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LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE



Family Learning Programmes in Wales: Renew and Reform

Introduction

This report aims to inform discussion and lead to a renewed emphasis on the role of family learning to engage adults and children in lifelong learning in Wales. It is written within the context of a priority of Welsh Government to review their approach to lifelong learning in Wales.

To complete this work, a review of the literature and existing evidence was undertaken, as well as a small survey of providers, taken during July 2021, to understand their current delivery of family learning.

Existing case studies of family learning delivery have also been used to illustrate impact.

Key Messages

Based on the evidence review, the survey, and general engagement from stakeholders in this area the key findings are:

- Despite some excellent and developing practice family learning as a tool for engaging and developing the skills of parents and children is currently ad hoc across Wales, it has disappeared as an engagement tool from much of the local authority/FE outreach delivery, it does not have a clear policy focus, lacks co-ordination, and does not have a robust funding base.
- Family learning as an early intervention and prevention approach works in reaching disadvantaged families and communities to improve their life chances.
- Learning outcomes and benefits resulting from family learning approaches can be categorised into five key areas: new skills; increased confidence and understanding; improved communication; changed behaviours; and changed relationships with community and family.
- Family learning facilitates increased parental participation and engagement, improved school attendance, reduces persistent absenteeism and can increase pupils' attainment.
- Family learning provides opportunities to reach minority ethnic communities, refugees and forced migrants to improve the reach of ESOL programmes and pathways to further learning and integration.
- Family learning provides opportunities to improve social networks and connectivity of families who need it most. During the pandemic existing family learning programmes were able to maintain contact with vulnerable families and provide much needed support to help with home schooling or other issues associated with lockdown.
- The wider outcomes of family learning are shown through skills development, employability, wellbeing, progression into further education opportunities, and

interactions within the family, as well as improvements in parental confidence and parenting skills.

- Family learning provides an opportunity to reach adults at key transition points to engage them in a return to learning, building relationships and trust.
- There is an opportunity to develop the curriculum of family learning provision to embed health and wellbeing, digital, science, ESOL, financial literacy and citizenship as well as Welsh and BSL.

Recommendations

- Family learning should be part of an overall **strategic lifelong learning approach** to raising capabilities in essential skills for adults and children.
- A clear **policy statement** from Welsh Government about family learning and its role in delivering lifelong learning and supporting community focused schools in Wales. Family Learning can be tool to **enable partnership** activity between schools and adult learning providers.
- A **Family Learning Delivery fund** should be introduced open to all providers to put forward proposals for delivery across primary, secondary and other community settings. Within this delivery fund there could be requirements for partnership development, match funding to ensure that opportunities for securing trust funding, lottery, sponsorship or contributing existing budgets are not lost. There should be a framework for evaluation and reporting outcomes across all provision.
- Reviewing how the **Pupil Development Grant** could support Family Learning Programmes and whether ring fenced funding for these programmes would enable more activity to be delivered.
- A **framework for family learning** to create cohesion between strategic and operational levels, this should link to the use of schools as community learning hubs. A similar approach has been taken in Scotland,¹ this should be developed in consultation with providers. The FACE toolkits provide a good range of resources that could be used in a revitalised approach to planning family learning.²

¹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/FamilyLearningFrameworkApril18.pdf>

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/theme-4-helping-families-to-actively-support-their-child-s-learning-resources-1-5.pdf>

- Family learning programmes should be used as **a pillar in an Essential Skills strategy** for adults in Wales and should be valued as an engagement and outreach approach that supports progression and transition to further learning and employment.
 - Where some local authority areas have had an uplift in the Adult Learning funding allocations, they could be encouraged to prioritise family learning delivery and to prioritise this within service delivery plans.
 - Family learning programmes are NOT parenting programmes but do complement activities delivered through programmes like **Flying Start** and would benefit from effective linking and information sharing to build on connections and community outreach.
 - A **Family Learning policy** would make connections with existing programmes like Flying Start and Communities for Work and engage school leaders in the value of developing partnerships for delivery.
 - A **network for Family Learning providers** should be established to share practice, curriculum development and approaches. Providing a way for providers to share, test and learn from each other and from international practice.
 - **Curriculum development and practice sharing** will raise the quality and enable innovation in delivery. Family learning offers opportunities to deliver literacy, numeracy, ESOL, BSL, health and wellbeing. As well as developing an offer in collaboration with secondary schools that supports families at key transition points.
 - **Workforce development** is key and has not been prioritised. Delivery needs adult learning practitioners who are trained in community and family engagement and the social practice model. Their engagement with communities and families is about building relationships and trust and they start from a wealth model. This is a fundamental part of the family learning approach.
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Findings

The findings from the survey of the sector and the evidence review of the sector are summarised below.

Survey of providers

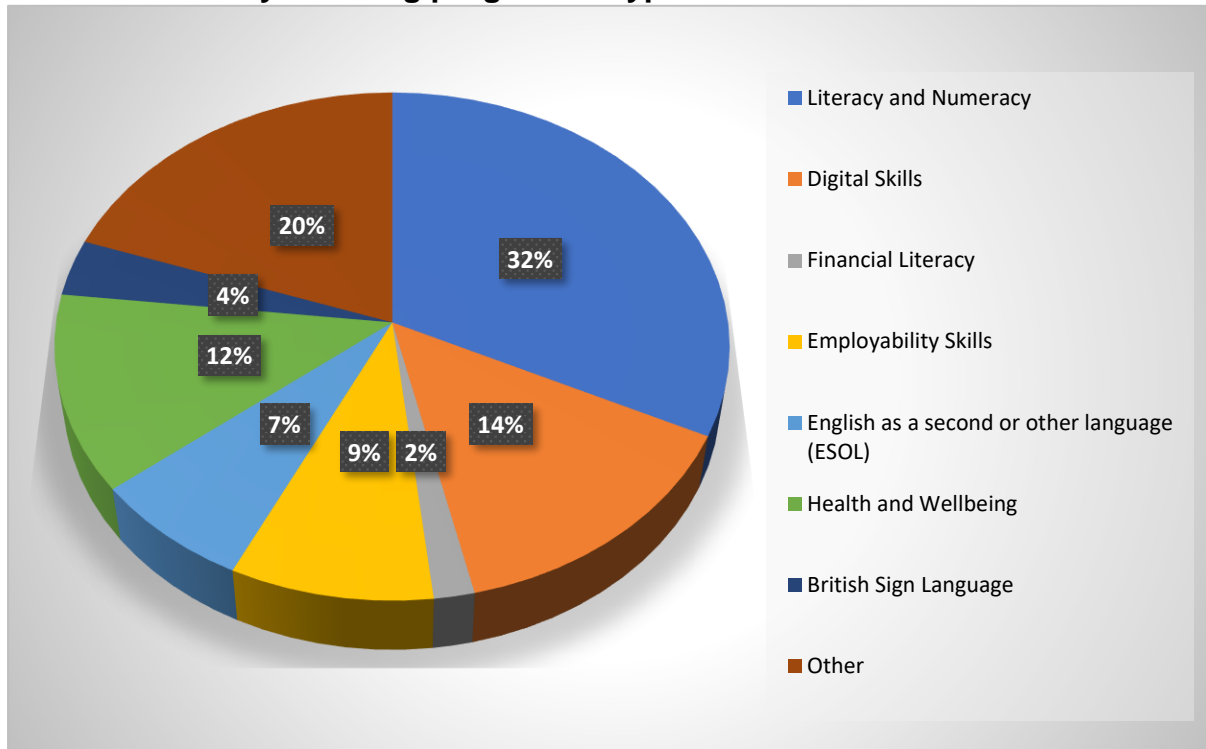
During July 2021 Learning and Work Institute conducted a short survey with Adult Learning providers throughout Wales. 34 providers completed the online survey with nearly half (41%) being Local Authority providers and 30% Training providers (15%) and Colleges (15%), other respondents included universities, schools, The National Museum (St Fagans) and the voluntary sector.

From the responses, 56% were currently delivering a Family Learning programme. Respondents were asked why they were not delivering and if they would consider Family Learning in the future.

Of the 44% that were not currently delivering their reasons were varied and included, lack of funding (20%), not relevant to current funding requirements (20%) and coronavirus restrictions (20%). Although, 80% of these providers would consider Family Learning provision in the future and 13% did plan to start delivering Family Learning programmes.

The survey shows that providers Family Learning programmes deliver a wide curriculum. 46% of programmes focus on Literacy, Numeracy and Digital skills – in some programmes, health and wellbeing, ESOL, employability, British Sign Language and Welsh were included.

Table 1.1 – Family Learning programme types



Source: Learning and Work Institute’s Family Learning provider survey 2021

Respondents were asked about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Providers describe the switch to online provision which has impacted participation - in some cases due to lack of equipment and skills to get online.

“Provision has moved to mainly online which has resulted in the majority of adults not wanting to attend without their children or without the physical presence and support of other parents in their year group.”

“Due to all courses being delivered online there has been a drop in numbers. Learners unable to access courses due to lack of equipment and digital skills”

“We have been unable to deliver the adult learner courses as a lot of our learners don't have access to Wi-Fi / devices.”

Although some providers also commented on the benefits that virtual learning has had for some of their Family Learning programme participants

“Most provision has moved online which has been successful in engaging more meaningfully with families on a 1-1 basis although this has meant a decrease in numbers but an increase in intensity and outcomes”

“Our provision moved online. Virtual learning was normalized [and] we saw a significant increase in learner / user numbers”

Thirteen local authorities responded to the survey including Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan, and Wrexham.

Survey responses show that delivery of Family Learning is currently taking place in 6 of these local authority areas (Caerphilly, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and the Vale of Glamorgan).

Responses show that 7 local authorities not delivering currently would like to or do have plans to start delivering Family Learning programmes.

Two colleges responded to the survey (Bridgend College and Cardiff and Vale College) both of which are delivering Family Learning programmes. Programmes like First Campus (Reaching Wider) are delivering a combination of STEM and Arts based Family Learning programmes.

Respondents who do not currently delivery Family Learning were asked if they would consider delivering Family Learning in the future, 80% said that they would and identified the following areas where they needed support.

- Additional funding
- Pandemic restrictions ending
- Tutor training
- Technology support for online delivery
- Childcare

The majority (73%) of providers deliver Family Learning programmes in the community, and over half deliver it in primary schools. Only 15% deliver their programmes in their own centres. All providers responded to the coronavirus pandemic by switching to online delivery. Nearly half (45%) of the providers who are currently delivering family learning programmes deliver between 1 and 10 sessions a week.

Providers told us of the strengths of Family Learning provision in their areas:

“Creates an ambitious culture of continuous learning and development by providing high quality training contributing to raising the quality of childcare and early education provision”

“Develops the Welsh language skills of parents / families and children through our schemes and stimulates progression to courses”

“Adult learners progress to a degree either at Cardiff or other local institutions. These have few or no prior qualifications and would otherwise not access higher education.”

“Feedback from tutors and students show that engagement in [Family Learning] education supports and encourages progression and helps develop positive relationships at home including enhanced parenting skills.”

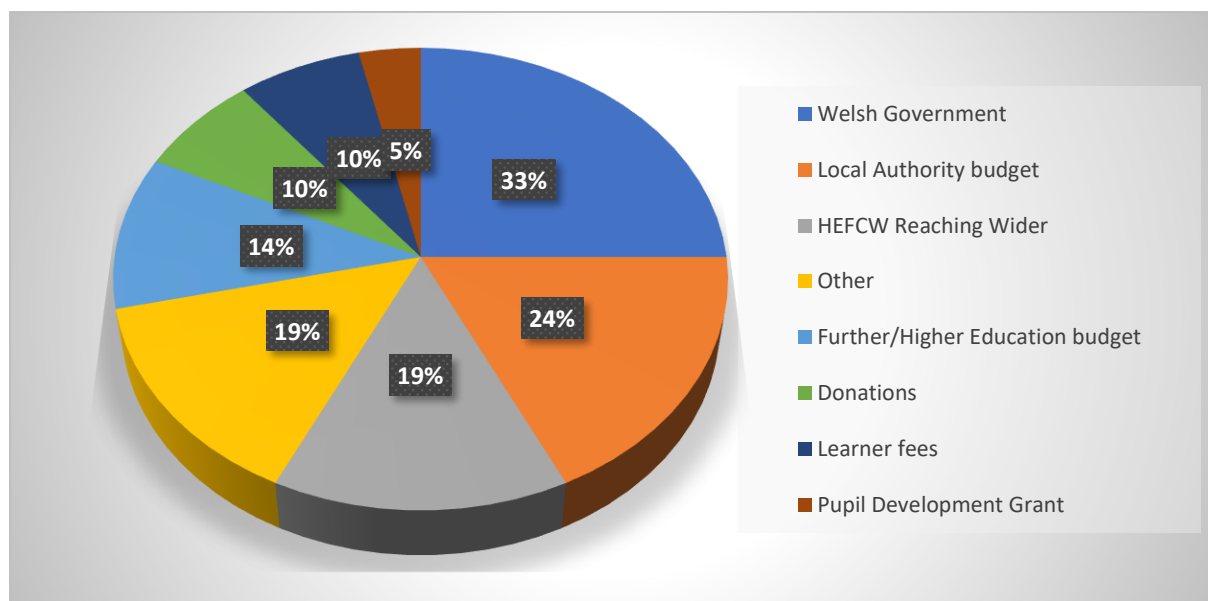
In Cathays High School in Cardiff a well-developed hub for family learning is now engaging parents (many refugees and forced migrants) with ESOL, essential skills and providing pathways to volunteering, employment and higher level skills.

In Further Education, Cardiff and Vale College have taken a strategic decision to invest in family learning, working with schools in the catchment area. The HEFCW Reaching Wider partnerships have supported some development work in family learning. Bridgend College have been developing partnerships with schools to deliver GCSE subjects for parents.

Where it exists family learning delivery is now funded from a range of sources. A small number of respondents identified school budgets (Pupil Development Grant) and other provision has continued utilising existing local authority/college budgets, HEFCW Reaching Wider and other sources of funding including grants from the National Lottery, Welsh for Adults and the Adult Learners' Week Innovation Fund.

Of those providers surveyed 33% are accessing Welsh Government funds (this may be the Adult Learning Grant) and 24% from Local Authority budgets to provide their Family Learning programmes.

Table 1.2 – Additional sources of funding accessed by Family Learning providers



Source: Learning and Work Institute's Family Learning provider survey 2021

Responses indicated that the number of adults and children accessing provision each week varies from up to 10 to over 100 in some areas.

Respondents were asked to describe the impact of their provision; highlighting programmes as engagement tools, providing opportunities for progression, reaching parents who wouldn't normally engage.

'All parents are encouraged to visit the college and opportunities for progression are explored. All courses are accredited.'

'Whilst the "outward" aim is to encourage adults to help their children with school-work, there is an inevitable improvement of their own literacy/numeracy skills. Some participants progress to further learning within the Essential Skills framework.'

'Some learners have subsequently identified employment and/or volunteering opportunities because of attending the course.'

'Family Learning is an invaluable tool in attracting difficult to reach parents and carers into adult education. The programme offers an excellent stepping-stone into other FE/HE and/or employability, training, or support.'

'Planned progression to other provision across the whole partnership, not just ACL funded courses, adds value to the offer. For the LA's it raises the profile of ACL and broadens the referral routes into the programme.'

Other respondents identify the value of the programmes in supporting positive attitudes and confidence in learning and the way that parents can be role models for their children and their education.

'Family Learning courses help parents to recognise their role in their children's education and gives them the skills to be able to support them.'

'Community and school/home links are strengthened through the family learning programme. We work closely with employability programmes and partner organisations to provide progressive learning opportunities for parents following on from Family Learning.'

'Schools recognise the benefit Family Learning has upon their pupils and families. Parents/grandparents gain confidence and often move onto other learning. It forms a link from schools to our Service and, as such, both staff and parents access our provision.'

Respondents highlighted the impact of the programmes in reaching those in greatest need of support for their skills.

'We also measure impact by progression of learners with low skills on to community ES classes. Progression is important. For this reason, we tried to target specific groups of potential learners as we are aware that the families who sign up eagerly for extra provision can also have the least need!'

'We work with community partner organisations to target our provision to families in the greatest need. This helps us to make an impact where it is needed most and to build ongoing relationships with partners and families.'

'We spend time engaging the most vulnerable families to enable them to re-engage with education and learning and then support them to move on to adult learning classes or employment support programmes. The target is to support their child's learning in school, but this enables the conversation to develop their own skills and begin their journey.'

'Community engagement - many of the courses we offered were developed in partnership with community partners and delivered to individuals with children who were connected with these partners.'

Respondents were asked about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on provision. Their responses point to the value of Family Learning in supporting parents when lockdown happened, and they were faced with home schooling.

'We supported families during lockdown with home schooling and managing tensions.'

'The challenges of home schooling presented a curriculum opportunity to support adult family members with this.'

'The model had to be radically changed and work with families individually - by providing packages for the home and following up with virtual activity.'

'We have maintained provision linked to individual schools as well as offering a generic Family Learning online weekly session where parents can access storytelling, resources and activities to support their children's learning. The sessions have provided opportunities for parents to access support through home schooling periods.'

'Family Learning tutors provided a familiar and trusted point of support during home schooling periods. We recognise the value the programme has in supporting children's learning, improving home/school links, raising confidence in children, improving parents and children's interaction. Crucially raising parents' confidence and skills to enable them to continue learning and so improve the whole families' skills and prospects.'

Responses were mixed in terms of how delivery was received during lockdown and the switch to learning on-line. Some respondents identified a drop off in participation and struggled to engage families online when schools were closed. Others found that learner numbers increased online and more grandparents, dads and those in employment joined in. Most respondents seem to be preparing for a blended approach/mixed delivery for the future.

'It is fair to say that the pandemic has affected course attendance. In previous years, it was not unusual to see more than 15 learners per class, whereas we are currently supporting much smaller numbers. We have modified the programme to a "bite sized" version to help families with attendance challenges. Where possible, we have supported individuals with digital resources, in some instances, connectivity has been a problem.'

'Due to all courses being delivered online there has been a drop in numbers. Learners unable to access courses due to lack of equipment, although we offer this facility, and also due to digital skills.'

'We have seen a rise in online engagement during the pandemic, which has seen us reach new audiences who are geographically further from our museums. We have also been mindful of working with partners to engage with families who may be digitally excluded.'

'We have seen more male attendees than usual. We have also seen grandparents working with parents - which is also unusual compared with the "norm". There has also been an increase in "employed" attendees - working from home has meant that individuals have been able to join in during a working day. In terms of planning future provision - we may need to consider offering one remote session each week.'

'The pivot to remote delivery has reduced the number of community courses provided, these are most effective in classroom settings. However, feedback from the courses that were able to run has largely been positive.'

Providers were asked to identify what support might be needed to develop provision. Respondents identified curriculum development, CPD to increase understanding of the new curriculum for schools, networking to share practice and increased profile and recognition of Family Learning, including more profile raising with school leaders. Connecting with existing programmes like Flying Start and Communities for Work was also highlighted.

'Inspirational ideas, curriculum development, resources, materials. Networking useful especially between provider and schools to get them on board in the first place! Maybe national recognition of the beneficial impact of Family Learning'

'More networking and sharing, case studies and targeted training opportunities'

'It would be helpful to have more promotion within schools. A general awareness of how Family Learning can complement mainstream activity would be helpful.'

'To be kept up to date regarding new curriculum developments in school, training in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy developments, new approaches or schemes. Also sharing good practice opportunities across providers.'

'I would also suggest that networking opportunities are provided for practitioners who deliver in community settings too, so that they can be made aware of Curriculum for Wales, Hwb, etc'.

'National Strategy for Family Learning'

'Support and networking with CAVC Family learning programmes, sharing resources with Flying start for example venues and equipment. Partnership with Communities 4 Work'.

In terms of future delivery, providers highlighted that a hybrid approach between online and face to face activity was being planned and to build back Family Learning where some momentum has been lost during the pandemic.

'We believe that Family Learning is a great way to work with families to uplift overall attainment in maths and English but also that it is a very good engagement tool for progressing adults onto our courses. It equips adults to better support their children. This is very relevant now that so much school time has been lost for children'.

The survey allowed respondents to leave further comments.

'Family Learning was vital for the mental well-being of the learners during the pandemic, it should be encouraged more within the community. Sometimes issues around abuse are also spotted through these groups. Someone can be stuck within a house and not be able to share unless they come out or meet in family learning groups'.

'Family Learning should be integral to school strategies to raise children's attainment and to narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers. Schools should include family learning as an effective intervention'.

'Welsh Government should include explicit references to family learning within guidance for use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant.'

'I feel families have been badly let down by failures to upskill parents to aid their children with learning long before the pandemic. The pandemic has just exposed cracks that were already there and made them that much deeper.'

'I know there was a desperate need for parents to have help using the HWB at home during lockdown If we are locked down again Family Learning could be really helpful'

in supporting parents in many ways in their efforts to support their children's education at home'.

'Since the specific family learning grant ended, family learning opportunities have decreased considerably. Family Learning should be a specific programme title within the ACL Service Delivery Plan and funded in line with ABE as a minimum. We know that parents need support, especially as home-schooling highlighted issues parents experienced. We need to seize the opportunity to create a cohesive offer to meet the needs of families, schools and ACL'.

Evidence Review

There is strong evidence highlighting the value of family learning to many positive and sustained outcomes.

'Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage' (Family Learning Network, 2016).

Examples of the impact of adult learning on the outcomes of children was specifically highlighted in the Foresight Report.³ It stated:

'The education of adults positively influences the educational achievement of their children and their children's health. Adults who participate in learning themselves are more likely to engage in their children's education, improving outcomes.'

It goes further, stating that 'the intergenerational effects are particularly strong where levels of inequality are high, and thus may accentuate the effects of inequality and exclusion.'

Over the last twenty years there have been a succession of UK reports that demonstrate that family learning is, 'the foundation of effective education'⁴.

'When parents engage in educational activities for themselves a series of cultural and educational interactions are promoted within the family. Parents benefit from self-efficacy, empowerment, and greater involvement in their child's school as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home. This leads to increased pupils' engagement in school and better educational achievements.' (European Commission, 2015)

Family learning can produce outcomes for all family members and contribute towards a culture of learning within the family. It is an approach that encourages

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-skills-and-lifelong-learning>

⁴ <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/familylearning.pdf>

parents and children to learn together and continue their learning at home. For those families experiencing social and economic disadvantage, it can be a lifeline.

“Many Family Learning participants go on to either train for employment, start looking for work or apply for higher level courses as a result of their participation in the programme.”

Source: Learning and Work Institute’s Family Learning provider survey 2021

The NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning identified the benefits of a nationally led, locally connected programme.⁵

Family learning is an approach that supports improved attainment and excellence and equity which leads to positive outcomes for both adults and children. Family learning is an early intervention and prevention approach which reaches the most disadvantaged communities. Family learning helps close the attainment gap through breaking the inter-generational cycles of deprivation and low attainment. The effects of family learning are known to extend beyond the duration of the intervention and provide lasting impacts and improved outcomes.⁶

Research shows that children have a much better chance of succeeding in life if their parents are engaged in learning.

Evidence suggests that those adults who have good levels of education and skills have more opportunities in life – they are more likely to continue to access learning opportunities, to gain rewarding employment and have better health outcomes.

Providing opportunities for family learning has impact because it not only secures better outcomes for children and their parents, but it also has positive impacts on a wide range of economic and social policy agendas.

Children spend approximately 15% of their waking hours in school (OECD, 2014). The remaining 85% of children’s time is spent at home or in their communities and this presents a potentially significant opportunity for learning. Equipping, supporting, and building the capacity of parents to maximise children’s opportunities for learning is key to raising attainment.

For many adults a family learning programme can be the first step to taking up further adult learning and training opportunities, gaining a job, or developing new

⁵ <https://archive.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/family-learning-inquiry/>

⁶ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Family-Learning-Report-full-document.pdf>

skills. For children, this can have a positive impact on their individual attainment and learning journey (Harding et al, 2013).

“Family Learning is an invaluable tool in attracting difficult to reach parents and carers into adult education. These qualifications are often the first certificate the parents have achieved.”

Source: Learning and Work Institute’s Family Learning provider survey 2021

Outcomes for children	Outcomes for adults
Educational attainment	Educational attainment
Attendance	Progression
Behaviour	Motivation
Motivation	Confidence
Confidence	Social and cultural capital
	Parenting skills

In Scotland, a review of the evidence around Family Learning⁷, has found that improving and increasing ways in which parents and families can be equal partners in their children’s learning at home, school and in communities is crucial to raising attainment for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Investing in the skills and qualifications of parents has an impact. Not only for the life chances of the adults but for their children also. At age five, compared with children whose parents have no qualifications, those with a degree-educated parent are around 18 months ahead on vocabulary and around 13 months ahead on problem solving.

Family learning as an approach is not a new concept but one which helps break cycles of poverty and disadvantage amongst communities whilst at the same time enhancing the intergenerational transfer of skills from the parent to the child and the child to the parent.

A family learning approach can also be a catalyst in helping adults take up adult learning and training opportunities, gain employment or attain new skills. Often parents will be driven by a desire to do the best for their children and the start of school life can be a key transition point where parents will recognise the need for

⁷ <https://education.gov.scot/nih/Documents/Family-Learning-Executive-Summary.pdf>

building their skills. The school gate can be a huge opportunity for adult learning providers to start a conversation, build trust and engage.

As an engagement and outreach approach, family learning can reach parents who have been out of work for some time and can be a bridge back into employment by providing vital confidence building skills, networking opportunities and a pathway to further learning.

Family Learning in Wales

At the time of the NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning (2012),⁸ Family Learning provision was funded by Welsh Government with a £2million grant awarded to local authorities through an early-years grant programme.

Delivery was predominantly in primary schools. Programmes varied in length and structure, but generally included adult-only time, where parents and carers worked on their skills needs – which could include literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, either delivered directly or embedded in contexts as varied as financial literacy, science or art.

Family Learning programmes were delivered across all counties in Wales and emerged from the Basic Skills Agency. Family literacy and Family numeracy became part of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales (2001).

This grant fund was withdrawn by Welsh Government in 2015. Family Learning providers were encouraged to continue to deliver programmes but to negotiate locally to secure funding. In 2014 the Adult Community Learning Grant was reduced by 37% and part-time funding for further education was reduced by 33% this coincided with 4% cut in budgets for local authorities.

In 2018 Welsh Government produced a series of FACE toolkits aimed at schools, focused on ideas and resources to support parental engagement. Toolkits included signposting to family learning.⁹

Some provision has continued in some areas in Wales, in others it has disappeared. Different models have emerged; some secondary school settings have developed family/parent learning programmes, recognising the benefits of improving the confidence and skills of their parents. Some delivery has focused on supporting the achievement of GCSEs for parents (maths for example) in sync with the teaching of those subjects to young people.

⁸ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/family-learning-works/>

⁹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/face-the-challenge-together-family-and-community-engagement-toolkit-for-schools-in-wales-main-guidance.pdf>

Adult learning and skills in Wales

Literacy, numeracy, digital, financial capability, health literacy and citizenship are central to people's job and career prospects and ability to be active and engaged in their communities.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted that people who don't have good essential skills are likely to face difficulties in finding and sustaining jobs. Parents without these skills face additional challenges in supporting their children with reading, writing, confidence and a positive attitude to learning.

Without digital skills they are at risk of exclusion from essential public services and social interactions which now take place online, including everyday tasks such as grocery shopping, catching up with friends and family, online communication from school and accessing non-emergency healthcare such as GP appointments.

It is estimated that more than nine million adults across the UK have low literacy or numeracy. That means they find doing things like filling out forms, understanding instructions on a prescription, writing birthday cards, communications from school or reading bedtime stories a real challenge.

The 2010 adult skills survey, the latest data for Wales, found that 12% of working-age people, some 216,000, had literacy skills below level 1. Around 50% of adults, some 918,000, had numeracy skills below level 1. Digital Communities Wales suggests that 10% of adults in Wales are not online, missing out on opportunities to save money, find work, learn skills and access important services.

Welsh Government has not participated in the OECD survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) the equivalent of PISA, England and Northern Ireland are included.

It could be assumed that Wales shows the same characteristics as England and Northern Ireland – the survey shows;¹⁰

- Significant adult literacy and numeracy needs
- Challenges in deploying information in technology rich environments
- A younger cohort less able than older adults at some tasks

All three issues have significant implications for the development of progression and transition pathways in Wales. Without underpinning basic or essential skills, adults (16+) are not able to access suitable entry pathways to further learning and / or employment.

In Ireland the Government has published a 10 year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Adult Literacy for Life.¹¹ offers a whole system approach

¹⁰ OECD (2013). *Survey of Adult Skills. UK Country Note*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20United%20Kingdom.pdf>

¹¹ https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x/133e8d1481/15607_all_strategy_web.pdf

for co-ordinated action to improve the outcomes for adults. Family learning programmes are identified as part of the system that will contribute to achieving the outcomes identified in this strategy.

The coronavirus pandemic and the impact on families

The *renew and reform plan from Welsh Government*¹² highlights certain challenges to address from the impact of the Coronavirus.

- Learners will need support to develop a secure foundation for learning. We need to enable learners to learn effectively. Their mental health and emotional wellbeing, their relationships and their physical health are all critical enablers of good learning.
- They may also need support in key enabling skills, including oracy, literacy, numeracy, planning, organising and critical thinking.

Engaging parents and families to work together on these priorities is essential. Supporting families to build their own skills and to have more confidence in their abilities will build resilience and enable them to be positive role models in their children's learning. Creating positive feelings about learning within families is an important part of how Wales will move forward to develop a culture for lifelong learning.

When lockdown came into force, many families did not have access to the kit and to affordable broadband to enable learning to continue and crucially some parents did not have the skills – digital, literacy, numeracy, to support the learning in their home. Evidence suggests that those with lower levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills were impacted more during the pandemic.

The Literacy Trust have produced research on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on families in the UK.¹³

They emphasise that what happens at home in the early years of a child's life is not only key to their success in education, but their success in life. A positive home learning environment can predict higher levels of vocabulary, spelling and literacy in young children.

COVID-19 has exacerbated factors that can influence a child's outcomes - the prevalence of parental depression, including economic hardship and job insecurity,

¹² <https://gov.wales/renew-and-reform-supporting-learners-wellbeing-and-progression.html>

¹³ [https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Literature review on the impact of COVID-19 on families.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Literature%20review%20on%20the%20impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20families.pdf)

and those in low paid or insecure work, who had fewer resources to begin with, have been impacted more.

Children from socially disadvantaged families are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with a language problem (Law et al 2017; Finnegan et al 2015), causing them to fall behind their peers in academic achievement at every stage of their education (Law et al 2017). If a child doesn't learn to read well when young, they can struggle at school (Read On. Get On 2014).

In Scotland, one in five poorer children leave primary school unable to read well, four times higher than for children from the least disadvantaged backgrounds (Finnegan 2015). By the end of secondary school, disadvantaged children are on average 18 months behind their peers.

A Child Poverty Action Group survey during lockdown found that low-income families were twice as likely to say they lacked the resources they needed to support learning at home (Child Poverty Action Group 2020).

Family Learning Case Studies

Inspire Learner Award Winners

Clare Gurton <https://www.learningandwork.wales/claire-gurton/>

The Smith Family <https://www.learningandwork.wales/the-smith-family/>

Swansea County Council

Swansea County Council deliver a range of family learning courses in two centres, and across community settings in Swansea – including 30 schools. Courses are usually for 10 weeks, although two schools who self-fund the provision through their Pupil Development Grants have opted for 30-week courses.

The family learning courses form part of wider ‘lifelong learning’ services, which also includes essential skills provision, and adult continuing learning. The family learning courses embed literacy, numeracy, oracy and digital skills – with the emphasis varying locally. The provision is funded by the local council, and all courses are Agored Cymru accredited. Provision tends to be aimed at parents with children between reception and year two.

The provision is advertised as ‘open to all’ – to avoid the potential stigma that could come with targeting parents. Informal, non-threatening approaches are used to engage learners who may be reluctant or have had negative experiences of learning in the past. For example, Swansea Council run coffee mornings and stalls at parents’ evenings.

Staff have found that parents who may otherwise be reluctant learners, are more likely to be involved in family learning for the sake of supporting their children. However, once enrolled, the courses provide an opportunity to encourage and raise the value of wider learning. Parents may become more aware of the role they play in supporting their child’s education, and have more involvement in the school, including being encouraged to become governors.

Moreover, participating in learning, and receiving a certificate for accreditation, can help to boost learner confidence and challenge ideas that learning is only for ‘some’.

A staff member explains:

“I think...they realise that education is for everybody, whereas they might have seen themselves as outside that, sort of, little club in the past, you know, nobody has ever gone to [University], nobody has ever gone to college, nobody has ever done A Levels.”

Additionally, Swansea County Council work with partner organisations to introduce further learning options through taster sessions. These have included arts, photography, and personal/social development courses as well as further accredited learning such as essential skills, English and maths.

Increasing the value of employment: The family learning courses can also act as a stepping-stone to employment – careers advisors are usually brought in towards the end of the course to discuss next steps with learners. Swansea County Council also have a strong relationship with Swansea Working, an employability organisation, who offer mentoring services to the family learning learners.

Ensuring learning is relevant: Although there are some 'set' curricula, learning is adapted to local need. For example, in some cases schools have been struggling with numeracy, and have requested to focus on this. Swansea have responded to an increasing need for digital skills courses, as some schools are beginning to use tablets, and parents may need additional help to understand them and how they can support their children to use them.

In the post-course evaluation forms from three terms in 2016/17, 90% of parents indicated that they had a positive experience of the course and benefited from it. Additionally, output data shows that of the 266 learners across 2016/17, 186 achieved accreditation.

Springboard Learning, Pembrokeshire

<https://www.learningandwork.wales/gelliswick-church-in-wales-vc-primary-school/>

Springboard, Learning Pembrokeshire, has been providing free learning opportunities to families in Pembrokeshire for over ten years. It delivers around 250 courses per year across nine schools and in 2018-19 engaged over 1,600 different adults and children in family learning opportunities within the county.

Creative courses linked to all 6 key areas of the new school curriculum help families explore the arts and sciences, the environment and the humanities. Springboard also runs courses which blend different subjects together such as mindfulness and art, English and technology to support people's health and well-being.

In addition, Springboard is also committed to delivering as many large scale 'WOW' projects as possible. These are special activities that are not routinely offered as part of the school curriculum or adult learning programme so that learners who engage on the project can feel a sense of pride in having created something that will have a legacy for the school and their local community. WOW projects have included a large scale mosaic, the design and creation series of stained glass windows and a school mural. The diverse range of family activities Springboard offers is dynamic and bespoke to each school's themes and priority areas of development to secure optimum levels of engagement but the systems for recording achievement and progression are standardised. For all programmes, students evaluate their own learning and progression throughout their learning journey with Springboard and the project is able to collate data on attendance, attainment, accreditation and progression for each learner it engages.

The project works with the Local Authority's data team to evaluate whether family engagement with Springboard can be seen to affect the children's attendance and attainment over the academic year.

Springboard's sustained growth has been made possible through securing significant amounts of grant funding from a variety of different sources each financial year. The project adapts its aims to fit the priorities of its various stakeholders and funding streams and is required to report back to its funders at the end of each financial and academic year based on the targets it commits to achieving in its grant applications and service level agreements.

Key to the project achieving such high levels of engagement is the commitment of its team of Advisors to recruit and support learners from engagement to progression.



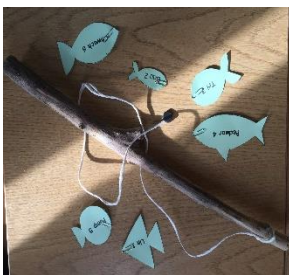
Families Learning Together at Cardiff and Vale College

What is the Family Learning Project?

The Families Learning Together Project at CAVC aims to engage a large number of families and support parents with practical and fun ways of engaging with their children's education. The team of qualified teachers deliver bespoke courses and workshops designed to take families on an exciting learning journey together. Pre-pandemic courses were delivered in schools across Cardiff and the Vale and have now been developed to include online. Courses are available at all key stages for families with children from nursery up to secondary school.



Welsh medium and EAL courses have added for 2021 -22 to meet demand.



What are the benefits of Family Learning with CAVC?

In addition to providing parents with an understanding of how to support their children at all key stages there is an opportunity to gain a qualification. Also, as part of the course parents become college students and enjoy a visit to the college where they find out more about CAVC and further learning opportunities. Courses can be tailored to the needs of individual schools or groups and are all free.

How do the Family Learning Together courses work?

School based

Parent only session – During this session we work with the parents developing their educational skills and



knowledge, identifying ways of supporting learning at home.

Joint session – The children join the parents for a practical, fun session of educational activities.

Online

Live sessions on Teams offering practical suggestions and guidance for parents to support their child's learning. Sessions are recorded and can be accessed at their convenience and are supported with home activities. There is an interactive Storytime for families with younger children.



Key facts

In 2020 - 21 all courses were delivered online due to the pandemic, engaging with over 650 families

The success of the project continues to grow and 178 courses are planned for 2021 - 22 with an aim of reaching at least 1500 families

For further information please contact the Family Learning team

Families@cavc.ac.uk

Twitter CAVC_FLT

Watch this [video](#) to find out more

Monkton Priory Primary School, Pembrokeshire

<https://www.learningandwork.wales/monkton-priory-community-primary-school/>

Monkton Priory Primary School has been engaging parents and the wider community in adult learning for many years with outstanding results.

In 2012 Launch Adult Learning was created by Headteacher, Shelley Morris, she says, "Our mission was to provide adult education in the community. The project has a clear purpose – achieving the best outcomes, raising attainment and aspirations for children within the setting and this goes hand in hand with providing opportunities for learning, skills and qualifications for parents."

Accredited courses are available and designed to remove barriers so that parents and the wider community can gain the confidence and skills to find employment.

The school operates in an environment where 50% of children are entitled to free school meals, 40% of children have additional learning needs, 30% of children are from the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community.

An Adult Learning co-ordinator was employed by the school to deliver Launch – parents and the wider community were asked about the courses they wanted and considered what local employers were looking for, to enable some of the barriers of getting into work to be addressed.

One of the main barriers to learning for students was childcare. Launch now offer a free crèche with every course, however this highlighted a shortage of quality crèche workers available. Rather than let this stop developments, Launch applied to become a learning centre which enabled them to write and deliver accredited courses, tailor made for the community's needs. Kellie Bellmaine is the co-ordinator of Launch, she said "I gained the qualifications required to become a tutor and wrote an accredited crèche worker course, which included the safeguarding qualification. We now have a pool of qualified crèche workers, and they've accessed employment not only with us, but with other partner organisations."

A key aim of the Launch offer is around progression for students, and feedback reflected that this was also something the community wanted. A significant and hugely successful relationship is with the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD). Outreach delivery means that since 2012 students can study for a Foundation degree in Inclusive education at the school. This was so successful that students can now study for a further one year and gain a BA Degree in Inclusive Education.

Lisa Wilson is a parent who has accessed the courses, she has eight children and is a grandmother to three. She says, "I was approached to start a foundation degree at the school. I could not even turn on a computer, but I was booked onto a First Steps course and I took another course to improve my IT skills. I have not studied since leaving school but felt it was time that I did something for myself and to be a positive role model to my children and grandchildren." After gaining the foundation degree, Lisa graduated with a BA in 2016.

Since 2012, 79 students have gained a Foundation degree, 53 students have gained a full BA degree, with 18 of these graduates identifying as GRT (Gypsy Romany Traveller). This innovation means that the school now has seven Learning Support Assistants working at the school with degrees and at the end of 2016 Launch were approached by UWTSD to offer another part-time degree programme in Youth and Community Work.

Data from Monkton Priory School has showed that attendance from children eligible for free school meals increased from 89.6% to 93.2% between 2013-17, while attainment in the core subject indicator increased from 22.2% to 76.5%. The school leadership attribute much of this improvement to the impact of the LAUNCH programme.

Cathays High School

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeFFa_stABE&t=8s

Cathays High School is a mixed comprehensive school for 11-19 year olds, located in central Cardiff, an area with a high population of migrants and refugees with language needs.

In response to local needs, Cathays have developed a range of adult learning provision aimed at upskilling parents and enabling them to better support their children's learning. They have developed strong progression pathways, facilitating routes into employment and further education. Courses based on a variety of creative, literacy, numeracy, fitness, digital skills and health and wellbeing are held in school, a leisure centre and in community settings.

Three courses funded by Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Cardiff: Childcare, Digital Skills and Confidence Building are held on a termly basis. Cathays also run an ESOL group throughout the year and a healthy eating course in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University. A self-organised sewing group has been set up by parents themselves.

Approach to outcomes measurement Accreditation: Many of the courses are run in 10-week blocks and learners achieve external accreditation through Agored Cymru accreditation.

Learners on non-accredited courses receive certificates of completion. The non-accredited courses are at entry level and learners who have been on them for a year progress onto Level 1 courses. Progress on to further education or employment is a priority: contact with learners after a course has finished is easily maintained within the school community as they are parents of the school's students so staff can track their destinations. Cathay's finds out which learners progress on to further education at Cardiff and Vale College and other local providers. They also record other destinations and outcomes. For example, after attending a confidence building course ten learners stated that they felt better prepared to look for work, four went on to look for a first job, and another four for a better job.

For many learners, the courses at Cathays are their first experience of learning provision as an adult. All of the courses are designed to provide a progression route into further education, employment and community participation. Progression can be internal as well: Cathays has supported some learners to become peer teachers.

Bridgend College

Bridgend College started a maths class for parents at Bryntirion Comprehensive who wanted to improve their skills to help with their children's maths homework.

The number of classes has tripled in the three years since the first cohort of parents signed up. Not only are parents from the original classes still attending, new classes have been added each year so they now cater for Year 7,8 and 9 parents. These maths classes are better attended than any of Bridgend College's other parents classes, which the college says is down to the unique way of teaching – parents follow the same curriculum as their children, so they learn the same things at the same time.

Rachel Edmonds-Naish, who manages Adult Basic Education at Bridgend College, said: "Some people still feel there's a stigma attached to learning basic skills as an adult, so it's a challenge for us to find ways of teaching which remove any embarrassment and make sure adult learning accessible."

"For example, we know some adults don't like going into colleges to learn because they associate them with teenagers, so we approach schools and community centres to find out what local people need and bring the classes to them. That's how the parents maths class at Bryntirion Comprehensive started, we approached the school to see if there was a way we could help and they've been incredibly supportive from the very beginning.

"This class works so well because the school shares the curriculum with us, so parents can learn alongside their children. For some of the parents, it's been years since they were last in a classroom and use these sessions to refresh their skills. For others, who maybe struggled at school, they are learning new skills to help with their children's homework and improve their own numeracy. Either way, any stigma is removed because they're doing this to help their children rather than themselves."

"The feedback we get from the parents is really fantastic and we've been more than happy to add more classes each year as new children start in Year 7."

Classes run after-hours at the school so they're accessible for parents who work. Bryntirion Comprehensive's Headteacher, Mr Pawar, said: "Pupils really benefit from having parents who are engaged with what they're learning and able to help with homework, so when Bridgend College approached us about setting up the parent's maths class we were more than happy to help.

"The classes have been a huge success with the parents, some of whom have now been attending for three years, and we've actually seen an improvement in the engagement and attitude of the children. We're now speaking with Bridgend College about introducing a literacy class which we're hoping to start in time for September 2019 intake."

Bristol Community Learning

Community Learning West (CLW) is part of Bristol City Council working in partnership with Gloucester and North West Somerset to deliver adult community learning.

In Bristol there are 2400 enrolments (1800 learners) per year on community learning pre-employability courses.

15% of the provision is family learning. This includes Family English Maths and Language (FEML), Wider Family Learning (WFL) and engagement activities such as first aid and arts and crafts.

In 2005 the publicly funded contract with Bristol City Council was reorganised so that it is highly targeted on engagement and progression of learners with qualifications below Level 2. Progression to other providers including three local Further Education colleges is a priority. This is linked to Bristol's status as a Learning City.

Courses are delivered in 100 community venues including schools.

The systems for tracking and recording of progression and outcomes are used across all provision and are not specific to family learning. Family learning is delivered through partnerships with children's centres and schools. The partnerships with children's centres are strong with shared costs (e.g. creche), joint planning, data reports and are reinforced with service level agreements. The priorities for both organisations are linked. For example, to tackle issues about poverty the children's centres distribute weekly food bags and the family learning team deliver courses about healthy eating on a budget.

Using Unique Learner Numbers (ULN) with Further Education colleges, CLW can accurately record the actual progression onto further education, usually in the following academic year. CLW also collects wider outcomes and reports to Bristol City Council and South West Skills and Learning.

CLW does not routinely collect data relating to children. For some family learning projects children's individual learning records have been completed but they are not analysed. Schools are surveyed occasionally to find out about parent's engagement in schools after family learning courses, but this is not systematic.

In 2017/18, 60% of those who responded had a positive progression to further learning.