

The Shared Learning Newsletter

Share – raising the educational achievements of children in care



The educational underachievement of children in care is well documented. In March 2003, the government announced a new target to help improve the future for children in care. The Public Service Agreement aims to 'improve the life chances for children ... by substantially narrowing the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006.'

A report from the Social Exclusion Unit – *A better education for children in care* – and the government's Green Paper *Every child matters*, highlight the complex issues that need to be considered, and the actions that must be taken, in order to raise the educational achievements of children in care – for example, it's important to:

- extend educational opportunities
- raise children's expectations and aspirations.

Many local education authorities (LEAs), including Leicester and Doncaster, recognise the importance of engaging foster carers to support the development and learning of the children in their care. Both authorities have run successful Share programmes, which have enabled foster carers to feel confident about supporting the development and learning of children aged 3 to 5.

The success of these programmes has depended on effective partnerships between LEA adult and community learning teams, family learning professionals, further education colleges, social services, Sure Start, library services, childcare services, and schools.

The Share sessions were facilitated by three experienced and enthusiastic Share tutors – Helen Acton and Laura Dale (Doncaster), and Sue Rogers (Leicester). As one Share tutor said: 'It was hard work, but I believe it was an extremely positive experience for all involved.'

During the sessions, foster carers learnt about the six areas of learning that children experience during the Foundation Stage, and explored appropriate Share activities. One foster carer said: 'I didn't understand what they did in nursery before I did this course ... but now I know why, and what they are learning from it.'

All the foster carers agreed that Share had immense benefits – for example, by supporting the development of relationships with the children in their care, and by enabling them to take an active role in the children's learning at home.

Feedback from Doncaster's foster carers was extremely positive – all reported that they had enjoyed learning with their children ('It's given me loads of good ideas of things I can do with the kids'; 'I like coming here because it's so much fun, and you learn stuff because you enjoy it'), and 86 per cent said that they felt more confident when supporting children in their care with learning.

In Leicester, six foster carers gained Share accreditation. Some carers reported that their experience of compiling the Share portfolio had helped them to put their evidence of competence together for an NVQ in childcare. In addition, the Fostering Inspection Team was very impressed with the work being done by the tutor and foster carers involved in the Leicester programme.

Effective support at home for development and learning is crucial to educational success. Doncaster and Leicester have successfully shown how, through effective partnerships, Share can engage foster carers in actively supporting the education of the children in their care.

Share news

from around the country

Share at last – and a first for Greenwich!

Lyn Harrison, Greenacres Family Learning Leader, sent us this report.

After great anticipation, the two-day training course for Share finally arrived. Greenacres hosted the event – the first training session for Share in the London Borough of Greenwich – and we were very glad that we did!



Six schools took part in the training – Alderwood, Ealdham, Plumcroft, Greenacres, Thomas Tallis and Deptford Green (Lewisham). We had all read about Share in *Excellence and enjoyment* and started the two days with a real interest in the project – and we were not disappointed.

The course outlined clearly the aims of Share, and offered informative methods of engaging, training and managing parental involvement. We were impressed by the importance given to parental motivation and effective management within the individual school context. We also valued the ‘emotional nature training’ and the wide range of hands-on experiences, which will hold us in good stead for our new school ventures.

Representatives from Foundation through to Key Stage 4 levels were able to collaborate during this exciting cross-phase training session. As well as providing us with ‘positively-filled’ moments, the training session also gave us time to think about ourselves, and about our own interaction with potential clients – the parents.

Our thanks go to Gill. I suspect that this will not be the last we see of her in Greenwich!

Celebrating Share in Leeds

Sue Scholes is the learning mentor at Broadgate Primary School in Horsforth, Leeds. She runs the Share programme, which is now entering its fourth year, and currently has two groups of parents, carers and grandparents. Sue recently received a letter from a grandmother, Anne, who became involved in the first Share group at the school. Anne wrote:

‘Nearly three years ago, I saw Share mentioned in the school bulletin. Being intrigued (or nosy) as to what Share was, my friend and I decided to attend the first meeting to see what it was all about. That meeting changed my daytime retirement routine beyond recognition...

Well, Sue, as you can see, joining Share was one of the best things I ever did. I don’t think I would ever have formed the friendships I have done, and certainly would not have dared to ask about helping out in school. We have all enjoyed our weekly meetings. I could have done none of these things without your help, enthusiasm and understanding.’

This is just one of the moving tributes paid to the dedication and hard work of school staff involved in Share.

The first Share group at Broadgate started meeting three years ago, with Key Stage 1 families, and was so successful that it won the Share School of the Year Award for 2003, receiving a £500 prize. The children and parents had a wonderful time on a bowling trip following the award, and all the children received certificates for ‘Making a great contribution to Broadgate’.

The rest of the money has been spent on enhancing the school’s playing field with a ‘Tyre Trail’, which is hugely popular with all the children in the school. Sue has also started a second Share group with Foundation Stage parents, and says: ‘The verbal feedback from parents has been very good – they’re all coming back in September!’



Sue was recently invited to speak to headteachers in Durham. She says: ‘Of course I put Share on the agenda – it was a conference about learning mentors and working with families.’ She added that the school is due an Ofsted visit, and she will be making sure that Share is given a mention.

We wish her, and the families and staff of Broadgate Primary School, every success with Share in the future, and also with their Ofsted inspection.



The piloting of the 'Healthy Share' programme took place at Goddard Park Primary School in Swindon over four weeks during the summer term. Between four and five parents (and one grandparent) met once a week, starting on Thursday, 10 June, from 9.15–10.45am.

Parents took part in a range of enjoyable activities that they could then do at home with their children, to help them understand the importance of looking after their health. They covered topics such as 'Brushing away', on the importance of healthy teeth, and 'Seeing stars', on bedtime routines.

Your good health!

Overall, feedback was extremely positive, with parents finding the topics covered both informative and interesting. As one parent said: 'I learnt that you can get bacteria in so many different ways.'

The parents enjoyed sharing their own experiences, and valued the contributions made by the other participants. They particularly enjoyed the practical sessions and got to know each other well during this time.

One parent said: 'I liked the interaction with other parents whom I wouldn't normally speak to, and also working with my children and seeing what they take on board.'

The Healthy Share programme enables parents to discuss subjects relating to having a healthy lifestyle – for them and their family. Topics include health and safety, health in the community and healthy eating. Please contact Paula Woodall on 024 7658 8447 if you would like a copy of the Healthy Share units.

'The overall message was that the families taking part appreciated the importance of a shared learning activity to reinforce the value of a healthy lifestyle.'

Jackie Crowther, Family Learning,
Swindon Learning Partnership

Celebrate in Knowsley!

Knowsley is a well established and successful 'Family Learning' authority, and also a very successful 'Skills for Families' pilot authority. A key strand of its portfolio of practice is Share, which it introduced in 2001.

There are currently around 60 primary and ten secondary schools in Knowsley. Of these, 36 schools deliver a Family Learning programme, and eighteen (including two secondary schools) deliver Share. Courses are also delivered in partnership with Sure Start, and within community settings. Last year's accredited learners included:

- Share – 200
- Family Literacy – 166
- Family Numeracy – 74
- Keeping up with the Children – 66
- 0–3s – 15
- Early Start – 17
- Childminders – 12
- Active Dads – 14
- Playbus – 4

As a reflection of the extent to which Knowsley values family learning, the Family Learning team invests considerable time, funding and energy in an annual celebration.

This year's event took place on Thursday, 8 July at the Suites Hotel. Keith McDowall, Family Learning Manager, and Damian Allen, Assistant Director, opened the event by welcoming everyone. Phil Street OBE, Chief Executive of ContinYou, then presented certificates to all participants and accredited learners.

Over 64 learners were presented with certificates and awards at this year's event. Of these, 38 achieved OCN accreditation at Level 1 and seventeen did so at Level 2. The number of successful learners has increased so much in recent years that the event had to be held over two days! Share practitioners 'shared' in the celebrations too – over fifteen attended, including four headteachers representing their schools.

There was ample opportunity for everyone to discuss family learning, and to share in each other's achievements, as they browsed through many superb displays.

Gill Downey and Pam Brown from the Family Learning team organised the two celebratory days from their Family Learning Centre at St Marie's Primary School in Kirkby. You can contact the team on 0151 443 4501.



Congratulations to everyone in Knowsley!

Correction

In Issue 16 of the Share Newsletter (December 2003), the article on page 2 'ICT skills used for Badger Village', was sent to us by the Share group at Oakfield Primary School, Ryde, Isle of Wight. Unfortunately, the work was credited to Brock C of E Primary School. This is incorrect, and we wish to apologise for any confusion caused.

Diary dates

Share events

Share Approved Trainer Course

Venue: Coventry
Dates: 8–9 February 2005; 7–8 June 2005; 19–20 October 2005

Share LEA/EAZ Network Meetings

Venue: Coventry
Dates: 10 February 2005;
9 June 2005; 18 October 2005

Annual Share and Family Learning Conference

Title: Services to children: the impact of parental involvement
Venue: Hilton Metropole, Birmingham
Date: 9 March 2005

ContinYou events

CEN Conference

Title: Community education – the multi-agency approach
Venue: Northampton
Dates: 28–29 January 2005

Extra Time Conference

Title: Re-imagining out-of-school-hours learning and study support
Venue: Portman Radisson Hotel, London
Date: 10 March 2005
(For more information, phone Chantelle Peat on 024 7658 8476 or email chantelle.peat@continyou.org.uk)

Community Practitioner Briefing

Venue: Friends Meeting House, London
Title: Individual empowerment through the arts
Date: 20 January 2005
(For more information, phone Graham Harvey on 024 7658 8469 or email graham.harvey@continyou.org.uk)

Out-of-school-hours Learning Week

Title: Week 53
Date: 7–11 March 2005
(For more information, phone Chantelle Peat on 024 7658 8476 or email chantelle.peat@continyou.org.uk)

Regional seminars

Title: Creating adult learning opportunities in schools
Dates and venues: 3 March 2005, Leeds; 8 March 2005, Birmingham; 20 April 2005, London

What's new

Approved Trainers

The latest Approved Trainer course took place on 13 and 14 October. Five participants – from Dumfries to Surrey – joined us and enjoyed our new updated programme. This now includes more activities and information on 'brain-based family learning', responding to learning preferences of practitioners and families.

The next Approved Trainer course will take place in February. Contact Paula Woodall for further information. We look forward to hearing from you!

Share Awards ceremony

We have decided to hold the next awards ceremony at the Annual Share Conference. This will take place on 9 March 2005 at the Hilton Metropole, Birmingham, a large, prestigious venue, which will enable more people to attend the event than ever before.

Congratulations!

The following schools have received the Share Quality Learning Certificate for the excellent work they are doing with parents:

- St Alberts, Knowsley
- Ysgol-yr-Eos
- Ynysboeth Infant
- Tonyrefail Primary
- Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive, Gateshead
- Bede Community Primary School, Gateshead.

The Shared Learning Newsletter is primarily for practitioners and parents/carers taking part in Share. It is also useful for agencies or individuals who wish to find out more about how Share works in practice. We welcome articles, examples of activities, photographs and comments for inclusion in the newsletter. It is published termly and information needs to be sent in eight weeks before the end of term. We look forward to hearing from you!

For further information, contact:
Paula Woodall at ContinYou, Unit C1,
Grovelands Court, Grovelands Estate,
Longford Road, Exhall, Coventry CV7 9NE
Tel: 024 7658 8440 Fax: 024 7658 8441
Email: info.coventry@continyou.org.uk
Website: www.continyou.org.uk

Teresa is leaving ContinYou

We'd like to take this opportunity to say a fond farewell to Teresa Johnson, National Programme Director, Share.

For the past five years Teresa has taken responsibility for the national (and international!) development of Share. She has worked tirelessly to provide an extremely high level of service to all LEAs, managers and practitioners who have requested Share advice, information and support.

In September 2004, Teresa took up the post of Full Service Extended School Manager at Barrs Hill Secondary School in Coventry.

We offer our sincere gratitude for all Teresa has achieved – and many, many congratulations on such a super promotion! We are sure you will all join us in wishing Teresa every happiness in her new post. Our sincere thanks and very best wishes, Teresa!

Good luck, Dawn

Congratulations also go to Dawn Lamont on her successful promotion to Case Worker for Warwickshire Parent Partnership Service.

The Share team will miss her, but we're pleased she is staying with ContinYou and wish her every success.

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