

## **Evidencing the impact of family learning**

*Family Learning is valued by learners, providers and stakeholders but how can the wider outcomes and impact on learners, families and communities be evidenced in a consistent and efficient way?*

With changes to funding structures and differential approaches to family learning across the UK it is essential that substantial and trustworthy evidence demonstrates its value.

## **Challenge for the workforce**

Learning & Work Institute's report [Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: the impact of adult learning in the UK \(2017\)](#) sets out a compelling agenda to strengthen the role of adult learning in equipping individuals and communities to both respond to and shape the changing world around us. Further research, [Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: implications for workforce development \(2019\)](#) considers the challenges facing the adult learning workforce. One of the challenges that the family learning workforce faces is how to evidence the impact that their work has on individuals, families and communities.

## **The benefits of family learning**

Family learning successfully engages and supports families which face social and economic disadvantage. It can engage those furthest from learning and from the labour market and offers progression routes into further education and training and into 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. As parents and children learn together, family learning courses can also impact on children's attainment and wellbeing.

## **Case studies**

As part of the EAAL (European Agenda for Adult Learning) Case studies have been collected from providers across the UK and are included in an [interim report](#) on this topic. They show that many different approaches are being taken to demonstrate outcomes and impact but there are common elements to be found:

- Purpose

All the providers were clear about the purpose or intent for which evidence and data were collected. This included the data requirements of external funders and internal organisational processes

- Planning

It is essential to plan not only how the course will be delivered but also how evidence will be collected throughout the course. To this end, the role of external partnerships was seen as crucial with agreed roles and responsibilities.

- Delivery

The range of programmes delivered is wide, Some involve adults and children working together and others are for adults only. Regardless of the programme structure ensuring evidence is collected is an essential part of the quality system. Several of the case study providers used a [RARPA](#) (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) approach.

- Evaluation

Evaluation was not seen as separate to delivery but part of the same process and that allowed providers to build on success and feed into future planning.

- Celebration

Celebration of the programme's successes and the achievements of adults and children was seen as critical both as an end of one process and the inspiration for new programmes.

It is acknowledged that the impact of individuals, especially regarding employment and progression, may not be achieved until weeks or months after a course has been completed. Celebration events held after courses had finished provided an opportunity to capture longer term impact.

### **Next steps**

Looking forward, consideration should be given as to whether a standardised method for evidencing outcomes is desirable and achievable. It would also be worthwhile to compare and contrast this task in family learning settings and other adult community education provision. It would also be interesting to take a European perspective and consider how other countries are evidencing the impact of their family and community learning provision.

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