

The Shared Learning Newsletter

Welcome to a fresh focus

Welcome to the 31st edition of ContinYou's *Shared learning* newsletter – and the very first from our newly remodelled Children and Families Team.

Those of you who've been with us since Issue 1 will know that these newsletters developed out of a wish to celebrate the fantastic work of Share family learning practitioners across the UK, and beyond. While we still wish to do this, we now also want to develop the newsletter to cover not just Share but all aspects of wider family learning and parent support. This will enable us to reflect better the growing recognition given to the family as the centrepiece of public policy agendas.

In short, we want to share ideas and good practice around engaging families in their own and their children's learning. The addition of the Pyramid programme (www.continyou.org.uk/pyramid) to the work of the team brings the opportunity for a fresh focus on emotional health and well-being.

The team has got off to a flying start with two new initiatives to support children and families:

The Big Impact

As one of three lead partners in the National Family Learning Network, along with NIACE and the Campaign for Learning, we are delighted to be lending our expertise to The Big Impact project.

Funded for the next three years by the Big Lottery through its BASIS (Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Support) programme, the project will use the combined family learning expertise of all three organisations to provide support services across England for family learning practitioners.

The project aims to improve the quality of support for family learning practitioners by developing training materials, sharing best practice and introducing a mentoring scheme.

It will also improve skills associated with sustainable funding for voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as supporting the Network to lobby policy makers and statutory bodies to improve the profile of the sector. We believe that this BASIS-funded project provides the opportunity to impact positively on thousands of practitioners and the many families they support.

Involving Men as Fathers

With the support of the Parenting Fund, we are working with four local authorities to take a closer look at how they involve men as fathers in their provision (see page 4). This is a particularly timely development, coming as it does close on the heels of the launch of the government's Think Fathers Campaign (www.think-fathers.org).

Jen Scott (Manager, Children and Families Team, ContinYou)



Salford Family Learning Service

We've received this report on a successful Share programme at All Hallows RC Business and Enterprise College in Salford.

After completing the Share facilitator training we were buzzing with excitement and anticipation at the challenge of involving Year 7 parents/carers with their child's learning.

We have just completed our first Share programme at All Hallows RC Business and Enterprise College in Salford. We started with four parents and one grandparent.

Below is an extract from one parent's diary.

'We had a great time out with the children as a celebration of the work that was done by the great teaching staff this school has. I would like to thank Helen and Barbara for all the support my child receives from the school and for making me feel welcome to approach them with any problems. I also found this course great for parents to join in and also for the children to be involved. I would say to any parent "Please join, this is really rewarding". I am going to miss my Tuesday meetings and I do not know how I am going to fill them up. I will need to do more hours at work!'

As practitioners, we found delivering the course really enjoyable and a valuable learning experience. We are now going into our feeder primaries to hold taster sessions to entice parents of our new September intake to have a go, with a view to starting a new programme early.



Ofsted
Outstanding
2008/2009

Share at Askham Grange

Andrea Gibbons, Family Learning Co-ordinator at HMP Askham Grange, sent us this report.

HMP Askham Grange is an open women's prison near York. We have accommodation for up to 128 women, including a mother and baby unit that can hold ten women and their children (up to the age of about 18 months).

Keeping families together is a key issue when considering reducing reoffending and gives our residents the best possible chance of successfully reintegrating into ordinary life when they leave Askham.

At the end of September 2008 Askham was inspected by a team from Ofsted. We are happy to report that we became the first prison in the UK to gain a Grade 1. Our family learning work contributed to Grade 1 for Achievement and Standards and to Grade 1 for Quality of Provision within our personal and social development strand.

The Ofsted inspectors noted that: 'Innovative family learning programmes developed by the prison are delivered ... These recognise the benefits of strengthening family bonds to reduce reoffending. Family learning is used well to help learners support their children while in prison. They produce a wide range of good

quality resources such as story books and games, which are sent home for children to enjoy and to use with learners on occasions such as home visits. Learners value greatly the opportunities the family learning programmes provide in helping them to play a significant part in their children's education.' (Ofsted report 322924, 2/10/08)

The Ofsted result is a culmination of a very successful four-year partnership between Askham and Share. It is proof that this type of parental involvement is a vital part of children's development (both educationally and socially), whether it happens in a Share school or in a Share prison like Askham.

One of our learners recently commented: 'I get a real feeling of joy that I can go to family learning. I remember the joy on my child's face when I give them something which I have made for them. I get a great comfort that I can be a mummy even though I am here.'

I would recommend the Share programme to other organisations and would be happy to chat with anyone who wants more information.

For more details, contact Andrea at andrea.gibbons@hmps.gsi.gov.uk.

New developments for practitioners

'I didn't want to come to the training as I didn't know if it would be any use, but I have really learnt a lot – brill.'

The Children and Families Team has recently completed a pilot programme with Essex County Council education department – a two-day training course for practitioners who support parents and children on a one-to-one basis in their own homes and other settings.

'Thank you. I have learnt so much about ways to communicate. I feel so much better about going into parents' homes now.'

The training covers all aspects of communication, gives an opportunity to build upon reflective practice and builds upon participants' existing skills, while developing a better understanding of the need to work in partnership with parents to support their children.

The domiciliary care workers (who support children with a range of complex disabilities) who have

completed the training have reported:

- an increase in their confidence to work with parents
- a greater understanding of communication techniques and practical ways to support parents
- an increase in their own self-esteem.

The training is at Level 3 standard, and can demonstrate an understanding of components of the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents.

The team has also developed a new two full-day or four half-day training programme that is designed to support foster carers as expert practitioners and peer mentors.

This training is based on National Occupational Standards at Level 3. It includes practical exercises to develop practitioners as expert listeners; uses a variety of communication techniques and learning styles; offers practical tools; builds on skills to increase capability and confidence in practitioners.

The training is informed by current practice and policies within the

foster care frameworks and can support foster carers who are looking to support their peers through volunteering, such as the foster carers' local networks.

The training can be adapted for those outside the foster care profession and would be suitable for any practitioners who want to develop their mentoring skills.

If you would like to know more about either of these training opportunities, which can be commissioned to meet your local needs and make an investment in your own and your colleagues' learning, please contact the Children and Families Team at ContinYou.

'I have found the course so inspirational. I have rediscovered that I do a rewarding job. It is hard work but the pros outweigh the cons.'

Working with hard-to-engage families One-day training

ContinYou believes that services should be available to meet the needs of all families. This training will give staff the tools and confidence to make engagement with more families possible.

The aims of the seminar day are to:

- understand the benefits of parental involvement
- identify groups which are hard to engage, both generally and locally
- identify and address the barriers to involvement in children's services
- introduce a parent-friendly audit tool
- improve the skills needed to build rapport with hard-to-reach families
- reflect on specific groups and specialist needs

- consider the advantages of multi-agency work when trying to engage parents/carers
- reflect on practice and environment and develop an action plan.

Working with hard-to-engage families contributes to the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents: WWP 201; 203; 309; 313.

Cost: Training and tools for 20 practitioners – £2,000 (£100pp)

For more information, phone 024 7658 8467, email childrenandfamilies@continyou.org.uk or write to: ContinYou, Unit C1, Grovelands Court, Grovelands Estate, Longford Road, Exhall, Coventry CV7 9NE.

New Share Foundation Stage materials

We are pleased to announce the arrival of our updated Foundation Stage pack.

The new spiral-bound pack includes additional 'Little badgers' sections, which show how the activities can be adapted for 0 to 3 year olds. There are also suggestions on how the resources can be used with children with special educational needs.

Development Manager Gaye Warwick, who used the new packs in recent Share training in Lewisham, says: 'Delegates seemed to really like the new packs – as well as containing useful new activities and guidance, they are also much lighter and easier to carry around!'

To buy your Foundation Stage pack, contact the Children and Families Team at ContinYou (see contact details below).

Congratulations

Congratulations go to the following schools for achieving the Share Quality Learning Certificate for the excellent work they are doing with parents/carers:

- Carr Mill Primary School, St Helens
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Isle of Wight.

Parenting Fund Round 3

ContinYou has been successful with Parenting Fund Round 3 to offer free Involving Men as Fathers (IMAF) seminars in Bristol, Manchester, Hackney and Greenwich over the next two years.

The seminar is aimed at children's services staff who wish to engage more fathers/male carers in their services – for example, managers, reception, field workers, PSAs, children's centres, extended services, health workers and voluntary organisations.

It is important that the staff attending the IMAF seminar have the backing of their manager and organisation to make some changes in their environment and delivery. The seminar helps organisations to implement the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty. Those attending the training will be asked to help ContinYou to monitor changes in male involvement.

The seminars will be offered in autumn term 2009, spring term 2010, autumn term 2010 and spring term 2011, and delegates will be invited to attend by their local authority.

Don't worry if you feel you've missed out. The one-day seminar – Involving Men as Fathers – can be commissioned for £2,500 for 30 participants. Also look out for termly day delegate courses.

For more details, contact Gailyn Groves (Development Manager, ContinYou) by emailing gailyn.groves@continyou.org.uk or phone 024 7658 8470.

Diary dates

We are running a variety of one-day seminars and commissioned training over the coming months, for example:

- Involving Men as Fathers
- Pyramid for Parents
- Share Practitioner Training
- Preparing for Partnership with Parents
- Smooth Moves
- Hard-to-engage Families

For full details of the dates and locations of these courses and to book your place, please contact the Children and Families Team by emailing childrenandfamilies@continyou.org.uk or phoning 024 7658 8440.



Hints and tips

British Food Fortnight
19 September–4 October 2009
www.lovebritishfood.co.uk

Family Learning Festival
17–31 October 2009
www.familylearningweek.com

Any ideas?

Do you have any ideas for activities that we could develop into Share materials? Activities that are based around science, emotional health and well-being and citizenship would be of particular interest.

To share your ideas, email childrenandfamilies@continyou.org.uk.

The Shared Learning Newsletter is primarily for practitioners and parents/carers taking part in parental support and family learning. 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:
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