good progress and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem". At the start of their education, children's knowledge and skills were well below that typical of their age but they achieved well in their first year.

Children's sessions were delivered at Rose Valley Primary School and the adult and joint sessions were held at the local Children's Centre which is two minutes walk from the school. The school buildings were in a poor state of repair. However, the local community was able to access a range of support services, such as drop-in sessions for fathers, on the premises.

Rose Valley Primary became involved in family literacy in order to promote the literacy of local families and pupil progress. Recruitment to FL was mainly via the Pastoral Coordinator/Child Protection Officer who is based at the school. Having been appointed ten years earlier to provide support for children with behavioural problems, the coordinator now spent about half of her time supporting parents and signposting them to agencies such as UCAN which offers a range of services

including information and advice on training and employment. The coordinator also ran short group sessions where parents could share problems and participate in craft activities. These sessions took place in a large relaxed space decorated with murals and furnished with sofas and cushions. By building the trust and confidence of parents in this way, the coordinator was able to introduce them to the family literacy programme.

The Family literacy course

This was the first joint FL course run at Rose Valley School, although the team had run several other family learning courses there over the previous four years. The class met on Monday mornings between 9am and noon. Parents started their sessions with drinks and toast at 9am and worked until about 11.15am. Children's sessions started at 9.30am. Children on the FL programme left their class for individual or paired sessions of between 10 and 15 minutes with a primary school trained practitioner. At 11.15am, the parents collected their children from the school and brought them back to the centre for the joint session. Both teacher and tutor were present at this session.

The parents' course started in the middle of October and the first children's session was held at the beginning of December once all the children had been individually assessed.

At the beginning of the course, the teacher and parents wrote a formal Individual Learning Plan and parents assessed their skills. This self-assessment was included in the parents' Learner Records, which were maintained throughout the course. The self-assessment exercise was repeated at the end of the course so that parents could determine their progress. The teacher kept records of in-class activities and evaluated each parent's progress every week. At the end of each session parents recorded their comments and any home activities they had done with their child during the week.

At the end of the course parents were asked to complete a progress record. As this was designed for use with learners in FE, a more appropriate one was currently being developed for use with learners on family learning programmes. The tutor invited FL learners and other interested parents to meet a *Skills for Life* tutor at the school after the course had finished. Nine learners attended and three others returned their interest forms resulting in a Sfl Level 1 and 2 course being offered on the school premises beginning in September 2009. It was intended that the local College's advice and guidance officer would also be invited to a session to talk about progression on to further education or employment. However, they declined this offer as the majority of the learners were progressing on to Level 1/2, and one who was volunteering in school had enrolled for a classroom assistant course in September. They would have this opportunity again the following year.

The learning spaces

Adult sessions were held at a new, purpose-built Children's Centre. The centre had an on-site café and crèche, offered a range of family activities and courses, and drop-in sessions for other services such as a Health Visitor, Police Community

Support and the Job Centre. The pastoral coordinator arranged for free use of the crèche for parents during the sessions. The classroom was a pleasant, light, modern space containing a central block of tables, a resource table and facilities for making drinks and washing up.

Children were usually taught in a small room in the school, but on the day of the observation building work meant these sessions had to be held in the canteen, which was cold, uncomfortable and occasionally noisy.

Teaching approach

The Family Learning team – consisting of the adult tutor and child and Early Year’s practitioners – shared good practice at curriculum meetings to ensure that a selection of good quality activities were available for everyone to use. The overall approach was to provide active learning experiences in sessions that were interesting and fun as well as informative.

The tutor used individual, paired and group activities based around the children’s learning and curriculum. This might include looking at children’s books to see how they are structured and using adult texts with sessions structured in the format of the literacy hour to develop skills in the use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and the purpose of reading. Parents were supported to create good quality resources which could support their children’s learning at home whilst also increasing their own knowledge.

Resources used by the tutor included *Skillswise* sheets which were designed to support Skills for Life (Entry level to Level 2) programmes and were downloadable from the BBC website, and Skills for Life practice papers.

At the beginning of each session the aims were written on a flipchart and introduced to the group. The tutor engaged learners by asking them to describe their experiences of supporting their children and to assess their level of understanding and recall of particular subjects. Learning was designed to help parents understand the challenges their children faced when learning to read and write, and how they might address these challenges. The tutor suggested approaches which draw upon different learning styles. She provided parents with handouts of tips and hints and examples of activities parents can use at home.

The Early Years teacher used synthetic phonics based on the ‘Sounds~Write’ programme. Children learn six basic sounds, build words and segment them down again. They learn the sound swapping game, where they are encouraged to identify similar sounding words to help to prepare them for words with greater complexity. Children build up more sounds and learn double consonants, they move on to four and five-letter words which they build and segment. More complex graphemes such as ch, ai, ay are added until all of 44 sounds had been covered.

Activities in the joint sessions include stories, singing, practical activities and question and answer exchanges between staff and learners.

The adults and children

Ten parents were enrolled on the course, seven of whom were regular attenders. The remaining three had domestic problems that may have contributed to their poor attendance. On the observation visits, there were five parents in the session, plus an Iranian asylum seeker who, because of her limited ability with spoken English, only attended the joint session. Of the ten children on the FL programme, six were in the reception class, and the remainder were older children working at reception level.

Staffing on the course

The tutor and teacher had a good relationship with one another and their learners. Teaching staff were interested and enthusiastic about their work. However, these roles can be stressful, especially for the tutor who had a heavy workload, was responsible for planning, and had to travel between venues.

Impact and improvement in adult skills

Parents had brushed up on and developed their own literacy skills. Four of the regular attenders passed literacy tests. Two gained City and Guilds at Entry level 3, and two achieved at Entry level 2 in the national test. According to the tutor, the Entry level 3 learners had the ability to succeed at Level 1 but they were unable to take the test at Children's Centre for various reasons – there would not be enough time in a 20 week course involving the children to brush up on the skills needed for this level – the school had already been registered as an authorised centre for G&G as some learners had taken numeracy that year. Also the intention was that the learners gain confidence on FL courses and through close work with SfL team could be provided with a suitable progression route. They could do this at the school.

Attendance on the FL course provided children with quality time with a parent and access to good resources. Parents gained knowledge of the school literacy curriculum, including the technical vocabulary that the children use. Through modelling, parents learnt how to share stories and activities with their children. This had increased their confidence to help their child and encouraged them to engage in activities such as visiting libraries and museums with their child. Some had gained the confidence to come into school; and others helped as volunteer or became teaching assistants or childcare workers.

All adults took the standard length course. For the five people in this sample, 2 completed the pre and post reading and writing tests. The mean score on the reading pre-test was 34, and on the post-test was 29.5. The mean score on the writing pre-test was 23, and on the post-test was 27. There were five children on standard courses in this case study. Two of those completed the pre and post writing and reading tests. The mean score on the reading pre-test was 9, and on the post-test was 18. The mean score on the writing pre-test was 3.5, and on the post-test was 4.

Factors working for success in FL

- The support of the school and particularly the pastoral coordinator, and short creative workshops helped learners to gain confidence, understand family learning and select the most appropriate course.
- Having a free crèche, although it was sometime underused as parents and children did not like to be separated.
- Starting each adult session with tea, toast and talk provided parents with an opportunity to discuss family issues which had occurred over the weekend.
- Providing parents with information about their child's progress and tips on how to support this at home helped parents.
- Using short tasks with the children
- Having a good phonics system helped to identify children's progress.
- Having a joint session.
- Double staffing which allowed tutor and teacher to work together in the joint session
- A primary trained teacher to support children in small groups.

Factors working against success

- Recruiting nine parents as required by the funding. Low parental confidence inhibited recruitment. The current mechanisms may attract parents whose children who are not eligible for FL.
- High drop-out rate, largely due to personal/family commitments and issues and illness.
- Completing the paperwork for the research study was time-consuming, especially as this had to be done in addition to the *Skills for Life* assessments
- Finding rooms in school for the children's sessions was a general problem
- Limited access to IT. Laptops were occasionally used for demonstration purposes but this was not practical on a regular basis as staff already carried a lot of material and resources. On-site computers are needed if parents are to have the opportunity to use them.

Implications for policy and practice

Practice

The case study shows the importance of:

- Using a convenient and familiar venue
- The school as a centre of community service provision
- Wider family learning as a first step to engaging schools in Family literacy provision
- The role of the pastoral coordinator in building trusting relationships with parents and engaging them in learning
- Linking adult learning with children's curriculum and learning
- A range of different types of activity in learning sessions.
- Using phonics in teaching children and enabling parents to support their children
- Positive tutor–learner relationships

- Strong relationships between school and FL staff
- Having clear progression routes
- Enthusiastic committed teaching staff.

Policy

The case study shows:

- The need for funding to engage hard to reach learners, run small groups, meet childcare costs and capture impact data, and the value of funding to enable double staffing in FL sessions.
- The benefits to LAs of integrating FL and making links with government policy
- Shows the contribution of FL to achieving the goals set out in:
 - *Skills of Life* agenda
 - Reaching Out: Think Family
 - *Every Parent Matters*
 - the 'well-being' and 'enjoy and achieve' themes of Every Child Matters.

X.4 CASE STUDY 4

Rationale

This case study illustrates successful partnership between an infant school and the Family Learning team

Course: Family Literacy: short course of weekly one three-hour sessions running from September to December 2008.

Introduction

The LA had been selected because of positive reports about the work of the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) manager and tutors despite limited success in integrating family literacy into the local authority. North Acre School had previously been identified as a case site to illustrate the economic well-being theme of Every Child Matters.²⁴ Family Learning in the county was awarded a grade two (good) in the Ofsted inspection conducted in February 2008.

The FLLN manager asked schools to capture data on children's ability prior to starting a family learning programme and to assess their achievement at the end in order to capture progress. However, schools rarely provided this, in part because of the difficulty in attributing progress directly to FL. Schools were more readily able to capture and provide evidence on the soft outcomes for children which the local authority Improvement Team considered to be equally valuable.

Family learning started slowly in [name of LA] and most development was after funding was provided fully through the LSC from 2002. Developments in engaging with the Early Learning team and Primary Strategy group were in the early stages, and assistance from senior advisers and School Improvement teams to promote FL had been limited. The FLLN manager's time was stretched by the demands of county-wide initiatives and addressing management responsibilities.

Disadvantage was not widespread across the county. Local County Council indices of multiple deprivation were used to target the primary schools where parents and children might benefit most.

The setting: The school

The school had on its roll approximately 227 children aged between four and seven years. According to the latest Ofsted report, children entered with a level of skills below that expected of four-year-olds. Compared with similar schools, there was a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs.

The school was awarded a grade two by Ofsted inspectors in February 2008 and was recognised as a good school with outstanding features. Positive features

²⁴ Lamb, P, Meade, C., Spacey, R. and Thomas, M. (2007) Connect-five. Family learning and *Every Child Matters*. Leicester: NIACE.

included: good teaching which enabled the progress of children of all abilities and good relationships between staff, children and parents.

The school first became involved in family learning about six years earlier through two parent-only courses: a 10-week literacy course followed by a numeracy programme entitled 'Keeping up with the Children'. The school offered themed activities on Family Learning Day.

Extended family learning was introduced two years earlier because of the headteacher's concerns that results were not improving despite having good quality teachers and targeted learning. She considered parental involvement to be the key and sought the advice of the FL manager about setting up a programme.

The school maximised funding by, for example, making their own story sacks of books, games/DVDs rather than buying ready-made packs.

Parents were recruited through advertisements, personal letters, word of mouth and the headteacher directly approaching parents. Initial recruitment was targeted at parents with reception-aged children and extended to Year 1 if an insufficient number from this group were recruited.

The Family literacy course

This course took place on a Tuesday morning from 9am until noon. Parents and children learnt separately initially: the adults from 9am until 11am and the reception children from 9.30am until 10.15am. The observed sessions were lively with parents engaging enthusiastically with the tasks and working well together. The tutor reported that they supported and motivated one another.

At 11am the parents walked from the community centre to North Acre Infant School, which is adjacent to the community centre – for the joint session which ran from 11am until 11.30am. Both tutor and teacher were present at the joint session, with the early years teacher taking the lead. A student helped in the children's session by handing out materials. In joint sessions, the teacher explained the children's activity and its purpose, and the tutor and parents described the work they had been doing. Joint activities or games were used to reinforce the children's learning.

At 11.30am the children left for lunch, leaving the parents, tutor and teacher to discuss the session. The teacher suggested ideas for activities that parents could do with their children and gave out resources to help them.

Parents joined the children in their school assembly towards the end of the course and a treasure hunt was planned for the last session.

Most learners enrolled the following term on a family numeracy course offered by the same tutor. They also had an opportunity to meet and have an individual interview with an adviser from *nextstep* (careers and learning advice service). Six learners, including four ESOL learners, were enjoying continuing their learning with the tutor on a creative writing course.

The learning spaces

Adult learner sessions took place in a community centre adjacent to the infant school. Children's sessions were conducted in the school where parents joined the children for the joint session. The community centre was relatively old, but the appearance of the classroom itself was improved by photos of parents and children engaged in FL. The environment was comfortable, quiet and conducive to learning. The tutor laid out dictionaries on all learners' tables and provided a resource table of children's books and games for parents to borrow.

Facilities for making drinks were used on arrival and at the mid-way break. The tutor provided biscuits and chocolate.

The children's classroom was pleasant and sufficiently large for the children to sit together on the floor, move around and then join their parents at tables for joint work.

Teaching approach

The tutor's approach was to mirror the types of learning and terminology used in the children's classes. Learning and using the same terminology as the children helped parents to communicate and connect with their children. More specifically, knowing mnemonics and phonemes is helpful. At the beginning of the course parents were given an information sheet which listed learning outcomes and described the plan of work.

The tutor was explicit about the objectives of each session, explained tasks clearly and checked understanding. She used repetition and recapping to reinforce learning. Parents were encouraged to use websites and resources brought by the tutor to sessions, and to share their ideas and experiences about resources they had used. The tutor encouraged parents to think about how they might use and adapt classroom activities for use with their children.

Activities included group work, pair work and tutor input with question and answer sessions to encourage parents to review their learning. The tutor identified group activities as particularly effective.

Adult learning was assessed on an on-going basis, using tutor, peer and self-assessment. Every week parents completed a diary sheet on which they recorded their learning in the session, their reflections and home activities. The tutor added her feedback and encouraging comments.

The Early Years teacher used flash cards to help children become familiar with high frequency words, and drama to encourage speaking and listening and to extend language. Drama was particularly effective with the boys. She used synthetic phonics to some extent. Key messages were conveyed and reinforced using a range of activities including games, practical activities such as making books and puppets to help children retell stories, learning simple poems and rhymes to perform for parents. 'Circle time' helped children to explore problems using stories. If classes included children from Years one and two, peer teaching was used.

The adults and children

Many of the adults on the course had negative memories of education and learning and additional challenges such as bringing up their children without a partner or working in several paid jobs to avoid claiming free school meals.

Of the 15 parents in the observed group, four were ESOL learners, whose first language was Hindi. Parents were consulted about whether they would like to take national tests and if so what level of test they would like to take: most opted for Level 1 or Level 2.

The tutor planned to offer further sessions after completion of the ten-week course to help prepare learners to take national tests. The tutor commented that the *Go!* level 2 reading materials were easier than the level 2 National test.

Fifteen children attended the course, all of whom were in the reception class. Hindi was the first language of four of the children in the group. The teacher particularly commented on the good progress made by the ESOL children.

Staffing on the course

Both tutor and teacher were positive and enthusiastic. The tutor said of her work: "I am happy with what I do. I love it. I love the size of the groups – 8 or 18. I love the challenge, building confidence and encouraging the parents". The head teacher commended staff for their patience, humour and ability to form good relationships with parents.

Impact

Family literacy was thought to improve parents' understanding about how children are taught and to provide them with strategies to support their children's learning. It helped build parents' and children's confidence in themselves and in one another. Children felt more confident about asking for help and parents were more confident about their ability to give it. Parents described how they used flash cards and resources from the recommended websites with their children, played games, read more with their children at home and used everyday situations as learning opportunities. Some were more involved with the school.

Staff thought that FL raised the aspirations of parents and children. According to the tutor, many of the parents moved on from family learning to become teaching assistants in the school.

Eight were successful in Level 1 National Tests and seven at Level 2. Many continued to Family Numeracy; of these, two achieved Entry level 3, seven gained a Level 1 qualification, and five were successful at Level 2.

FL provided fun and friendship for those parents who had difficult domestic lives. Parents enjoyed and were very positive about the course: "...it's a fantastic opportunity." The parents valued the long-term benefits of family literacy:

“The course is for life. I can take the knowledge away with me and this will benefit my child for the rest of his learning in school.”

Improvement of adult skills

Some parents had particular concerns about their literacy at the beginning, while others regarded the course as a useful refresher. In specific terms, parents mentioned expanding their vocabulary, and gaining a better understanding of grammar and the structure of sentences and of segmenting words. More generally, they gained in confidence, knowledge and qualifications.

In the county where this case study was located, 18 adults took courses (note that information was not provided as to whether these were standard or short courses). Pre- and post-test reading data were complete for 14 of the adults. There was no information on their writing. For those 14, the mean score on the reading pre-test was 26, and on the post-test was 29. For the children who attended courses in this county, data were available for 16 (with no information provided as to which course they attended). Complete writing data were available for 14 of the sample. The mean score on the writing pre-test was 4, and on the post-test was 10.

Factors working for success in FL

The headteacher, school and family literacy staff, the teaching approach and parents themselves were all identified as success factors. The tutor in particular highlighted the headteacher's role:

“I think the over-riding factor is the strong motivational drive of the Head(s) to sell Family Learning in and out of school, knowing firsthand how much it benefits children, parents and the school.”

The headteacher's commitment affected both recruitment effort and the engagement of other school staff, not just those involved in teaching. Patience, a sense of humour and the ability to form good working relationship with the adult learners were identified as important qualities in teaching staff. Parents themselves contributed to success by their wish to learn for their own benefit as well as for their children.

Teaching staff identified particular features of the programme and teaching approaches which promoted success:

- Working within a structure whilst retaining the freedom to discuss and share.
- Re-capping learning each week in order to consolidate and reinforce learning.
- Using group activities so that parents can share and learn from one another.
- Practical activities, especially with larger groups.
- Showing parents how they can support their children's learning through talking with them and everyday activities.
- Modelling ways of engaging the children with a text.
- Making parents aware the progress expected of their children and raising parents' and children's expectations.
- Inviting parents and children to complete a contact book to record home activities such as reading and singing.

Factors working against success

Having to complete extra paperwork for funding reports and tracking progression was burdensome. Lack of access to IT in the community centre meant that the tutor was dependent on an OHP or on bringing her laptop to demonstrate websites. Until extra accommodation could be built the school lacked a sufficiently large classroom to accommodate the course. More specific to teaching were the challenges of enabling a large group to establish an identity, integrating ESOL with non-ESOL learners, and ensuring that individuals were supported and their needs met.

Practice

The case shows importance of:

- partnership between school and FL team and the role of wider family learning programmes in achieving initial engagement.
- role of the headteacher
- creative approaches to optimise use of funds
- relationships in recruiting adult learners
- familiar, convenient venues
- tutor-learner relationships
- enthusiastic, committed teaching staff
- creative, relevant, varied and active learning
- use of a range of assessment methods
- modelling and mirroring children's learning in adult teaching
- having clear progression routes.

Policy

The case study shows:

- the value of LSC funding in counties with pockets of, rather than widespread, deprivation
- the contribution of FL to achieving the goals of key policy agendas:
 - the 'well-being' and 'enjoy and achieve' themes of Every Child Matters
 - the *Skills for Life* agenda
 - the parenting aspects of *Every Parent Matters*

and suggests a need to:

- encourage senior managers in local authorities to be more proactive in integrating FL
- provide support and mechanisms to help schools to identify FL contribution to 'hard' outcomes

Implications from the case studies for policy makers

Key success factors

LAs

- Dedicated, supportive LA managers who understand how schools work and have a flexible approach to FL including willingness to maintain programmes when adult enrolments are low to keep schools engaged.
- Strong relationships between LAs and schools. LA staff who are patient, persistent and flexible in building relationships with schools.
- Providing funding for dedicated tutor and teacher time including funds for schools to buy supply cover so that school staff can be involved in FL recruitment, planning and delivering FL and attending training courses.
- Partnerships with colleges which enable access to good quality *Skills for Life* tutors for FLLN
- Structures such having a Directorate of Children and Family Services which recognises the need to support families
- Providing or accessing funds for free crèches during FL sessions.
- Evaluate courses and promote all outcomes and include them in LA annual performance assessments
- Promoting success and advertising FL activities and achievements through a variety of channels.

The school

- Supportive committed headteachers who support FL and recognise its benefits and the role of parents in children's learning.
- Parent support officers or pastoral coordinators who build trusting relationships with parents and engaging them in learning.
- established timetable to include family literacy/numeracy
- specially designated space in the main school building
- Using convenient and familiar venues, appropriately resourced and furnished for FL sessions and adjacent premises where learners can continue their studies.

Staff, staff and training

- Recruiting good well qualified tutors and teaching staff eg by targeting FL tutors who have been awarded a Grade 2 by inspectorate.
- Tutors and teachers who are committed and passionate about FL and can form positive relationships with learners and with a good working partnership with one another
- Double staffing so that tutor and teacher can work together in the joint session.
- Providing training for FL tutors including courses on literacy strategies for teaching children and support and further training for SfL teachers new to FL.
- Managers and tutors who understand local cultural norms and attitudes.

- Building strong relationships between school and FL staff.

Courses

- The embedding of family literacy as part of a wider family and adult learning programme to encourage engagement via short FL courses and enable progression.
- Providing short courses for parents who are daunted by the commitment required to attend standard courses
- Providing standard courses which have a greater chance of maximizing change and progression.
- Facilitating supportive learner relationships eg by group sizes that enable bonding and allows enough time in each session for everyone to join and share their views, and having social support time at the beginning of a session; using group activities for parents to share and learn from one another.
- Facilitating learner commitment eg by providing parents with information about their child's progress and with information and strategies to support their children, and valuing home activities.
- Having a joint session and linking adult learning with children's curriculum and learning.
- Using a range of different types of creative, practical and relevant learning with strong input from the adults.
- Modelling ways of engaging the children.
- Re-capping learning each week in order to consolidate and reinforce learning.
- Having a good phonics system helps to identify children's progress and using short tasks with the children.
- Having clear progression routes e.g. into further learning, voluntary work and roles in school

Factors working against success

- Lack of /poor accommodation
- Limited access to IT.
- Schools' reluctance to release children for standard courses
- The requirement to take tests at level 1 and 2 precludes less qualified and least confident parents.
- The requirement to recruit 9 parents.
- High drop-out rate, largely due to personal/family commitments and issues and illness.
- Offering standard courses which requires heavy commitment
- Insufficient follow up to encourage progression

Implications for policy and practice

Schools

LAs

- Need more money to improve accommodation
- Use a convenient and familiar venue and accommodation for continued learning that is as near as possible to the original FL setting
- Build in dedicated paid time for planning between tutors and EYTs
- Where possible, try to use EYTs from within the school
- Where possible, target FL tutors who have received a Grade 2 or above
- Appoint LA managers who have a strong educational background.
- Recognise the importance of the need to understand learner's backgrounds and their specific needs.
- Use wider family learning as a first step to engaging schools in Family literacy provision
- Employ pastoral coordinator/parent support workers to build relationships with parents and engage them in learning
- Support strong relationships between school and FL staff
- Have clear progression routes
- Employ enthusiastic committed high quality teaching staff
- Be proactive in integrating FL into LAs
- Capture data showing the contribution of FL to achieving the goals set out in: *Skills of Life* agenda, *Reaching Out: Think Family*, *Every Parent Matters* and the 'well-being' and 'enjoy and achieve' themes of *Every Child Matters*

Central Government

- Provide additional funding to engage hard to reach learners, run small groups, meet childcare costs and capture impact data, and the value of funding to enable double staffing in FL sessions.