

Resources for libraries, archives and family learning

A topic paper from NIACE



Who is this paper for?

This topic paper is aimed at managers and practitioners in libraries and archives and family learning services, whether funded through local authorities or the voluntary sector. It aims to celebrate and support the further development of collaborative work with some examples from across the regions and to emphasise the importance of reading for pleasure and the role libraries can play in developing it.

'Family involvement in libraries' creative reading activity has a powerful effect. Families report increased reading, increased family interaction through sharing books and higher family learning aspirations.'
[Confidence All Round; Morris, Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005]

Policy context and introduction

There are many examples of the rich diversity of learning taking place in and linked to libraries and archives. Some examples of this are included in the recent NIACE publication *Families, Learning and Culture*¹. Family learning has been recognised as playing an important role across many agendas² and formed a distinct thread of the 2008 DIUS consultation on informal adult learning. It offers opportunities for families, adults and children not only to develop skills and knowledge but also to gain more generic outcomes³, like confidence, improving relationships within the family and getting involved community activities.

Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) and Wider Family Learning (WFL) are important strands of the work funded by the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to local providers including Local Authorities and some further education colleges. Family Learning programmes give participants clearly structured opportunities in a context that focuses on their child and their learning. Programmes offer the chance for adults to improve their own skills, including literacy, language and numeracy skills, increase understanding about how to support their child and their learning, gain confidence and develop other generic learning skills, as well as developing children's skills, knowledge and understanding. Family Learning programmes identify clear learning outcomes for adults and children. The revised national government target for 2020 for improving adult basic skills levels in the UK, following the Leitch Review⁴, is that 95% of adults should have achieved the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy. FLLN programmes contribute to meeting this target and offer a fantastic range of reading and writing activities, both for parents/carers and their children, involving activities like book making, reading trails, treasure hunts for words, making games and exploring the local environment. An experienced teacher or tutor makes this look informal while underneath there will be detailed planning, differentiated to meet each adult and child's individual needs. Planning will involve the partner organisations working together to ensure a quality experience for the whole family.

Working in partnership across services is essential if organisations are to provide the best service to meet the diverse needs and interests of the participants. Libraries and archives provide a wealth of opportunities, building on the skills and knowledge of the staff, the resources and spaces. In the current move towards integrated teams and services reaching out to the

¹ Lamb, P. (2008) *Families, Learning and Culture*. Leicester: NIACE
<http://www.niace.org.uk/development-research/programmes-of-work/families-learning-and-culture-inspiring-families-through-mus>

² Haggart, J and Spacey, R (2006) *Linking the thinking in family learning*. Leicester: NIACE.

³ Lamb, P., Fairfax-Cholmeley, K. and Thomas, M. (2008) *Families, Learning and Progression*, Leicester, NIACE.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/development-research/programmes-of-work/families-learning-and-progression>

⁴ Leitch Review of Skills (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy: world class skills*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

families most at risk⁵, along with museums and galleries; libraries and archives provide a key role in providing an accessible, welcoming environment⁶, providing a rich source of materials and knowledge for family learning. The notion of place shaping⁷, and using spaces in the heart of communities is crucial to the work of museums, libraries and archives. The Lyons Inquiry⁸ called place shaping: “The creative use of powers and influence to promote the general wellbeing of a community and its citizens”.

NIACE is currently undertaking an inquiry into the future of lifelong learning⁹. The richness and variety of collections, information, sign-posting to other provision, spaces and services that reach out into the community on offer in libraries, museums and archives, contribute significantly to the picture of informal learning for families across the country. Libraries work with families in many different ways on a regular basis, through story and rhyme time activities, etc.

Museums, libraries and archives can also play an important part, working in partnership with voluntary and statutory organizations, to reach families in need. It is important that the work with families and the contribution it makes to meeting Every Child Matters outcomes and the priorities set out in the Children’s and Young People’s Plan is shared and celebrated. The Guardian ‘Kids in Museums’ award that celebrates family friendly services has acted as a catalyst for museums to develop their work with families from increasing awareness of front of house reception staff right through to the organization of space and activities.

It is essential that all those working with families in a learning context have a shared knowledge and understanding of the key principles and practice of family learning which underpins the work across all sectors. The new family learning qualifications were developed by NIACE on behalf of the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Sector Skills Council, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and they will soon be available on the Integrated Qualification Framework (IQF) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). These units aim to meet the needs of all those working with families in a learning context, from managers to support staff.

Here we have some examples of how Libraries and Archives and Family Learning services are working together. There are eight case studies representing some of the work going on across the regions that encourage reading for pleasure.

⁵ Cabinet Office: The Social Exclusion Task Force (2008), *Think Family: Improving the Life Chances of Families at Risk*, London: SETF.

⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/kidsinmuseums>

⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/localgovernmentfinance/lyonsinquiryinto/>

⁹ <http://www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry/default.htm>

Case studies

Newcastle

The Newcastle City Library Service and the Family Learning team work very closely together on a range of projects. But most importantly they work together to plan strategically. The Newcastle Family Learning advisory group is made up of representatives from a range of key organisations and services including the head of children and family services.

‘This has been a good way of keeping informed and being able to plan together to meet the needs of families in Newcastle’. Janice Hall, Newcastle Library Service.

An example of the impact of joined up working is the successful joint Family Learning Lottery bid with Libraries, Family Learning and the voluntary organisation, the Northern Learning Trust. This project has enabled the development of Family Science programmes, many of which take part in libraries across Newcastle. Other examples are the successful Northern Children’s Book Festival and joint work with looked after children.

For more information contact: janice.hall@newcastle.gov.uk or una.mcnicholl@newcastle.gov.uk

Manchester

Manchester Library and Information Service and Family Learning Teams work closely together to ensure that learners get the most out of visits to the Library as part of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) courses.

In preparation for the visits the family learning tutors set up a variety of reading and language activities to explore concerns, increase understanding of the services and confidence in asking questions. Information on parents’ first languages and levels of English were shared, so that appropriate dual-language Bookstart packs could be prepared in advance to response to the needs of individual families.

All the activities on the visits were used to develop language, reading and writing as well as observing and discussing expressive ways of sharing books with children. One example was a collaborative story writing activity using pictures to inspire ideas.

For more information contact: nicky.parker@manchester.gov.uk or a.lal@manchester.gov.uk

Hull

The collaboration between Hull Adult Education and Hull Libraries has included an annual Family Learning Festival, with librarians and family learning tutors working together to run sessions. An example of one of the activities was creating time capsules for families to keep as a reminder of their age and interests. Other collaborations include: linking Bookstart and Play and Language courses to enable learners to progress on to longer programmes; library staff running story writing workshops as part of family learning programmes; and the Six Book Challenge. This was based on the children's national summer reading challenge with family learning workshops in libraries across the city and family learning groups visiting local libraries being challenged to read six books and keep reading diaries (part of the Vital Link project¹⁰).

For more information contact: claire.stanley@hullcc.gov.uk or clare.bennett@hullcc.gov.uk

Hertfordshire

The partnership between Hertfordshire County Council Library Service, local studies and lifelong learning has been effective in bringing local records to life, illustrating how archives can be used for exciting family learning projects. The library in Bishop's Stortford has been used on Sunday afternoons for family learning activities, exploring the Victorian archive records from a local tailor's shop. The records include pattern books, swatch books and the records of a royal visit to Bishop's Stortford in the 1850s. Family learning activities have included using the records to design costumes, dress a paper doll and design a frieze with the models along the route of the royal visit.

For more information contact: daphne.knott@hertscc.gov.uk

Norfolk

An example of the partnership work between Norfolk Family Learning and Norfolk Library and Information Service is the work at Gaywood and King's Lynn Libraries, building a sustainable model for collaborative working. Library Story Time sessions at the library were followed by family learning sessions with related craft activities, building up good working relationships and trust with the local learners and understanding between staff, resulting in learners going on to complete a Keeping Up With the Children course and 50% of achieving the level 1 National Literacy Test.

The course was enhanced by the librarian leading a session on the library computers, (available in all public libraries) using the web, printing resources

¹⁰ <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/index.html>

as well as supporting learners to join the library, ordering books about helping children and selecting suitable picture books to share with their children.

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dorne.fraser@norfolk.gov.uk and chris.haines@norfolk.gov.uk

Kent

Kent County Library Services work closely with Kent Adult Education Service to run creative family learning sessions in libraries. District Managers identified which libraries to involve in this partnership and discussed appropriate creative family learning activities, such as 'taking a line for a walk'; 'cards, invitations and calendars'; and fitness activities 'beat the clock'. These were offered on Saturdays or during the half term holiday.

For more information contact: gillian.lawrence@kent.gov.uk and

sue.ricketts@kent.gov.uk

Dorset

In Dorset an example of partnership working are the 'Readbear' workshop sessions in Weymouth Children's Centre, planned and run by adult education tutors, local Dorset Library Service staff and SureStart staff. The sessions involved modelling the use of different voices in a story or rhyme, singing, showing feelings, finding out how to make the story interesting and learning about the benefits of reading together linked to the Bookstart Bear and the Booktrust offers for the Early Years. Many of the parents and carers involved have progressed on to other courses.

For more information contact: mary.appleton@dorsetcc.gov.uk and

j.macleod@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Westminster

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) and the Bookstart Co-ordinator from Westminster Library and Archives work in partnership to deliver family learning workshops linked to nursery classes, Children's Centres, family drop-ins and Homestart events. Based on book themes, these workshops involve exploring the Bookstart pack, story and rhyme sessions, modelling book-sharing techniques and practical workshops.

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Moving here – 200 years of migration to England¹¹

'Moving Here' is a web based project that explores, records and illustrates why people came to England over the last 200 years and what their experiences were and continue to be. It offers free access, for personal and educational use, to an online catalogue of versions of original material related to migration history from local, regional and national archives, libraries and museums.

There are many further local resources in record offices and archives that are starting points for stories and ideal for family learning. Ask in your local record office to find out what is available about your local area.

The following key messages will help support sustainable partnerships between libraries, archives and family learning services

Family learning is enhanced by strong working partnerships with Library and Archive services at all levels but this takes time, commitment and energy.

Successful collaborative work includes:

- a joint vision for mutually beneficial strategic development;
- open communication to ensure strategic and operational planning;
- awareness of the adult learning context and a shared understand of the principles and practice of family learning;
- an understanding of what the different services can offer and identification of funding to support development costs;
- joint planning, preparation and collaboration with clarity of roles and responsibilities to make the best use of the skills and expertise of all the staff involved;
- building confidence to share skills and expertise, to open up opportunities and increase participation;
- identification of appropriate space and resources to meet the needs of adults and children;
- clear publicity that demonstrates that the event is for families and that adults will be working with their children;
- joint evaluation to learn from successes and failures and improve practice, with measures to evidence the impact of collaborative work;
- opportunities for disseminating examples of effective practice;

¹¹ <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>

- acknowledgement and exploitation of the wonderful potential of resources in archives and record offices, such as maps, letters, photographs, film etc.



Some useful websites

www.culture24.org.uk/home Information on hundreds of museum, gallery, library and archive exhibitions and events across the UK.

www.niace.org.uk

www.adultlearningconsultation.org.uk

www.dcsf.gov.uk/readwriteplus

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

www.bookstart.co.uk

www.learningcurve-uk.com

www.show.me.uk

www.movinghere.org.uk

www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk books selected for parents to share with their children

www.vitallink.org.uk

The Reading Agency has two pieces of relevant evaluation:

From Confidence All Round, at

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/evaluation.html>

From the Vital Link with Parents project, about partnership working between libraries, family learning and children's centres

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/gotkidspilot.html>

About NIACE

NIACE is the national organisation for adult learning in England and Wales, promoting excellent practice in the delivery of learning and to encourage more and different learners to engage in all kinds of learning activities. NIACE's activities include dedicated research, development and consultancy; advocacy to inform and influence public policy; the provision of information and dissemination services; publications and conferences. We are also actively involved in campaigning to promote and celebrate the achievements of adult learners. NIACE is an independent non-governmental organisation, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Family learning at NIACE

The family learning team at NIACE work to support the development of a broad vision of intergenerational learning for all families.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/search/node/family%20learning>

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The Reading for Pleasure suite of materials:

- CPD modules: Reading for pleasure in a number of contexts
- Storytelling: CPD unit with lesson ideas
- Families, Learning and Storytelling: Using archives for community cohesion
- Take Your Partner: Engaging emergent adult readers
- Technology and Reading: How to use blogs, wikis, iPods and e-books to promote reading
- Putting two and 2 together: Creating a bridge between literacy and numeracy learning
- Resources for libraries: Guidance on how to engage families to read for pleasure