

Aims

The Schools and Families initiative aims to help raise educational attainment of parents and children in the poorest wards.

The programme aims to break the intergenerational cycle of underachievement by

- ◆ Increasing participation in family learning courses
- ◆ Establishing the needs of parents and children
- ◆ Encouraging families to more effectively support their children's' learning

It aims to do this through the provision of a team of in-school community auxiliaries.

Location

Stockton on Tees is an industrial town in the Tees Valley area. The resident population in the 2001 census was 178,000. 11 wards in the Borough are in the most deprived 10% nationally. Approximately 46% of the population of Stockton-on-Tees live within these identified 11 wards.

Research has identified a deficit in adult basic skills, which is particularly acute in the most deprived wards.

The initiative uses the 10 schools that serve the residents of the Neighbourhood Renewal areas as a location for delivery alongside educational outreach workers who meet learners in the most appropriate locations – such as at home, schools and community centres.

The Intervention Strategy

The programme is targeted at areas where attainment levels are low, as identified by Standard Achievement Test results, and Basic Skills Agency statistics on adult achievement.

Although the whole borough shows levels of adult literacy and numeracy below the national average, the problems are more acute in the 11 targeted wards than elsewhere. For example, as compared to an average borough low numeracy rate of 23.1%, the worst ward sees a figure of 34.4%. For literacy, the comparable figures are 16.6% borough wide and 29.8% in the worst ward.

Staffing

The NRF funded Schools and Families programme provides for the recruitment of 10 dedicated community auxiliary workers. These workers are located in 10 primary schools and are line managed through the school staffing structure.

The programme as a whole is managed by the Stockton Adult Education Service who are accountable for financial and outcome monitoring for the funding.

Funding

NRF provides approximately £90,000 per annum and has been funded over 4 years in total.

Operating Method

Schools and Families provides an outreach service that targets difficult to reach and reluctant learners through the use of a team of on-site community auxiliary workers.

The workers encourage parents and families to become involved in the work and learning of primary schools within the neighbourhood renewal priority areas. This is effectively a first step to encourage families to join family learning courses that are currently provided by the Stockton Adult Education Service.

As the outreach workers are permanently located within primary schools, they are a visible presence, which helps to break down local barriers to learning, build trust and offer appropriate opportunities to engage with potential learners.

In order to increase participation, the programme has developed marketing strategies targeted at reluctant learners. These strategies include brochure and prospectus for schools and courses, special events, fun sessions and educational visits. The barriers to learning are reduced, and relationships between home and school are improved.

The auxiliaries feed parents and children into over 125 courses that are delivered by the Adult Education Service specifically to encourage joint learning within the family. Courses are delivered by Family Learning Tutors and are accredited through the OCN (Open College Network). For example the 'Computers Together' IT course



provides basic IT skills for adults but ensures that the children attend 2 or 3 sessions out of the 10 week course to ensure that the learning is passed on within the family.

Courses are delivered within schools but also at community centres where appropriate facilities are available.

Intensive Family Literacy and Family Numeracy programmes also offer additional teaching support to children in school and in joint parent and child sessions. Children's attainment is recorded on entry to and exit from the programme.

Achievements of the Intervention

Main achievements

In the short term there has been strong improvement in the attainment of the children and parents targeted by the Schools and Families programme. It is anticipated that this will continue and become long term improvement in their qualifications and future further and higher education.

Recruitment and retention has been improved in the targeted schools due to an immediate response to problems from the on site worker.

The delivery of adult education services within the borough has been improved as the auxiliaries provide another mechanism for feeding back what is working in the community into the strategic development process.

The scheme encourages parents to become actively involved in their children's education – and has been successful in raising the aspirational levels of both children and adults.

Mainstreaming Strategy

The Adult Education Service is planning to bend current services to reproduce the Schools and Family model as a permanent part of the education service. It is, however, hoped that by the end of the programme, that the schools should identify and budget for the auxiliary workers themselves.

The Learning Curve.

Reluctant learners are difficult to reach and have multiple perceived barriers between themselves and school and education. For these reasons most cases need a face to face relationship with a support worker.

Successful re-entry into education also needs a marketing strategy. Schools and learning need to be 're-sold' to the reluctant learner.



Schools and Families

Contact:

Barbara Mcqueeney
Tel: 01642 391 555

Barbara.mcqueeney@stockton.gov.uk

NRF Priority:

Education

NRF Authority:

Stockton Borough Council

NRF Funding

Medium

PTO for additional information

Lead Agent:

Stockton Adult Education Service

Main Partners:

10 Schools serving the NRF areas

Location:

10 Primary Schools in neighbourhood renewal priority wards in Stockton Borough

Main achievements:

Employed 10 Community Auxiliary workers

Increased take up of family learning courses

Confidence building of both Children and Adults



By working with parents who may themselves have problems with English and maths, the initiative will impact on children by offering positive role models, and realistic strategies for parents to support their children in learning.

It has been hard to recruit the community auxiliaries as they need a very wide range of skills in working with both children and parents and acting as the front line for a lot of issues in areas with a lot of problems. Some schools have added extra hours onto existing staff to overcome this problem, but it is still an issue in other schools.

The most important element of the success of the programme has been the relationships that have built up and the trust that has developed. This takes time and is sometimes unsuccessful – for example the interest in a taster session may be massive, but this is no guarantee that participants will come to the full course – this is something that the auxiliaries have to overcome.

Key Lessons

The provision of a visible presence in the schools has been a key success factor in the Schools and Families projects. Relationships can more easily be developed between the auxiliaries, the schools and teachers and the families that can be done by an adult education tutor who is only in the school a few hours each week.

Contact details

Barbara McQueeney

Barbara.mcqueeney@stockton.gov.uk

Stockton Adult Education Service

The Flights Training Centre

Master Road

Thornaby

Stockton on Tees

01642 391555