

European Agenda for Adult Learning – Evidencing Family Learning Outcomes

Interim Report

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September 2019



Forum for Adult Learning



ECORYS



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Registration No. 2603322 Registered Charity No. 1002775
Registered office: 4th Floor Arnhem House, 31 Waterloo Way, Leicester LE1 6LP



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2019-2020



Published by National Learning and Work Institute

4th Floor Arnhem House, 31 Waterloo Way, Leicester LE1 6LP

Company registration no. 2603322 | Charity registration no. 1002775

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Introduction

'Disadvantaged adults can be brought back to learning through their families, improving their confidence to take up learning and employment through improved health and well-being and increased engagement with society and their community'.¹

Family learning successfully engages and supports families facing social and economic disadvantage. It can engage those furthest from learning and from the labour market and offers progression routes into further education and employment. Family learning has been shown to be particularly successful in supporting parents and carers to increase their employability skills and to progress to employment, as well as contribute to health / well-being, and wider outcomes such as likelihood to engage in community activities. With increased devolution of budgets and differential approaches to family learning across the UK, and within national administrations, it is important to establish what works—and what counts!

This project, supported by the European Agenda for Adult Learning, aims to collate existing research on the outcomes of adult learning and how these could be developed across the UK.

Family Learning encourages family members to learn together as and within a family, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Family learning activities can also be specifically designed to enable parents to learn how to support their children's learning. 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'. (Scottish Family Learning Network, 2016.)

We were particularly interested in the role of family learning in enabling engagement, entry and progression. To this end we spoke to representatives of the UK's four Impact Forums (in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) to investigate approaches to the collection, collation, analysis and use of data on progression in and from family learning programmes.

This interim report aims to share our initial findings and reflections from material collected to date. We hope this will stimulate feedback from stakeholders to inform our final report in November 2019.

Background

With the devolution of skills funding, there is a greater interest in the outcomes of learning. Commissioners are increasingly concerned with methods of funding the results of interventions rather than the interventions themselves. The irony is that those programmes with multiple outcomes are harder to measure than those with a narrow focus. Family learning has been shown to have outcomes that fall within five broad categories:

- Children's attainment
- Educational progression
- Employment progression

¹ NIACE, 2013. *Family Learning Works* <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/family-learning-works/>

- Health
- Well-being

The draft family learning outcomes framework (from which this list is taken) identifies twelve outcomes within these categories. Positive outcomes can affect children and adults. For example, within the category of ‘children’s attainment’ besides improved school-readiness and educational attainment, it is noted how family learning impacts on adults’ ability to act as a child’s first educator. We know any form of adult learning is likely to enhance parents’ ability to support their children’s education. However, family learning—with its focus on shared educational activities—is more focused on specific interventions.

In terms of the category of ‘employment progression’, the following outcomes for adults have been identified:

- Improved employability
- Started volunteering
- Gained employment / self-employment,
- Progression at or in work

Of course the picture is more complex than that. We know from other research that the areas of ‘learning’, ‘work’, and ‘health’ are in a dynamic relationship with each other. Learning enhances our ability to self-manage our health and well-being, so that we are more likely to stay in employment and less likely to take time off work. On the other hand, workplaces can have negative as well as positive impacts on our health. Area-based commissioning and the greater alignment of health, employment, and educational services recognises this interconnectivity and, ultimately, the greater efficiencies such alignment should deliver.²

Employability skills and attributes are embedded in family learning programmes, and that, for many adults, family learning is the starting point of a journey to work. Indeed, some family learning programmes are specifically designed to increase adults’ employability and support them into work. Family learning has been shown to be particularly successful in supporting parents and carers to increase their employability skills and to progress to employment.

Our model for analysis

During late 2018 we conducted a review of research on evidence of outcomes and impact in family learning. A total of twenty-two organisations across the UK responded to the initial survey and call for evidence. Those respondents willing to provide further information were interviewed in 2019. Case studies are in the process of development from face to face interviews, telephone interviews, and documents reviews.

The following organisations have kindly provided case study material to date:

- Adult Education Wolverhampton
- Adult Learning and Literacies Service, Renfrewshire

² L&W, 2018. *Learning, Work and Health: the next 70 years*. <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Learning-Health-and-Work-the-next-70-years.pdf>

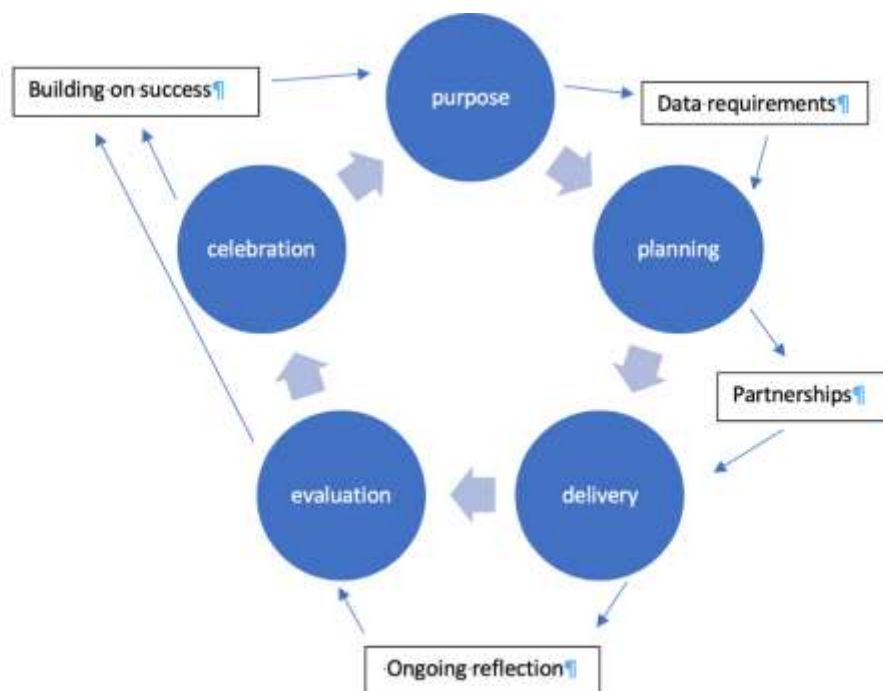
- Cathay's High School, Cardiff
- Community Learning West, Bristol
- Glasgow Life
- Inspire Culture, Nottinghamshire
- Learning and Employability, Stirling
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Parentkind, Northern Ireland
- Surrey County Council Family Learning
- Swansea Council

Due to the range of providers interviewed, we developed a model that reflected common themes from the research. The model helped us identify omissions in the ways in which providers approached the use of outcomes data, as well as good practice. In this emerging field, each provider was aware that it did not have 'the whole answer'. What's more, there were high levels of dependence on the variety of purposes that data was collected for.

Our research suggested a continuous process in the development of effective family learning programmes that are supported by outcomes evidence. This cyclical process is comprised of the following stages:

- The **purpose** for which the data was collected. This included the *data requirements* of external funders and internal organisational processes (such as quality assurance and self-assessment)
- How **planning** builds on these purposes and requirements in order to make sure data was used to shape programmes and what was expected of them. To this end, the role of external *partnerships* was seen as crucial at this developmental stage as well as later in the process
- Use of data and partnership working was seen as critical at the **delivery** stage to enable *ongoing reflection* on the programme's successes and areas for development
- **Evaluation** was not seen as separate to delivery but part of the same process that allowed providers to *build on success* and feed into future planning
- Similarly, **celebration** of the programme's successes and the achievements of individuals and groups was seen as critical both as an end of one process and the inspiration for new programmes

Figure 1: A process model for outcomes evidence in family learning



What the model tells us about the current situation.

Using the model above, we reviewed the case study material and other evidence to draw **four conclusions** based on the information to date.

1. The purpose of the programme influences the type of outcomes set and the way they are measured.

Family learning programmes are often developed to support progression for adults who have returned to learning or other initiatives such as routes into employment or raising attainment in schools. Funding is allocated to meet these purposes and therefore outcomes data is collected to demonstrate the contribution made by the programme. In England, where adult education funding is predominately directed towards the development of employment-related skills, family learning is often seen as a ‘first step’ back into learning. Progression routes are mapped from family learning programmes into accredited English and maths, as well as vocational training and employment. To this end, providers are required to record recruitment, achievement and success data and intended learner destinations at the end of the course. Progress in employment or in further education may be recorded at a later date but this is not mandatory. Providers in England collect the data for their own self assessment, to support further funding bids and to demonstrate good practice.

Table 1: What is currently required to be captured for family learning progression outcomes?

Provider	Required data	Additional data
Adult Education Wolverhampton (AEW)	Achievement (RARPA) and intended destination of adults	Achievement and distance travelled by children collected on SIMS by schools is shared with AEW A 'ULN' is used to track actual destination within the provider ³
Adult Learning and Literacies Service, Renfrewshire	Attendance, achievement and progression of adults	Children's attainment is recorded by schools using PASS (Positive Attitudes to Self and School) Qualitative data on parental involvement with school and progression in employment
Cathay's High School, Cardiff	Achievement (Agored Cymru accredited) and progression from Entry level to Level 1	Progression on to FE, Voluntary and paid employment
Community Learning West, Bristol	Achievement (RARPA) and intended destination of adults Wider outcomes regarding recruitment, progression and digital engagement reported to meet council's KPIs	Wider impact data collected includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ambition ▪ Social skills/ friendship ▪ Healthy lifestyle ▪ Problem solving ▪ Using IT ▪ Community involvement

³ The Unique Learner Number is a 10 digit reference number which is used alongside the Personal Learning Record of anyone over the age of 13 years involved in education or training in the UK to form the Learning Records Service. More information on this system is available at <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/learning-records-service>. Providers are required to record on the Individualised Learner Record a learner's intended destination at the end of the course but their actual destination may be different.

		Impact on housing is collected for specific programmes for those who are vulnerably housed
Glasgow Life	Achievement and intended destination of adults	<p>Children's outcomes are collected and shared by schools</p> <p>Actual destination data is collected informally through maintained contact with parents at school</p> <p>Impact of provision data is collected through the "How Good is our CLD" self-evaluation tool</p>
Inspire Culture, Nottinghamshire	Achievement (RARPA) and intended destination of adults	External company asks questions of 10% of learners for detailed progression, employment and destination data
Learning and Employability, Stirling	<p>Completion, achievement and progression of adults.</p> <p>Courses that are funded by health authorities require data relating to lifestyle changes.</p>	Test of Change Improvement methodology is used to collect qualitative data about parent-child interaction
Northamptonshire County Council	Achievement (RARPA) and intended destination of adults	<p>External company asks questions of 10-20% of learners for detailed progression, employment and destination data</p> <p>Used 2018/19 pilot FLLAG survey to collect actual destination, employment and wellbeing data⁴</p>

⁴ In 2018/19 the Family Learning Local Authority Group (FLLAG) in England piloted a survey of learners and tutors which aimed to capture wider outcomes data including well-being and financial security. The survey was found to be too complex for many providers to use and therefore the sample size is small.

Parentkind, Northern Ireland	Number of parents recruited as volunteers in schools	Qualitative data about the wider impacts on parents and improved home-school relationships
Surrey County Council Family Learning	Achievement (RARPA) and intended destination of adults	Wider Outcomes survey of all adults who have completed 11+ Guided Learning Hours includes employability skills and social participation Post course progression into FE or employment is collected separately

In Scotland, Raising Aspirations funding is allocated through schools for family learning programmes that take a whole family approach, helping parents to support their child’s development. The emphasis in Scotland is placed on recording outcomes for both parents and children. The impact on children’s attainment is recorded and compared with their peers.

Glasgow Life works with schools with higher than average levels of social and economic deprivation. The schools use some of the Pupil Equity Funding to support the ‘Closing the poverty-related attainment gap’ initiative to provide family learning opportunities. The purpose of the family learning programmes are to increase the parents’ own skills and their confidence in helping their own children to learn.

Outcomes data is collected by schools to compare and contrast the achievements of children whose families take part in the family learning programmes with those who are not engaged. Glasgow Life collects qualitative and quantitative data about the outcomes for adults and their families using the Glasgow Life Outcome Evaluation system (GLOES). It also uses its ‘How Good is our Community Learning and Development?’ system to assess how well the provision has met its purpose.

In Wales, there is no specific funding for family learning. The family learning provision that is delivered is funded through the Adult Community Learning grant or general further education provision submits achievement and success data to the Welsh Government office through the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR). Provision that is funded through other sources, such as the Pupil Development Grant and Families First, have different outcomes and reporting structures.

Family learning contributes to the Taking Wales Forward Programme for Government 2016-2021, particularly the ‘Ambitious and Learning’ theme. Family learning programmes focus on improving the attainment of children and the increase in qualifications, skills and employability of adults.

Swansea Council 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'.

Additionally, Swansea 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.

Good practice

- The purpose of a programme is made clear to learners and partner organisations at the outset.
- Outcomes evidence to be collected is directly connected to the purpose of the programme.

2. Delivery includes evidence of progression and outcomes as part of the overall quality system

The range of family learning programmes is very wide but generally falls into the broad categories of:

- Family Maths, English and Language
- Wider Family Learning (such as cookery, art and crafts)
- Parenting Skills

Some courses involve parents and children working together, others are for adults only.

Regardless of the programme structure ensuring evidence is collected throughout the course is an essential part of the quality system, sometimes using the 'RARPA' approach (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement). Qualitative data can be an effective way to encourage learners to reflect on their own progress. This includes learner diaries, photographs, records of activities at home, children's and adults' comments.

Evidence is collected by learners, tutors, school staff or community development staff. In cases where programmes are delivered in partnership with schools or voluntary sector organisations, agreements are regarded as necessary to ensure that evidence is recorded systematically. When evidence is collected in an ad hoc way providers are challenged to demonstrate effective outcomes with whatever evidence is available.

Pizza Learning is an effective family learning programme delivered across the stages of primary education by Adult Learning and Literacies Service, Renfrewshire (ALLS) in partnership with schools. It is a structured programme including Pizza Reading, Pizza Maths and Pizza Time (the courses all involve children and parents working together and finishing the session with eating pizza!). Methods of gathering outcome evidence are very well arranged. Regular meetings are held between ALLS and school staff to review the course development and impact and there is a regular dialogue about the families involved. The relationship with the families is long term as they progress through the various programmes and on to other community learning courses so the long term impact is seen and recorded in case studies, reading diaries and other qualitative formats.

Good practice

- All partner organisations should be involved in collecting progression and outcome evidence during a programme
- Evidence of progression and outcomes should be an integral part of the quality system

3. Evaluation is embedded into the overall quality system.

Programme evaluation is an ongoing process throughout the programme and as an end-of-course process. The costs of evaluation should be included in the total programme costs and any funding applications that are required. This includes staff time and the cost of conducting follow-up surveys and creating case studies.

Methods of evaluating the effectiveness of family learning programmes are various. Effective evaluation has some essential elements:

- Shared objectives ensuring that all those involved have a single set of objectives aligned with the purpose of the programme
- Consistency using trusted and appropriate methods. Some programmes use models and tools to monitor the impact on children and parents. Other providers use external organisations to conduct formal research. If data is collected in a systematic way then meaningful comparisons can be made over several years
- Inclusiveness, ensuring that the views of all stakeholders, learners, tutors, community workers and school staff, are considered
- Adequacy as it may not be possible to evaluate every session or every setting. The sample size across the provision must be large enough to provide meaningful conclusions

Benchmarking is increasingly used to assess trends over time and to compare performance with that of other providers. Benchmarking data is used for self-assessment, to support planning and decision making and to set improvement targets. It can also be used to enhance the reputation of a provider within the sector and with partner organisations.

The long term impact of family learning such as progression into employment may not be achieved until months or years after the adult joined a course and therefore evaluation at the last session or immediately after the course may not give a complete picture. Providers who are able to sustain contact with learners are better placed to collect substantial evidence.

Inspire Culture (Nottinghamshire) delivers a wide range of family learning programmes. The aim is to help parents to help their children and also to develop their own skills in maths and English in order to progress in employment. They have commissioned an external company to conduct a post course survey of learners in the period November to February in the academic year following the end of their course. This records learners' actual destination, which may be gaining new employment, progressing in their current employment or moving into further education. It also gathers learners' feedback on the impact of the course on their progression. This survey has been done in a standardised way for three consecutive years. The sample size is one thousand learners across all community education programmes (10% of the total learner population) so the evidence is substantial.

Good practice

- Evaluation is integral to all programmes and the costs should be built in at the outset
- Evaluation is necessary after the end of programmes to include long term impacts
- The key elements of successful evaluation are: shared objectives, consistency, inclusiveness, adequacy, and benchmarking.

4. Celebration helps to build on success

All of the providers in the research celebrated the families' achievements. They organised parties, certificate presentations, outings and even graduation ceremonies. Celebration increases the parents' confidence and the children's enjoyment of school life. It is an essential part of the process as it motivates learners and providers to build on their achievements. Celebration events held at schools strengthened the partnership between school staff and the adult learning provider. Celebration was also used to publicise the family learning courses to other parents, to market the schemes to other schools and to design future programmes.

Renfrewshire's Pizza Learning programme celebrates each session with a delivery of pizza for the families to share. What started as an incentive to families to attend, as well as a practical solution for parents to bring their children to an after school activity at a time when they would usually be having a meal, has become a 'brand recognition'. On completion of courses parents and children have a graduation style celebration event complete with mortar boards and certificates. The whole school community is involved and it creates a feeling of togetherness between the families, the school and Adult Learning and Literacies Service, Renfrewshire.

Providers used celebrations as a review of the provision and to plan and re-design further programmes. The feedback collected through conversations with learners—such as increased involvement in school life and more time spent on family learning activities at home—was used as evidence in the evaluation process.

Adult Education Wolverhampton has been offering a range of family learning courses at Goldthorn Park Primary School, Wolverhampton for several years. Certificate presentations are held in school assemblies and the families celebrate with an end of course outing (e.g. to a zoo). The impact data collected over the years has been used to shape, plan and re-design the programme. It has been found that the nursery and foundation stages are pivotal. The structure is that there is a deep focus at nursery and foundation stage including one-to-one support given to whole families if required (particularly regarding language support). School support continues in key stage 1 and 2 but to a lesser extent. The curriculum content has been redesigned so that it is closely matched to the school's curriculum, e.g. foundations for writing, fun with numbers. Families engage in a range of courses as their children progress through the school or as siblings start school.

Good practice

- Celebrations are used to motivate learners and staff
- Celebrations can build on success and inform future provision

Table 2: What are the roles and relationships for family learning progression?

Provider	Partner Organisations	Relationship / Roles
Adult Education Wolverhampton	Schools	Reporting on children's performance data
Adult Learning and Literacies Service, Renfrewshire	Schools University of West of Scotland	Reporting on children's performance data Research
Cathay's High School, Cardiff	Adult Community Learning Cardiff Metropolitan University Library Services	Funding Progression opportunities
Community Learning West, Bristol	South West Skills and Learning Housing Services Schools and Children's Centres	Data sharing and benchmarking Learner referrals Joint planning, shared creche costs, data sharing – all included in service level agreements
Glasgow Life	Schools Voluntary Organisations	Community Development Workers are based in schools Data Sharing Course delivery and data collection
Inspire Culture, Nottinghamshire	Schools Voluntary Organisations External evaluation company	Data sharing Course delivery and data collection Data collection
Learning and Employability, Stirling	Health Scotland Nurseries and Schools	Funding Data collection and sharing Course review and development

Northamptonshire County Council	Schools Council's Social Services dept External evaluation company	Data collection and sharing Support for families at risk Data collection
Parentkind, Northern Ireland	Schools	Recruitment Data Sharing Planning of volunteer placements
Surrey County Council Family Learning	Children's Centres, schools and community centres	Recruitment, local area data
Swansea Council	Schools Adult Learning Providers	Recruitment Course delivery and data collection

Conclusions to date

At the interim stage in the project, there are a number of conclusions that we shall develop in the next iteration of this report. These include:

- There are no standardised collection tools used across the UK to measure outcomes and impact
- Adult learning providers are collecting a wide range of outcomes data about families engaged in family learning and to evidence the contribution that family learning makes to government priorities
- None of the providers interviewed have the 'whole picture' but their evidence supports the purpose of their programmes
- Evaluation is embedded in programmes and the costs of data collection are included at the planning stage
- Methods used to collect evidence are various including the use of external companies and researchers. Providers have devised tools and documents to aid data collection and where these have been used consistently they provide evidence of trends over time

- Celebration is seen as an essential element of family learning programmes, not only to mark the achievements of parents and children but also as a way to collect evidence of impact that can be used as part of the evaluation process

Table 3 below summarises the conclusions alongside the good practice observed to date. We would be grateful to hear further examples from family learning providers to feed into the final report.

Table 3: Summary of Conclusions

Conclusion	Good practice
The <i>purpose</i> of the programme influences the type of outcomes set and the way they are measured	<p>The purpose of a programme is made clear to learners and partner organisations at the outset</p> <p>Outcomes evidence to be collected is directly connected to the purpose of the programme</p>
<i>Delivery</i> includes evidence of progression and outcomes as part of the overall quality system	<p>All partner organisations should be involved in collecting progression and outcome evidence during a programme</p> <p>Evidence of progression and outcomes should be an integral part of the quality system</p>
<i>Evaluation</i> is embedded into the overall quality system	<p>Evaluation is integral to all programmes and the costs should be built in at the outset.</p> <p>Evaluation is necessary after the end of programmes to include long term impacts.</p> <p>The key elements of successful evaluation are: shared objectives, consistency, inclusiveness, adequacy and benchmarking</p>
<i>Celebration</i> helps to build on success	<p>Celebrations can be held to motivate learners and staff</p> <p>Celebrations can build on success and inform further provision</p>

For more information and to get involved in the project, please contact Cath Harcula, Chair of the National Family Learning Forum via cath.harcula@ntlworld.com