



# Estyn

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
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Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

# The impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults

May 2012



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- ▲ work-based learning;
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## Introduction

- 1 This report is published in response to a request for advice in the annual ministerial remit letter to Estyn for 2011-2012. The report summarises Estyn's findings about the consistency and quality of family learning programmes. It raises awareness of the need to measure the progress made by children and their families. It identifies best practice in tracking, monitoring and recording the progress of pupils and adults.
- 2 The report considers:
  - how effective family learning programmes are in raising the standards of literacy/numeracy of young children;
  - whether there is consistency in the quality of delivery of family learning programmes;
  - what progress is made by adults in improving their own literacy/numeracy standards;
  - what constitutes best practice in the delivery of family learning programmes;
  - the extent to which the programmes lead to better follow-up support for those children who need it; and
  - the extent to which the programmes provide value for money.
- 3 The report focuses on those providers that are funded to deliver Family Learning Programmes through The Welsh Government's 'Local Authority Early Years Grant Programme'. The evidence for this report is drawn from a number of sources:
  - inspection reports and other relevant documentation and data;
  - visits to providers;
  - meetings with family learning managers and co-ordinators;
  - interviews with learners; and
  - meetings with adult education providers.

## Background

- 4 The Basic Skills Agency introduced family programmes in the mid-1990s to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy of both parents and children. The aim of the programmes was to break the cycle of underachievement where it occurs in families and to extend parents' skills in supporting their child's education. Local authorities and adult education providers delivered the programme through partnership working.
- 5 In 2001, following the success of Basic Skills Agency initiatives, such as 'Helping Your Child to Read' and 'Helping Your Child with Maths', the benefits of family programmes were recognised. These initiatives became an integral part of the National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales (2001). Research for the strategy identified that 7 out of 10 children with poor literacy at age 10 had parents who also had poor literacy skills.
- 6 The strategy was reviewed in 2004. The review of family programmes found that they worked well when they engaged hard-to-reach parents. The programmes led to improved educational outcomes for children, and to a range of benefits for adults including progression to further education and into employment.
- 7 However, a minority of the programmes were not always effective in recruiting parents with low skills. To address this, a new strategy, 'Words Talk – Numbers Count' (2005) placed a greater focus on recruitment and innovative ways of engaging the target group while keeping the focus on basic skills; the literacy and numeracy development of both adults and children. The new family learning initiatives offered a more flexible approach and a wider variety of programmes.
- 8 The Welsh Government's 'Local Authority Early Years Grant Programme' funds most of the current family learning programmes. This grant also includes funding for 'Language and Play programmes'. However, most local authorities and external partners identify other funding sources, such as Further Education Funding and European Social Funding, to supplement the delivery and provide extended opportunities for adults and children.
- 9 The Grant Programme specifies that funding must be used for specific target Groups, namely:
  - Communities First and other areas of significant disadvantage; and
  - schools that face challenging circumstances and where there is a serious problem with under attainment of pupils in the schools.
- 10 Under attainment for the purpose of the family learning programmes is where a pupil is performing in literacy and numeracy at a lower National Curriculum level than the attainment expected for a pupil of his/her age.
- 11 The target group for adult participants are those whose current skills in literacy and numeracy are at or below entry 3<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The national standards for adult literacy and adult numeracy are specified at 3 levels; entry; level 1 and level 2. Levels 1 and 2 are aligned to Essential Skills Wales qualification of communication and application of number. Entry level is further divided into 3 sub-levels; entry 1, entry 2 and entry 3.

- 12 A wide variety of publications, surveys and reports document the importance of family programmes and the positive impact that these can have on improving adult literacy skills and on improving the standards children achieve in schools.
- 13 A recent enquiry by NIACE<sup>2</sup>, 'Work, Society and Lifelong Literacy' (2011) confirms the important position family learning has on the standards children achieve. The enquiry finds that schools on their own cannot address the multiple disadvantages faced by many families.
- 14 The 'Millennium Longitudinal Study' by The Centre for Longitudinal Studies (2010)<sup>3</sup> looks in detail at the profile of parents who read to their children. It reports that parents with higher educational skills read more often to their children than those with low skills. Findings show that, overall, families in Wales read less often to their children than parents in other home countries.
- 15 Desforges documents the links between home reading and child achievement (2003)<sup>4</sup>. Research shows that pupils reading scores are higher and improve more quickly in families who are engaged in reading activities at home.
- 16 'Intelligence and Marketing Insight: Family Learning' (2007)<sup>5</sup> looks at the wider impact of family programmes. The report identifies that children leave the programmes with enhanced confidence and greater self-esteem. These factors result in a positive secondary impact on families, schools and the wider community.
- 17 In the Ofsted report, 'Family Learning: An Evaluation of the Benefits of Family Learning for Participants, their Families and the Wider Community' (2009)<sup>6</sup>, inspectors found that family programmes have a significant impact on the behaviour of children in school. They have better communication skills, settle better in class and have an improved relationship with teachers and peers.
- 18 The Estyn report, 'Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage in Schools' (2011)<sup>7</sup> identifies that home circumstances have the most significant impact on a child's progress and achievement. Pupils achieve higher results and are more likely to succeed when parents are involved in their education and provide support for learning.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/l/i/literacy\\_inquiry\\_-\\_full\\_report-web.pdf](http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/l/i/literacy_inquiry_-_full_report-web.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://search.ioe.ac.uk/search?q=millennium+longitudinal+study&site=CLS\\_New&client=CLS\\_New&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&proxystylesheet=CLS\\_New&proxyreload=1](http://search.ioe.ac.uk/search?q=millennium+longitudinal+study&site=CLS_New&client=CLS_New&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=CLS_New&proxyreload=1)

<sup>4</sup> Desforges, C. (2003) The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.learningobservatory.com/resource/learning-insight-family-learning-february-2007/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/family-learning>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/205405.2/tackling-poverty-and-disadvantage-in-schools-working-with-the-community-and-other-services-july-2011/?navmap=30,163>.

## Main findings

### Recruitment

- 19 Family learning programme co-ordinators use a good range of information to identify schools that would benefit from family learning programmes. When a school accepts the offer of provision, they set appropriate recruitment targets for the courses at that school. However, local authorities rely too much on co-ordinators setting targets for individual schools. They do not set an overall target for the local authority.
- 20 Nearly all providers market family programmes well and many use innovative means of targeting specific families. The most effective programmes use a facilitator from the school who has credibility with the parents, who knows the family circumstances and can build a good relationship with them.
- 21 Most providers and schools recruit parents after identifying the children who would benefit from family programmes. However, very few schools or family learning providers record or follow up the children who are identified for support but who do not take part in the programmes. No information is available about numbers involved or what, if any, support they receive.
- 22 Nearly all participants in the family learning programmes are from the target groups specified in the Local Authority Early Years Grant Programme. However, the level specified for parents taking part in the programmes is set too low. This results in the exclusion of a few children from the programmes.
- 23 Nearly all providers collaborate well with a wide range of partners such as Communities First and Health Services. However, in many authorities there are no strategic plans in place for sharing resources, such as youth centres and flying start centres, and this results in many missed opportunities.
- 24 All providers understand the barriers to learning that the majority of the target parents face and help them to overcome them. A common obstacle arises from the fear of schools that parents face because of their previous experience of failure.
- 25 Very few family learning providers collect data at gender level. This means that many have not identified the low participation rate of men. In 2010–2011, men made up just 10% of participants on short courses and 6.5% of participants on long courses in family programmes. Most providers lack clear plans and targets for recruiting them. This means that most providers miss opportunities to promote male role models for boys.

### Provision

- 26 Nearly all providers use effective delivery models for courses of over 12 hours' total duration. However, delivery models for short courses of 12 hours and under vary too much between authorities.
- 27 The grant programme application form does not ask for meaningful data about course participants and progression of learners on short courses. The form does not ask for the information needed to track the impact of the grant programme or to plan for improvements.

- 28 Too many learners remain on short course provision without progression.
- 29 Teachers and providers use a good range of teaching strategies to motivate learners and help adults understand how their children learn.
- 30 Nearly all teachers and family learning teaching assistants are well qualified and experienced.
- 31 Nearly all family learning teachers work effectively with schools to establish the needs of the children taking part in programmes. Most family programmes set learning targets for the children and discuss these regularly with class teachers. Programmes meet the needs of individual children well.

### **Progress**

- 32 On longer courses of over 12 hours in total, teachers use an appropriate range of initial assessment tools to establish the individual needs of the learners. They also use individual learning plans effectively to monitor and track how well learners achieve and progress to further learning.
- 33 Over reliance on informal self-assessment on short courses means that skills needs are often incorrectly identified by learners when they start and teachers don't have an accurate starting point from which to track progress.
- 34 Most adult learners on long courses and a minority on short courses have good opportunities to take a variety of credit based qualifications.
- 35 Very few providers collect data on progression although a few have data showing learner progression to courses at further education colleges or into support roles within schools.
- 36 Qualification attainment data is not collected nationally to create benchmarks to measure standards. This means that providers cannot compare their outcomes to national benchmarks.
- 37 Methods of tracking the progress of children and evaluating the impact of family programmes on the children taking part are inconsistent and do not make enough use of quantitative measures. Most schools rely on their own progress measures such as reading age assessments. They do not compare the progress of children on the programme with those who are not on the programme. Too many providers rely on anecdotal evidence and focus too much on the softer outcomes.
- 38 Very few schools and family programmes track the longer term impact of the family programmes on the standards achieved by children.

### **Monitoring the quality and impact of programmes**

- 39 Most family learning co-ordinators complete evaluative self-assessment reports based on participant questionnaires, teacher assessments, head teacher evaluations and course feedback sheets. They use self-evaluation to inform operational planning also provide useful reports for adult learners and stakeholders.



- 40 Good practice is identified and disseminated well through networks and staff meetings.
- 41 Many local authorities rely too much on co-ordinators' reports without collating the reports and learner outcome data to inform strategic planning in Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) plans.
- 42 Because of the lack of data on learner achievement at national level, it is difficult to judge overall progress on value for money. However, individual learning plans in the settings visited show that adult learners on long courses make good progress against literacy and numeracy targets. Many achieve a useful certificate that helps to move into employment or onto other courses.

## Recommendations

### **The Welsh Government should:**

- R1 revise the operation of the grant programme to incentivise learner progression from taster sessions to short engagement courses and then to longer accredited programmes;
- R2 stipulate a minimum number of hours for taster sessions and short engagement programmes;
- R3 require providers to set progression targets, collect data and measure outcomes;
- R4 restrict the number of times a learner can attend taster sessions and short engagement courses in order to encourage progression;
- R5 revise grant guidelines and claim forms to require family learning providers to return enough data to the Welsh Government that will allow benchmarking of outcomes; and
- R6 revise the guidelines on adult participants to allow those who have skills at level 1 to join the programme, where the school has identified that their children would benefit from parental support.

### **Local authorities should:**

- R7 work with other partners to set recruitment targets that focus on those most in need;
- R8 analyse recruitment data in order to set challenging recruitment targets for the future;
- R9 collect data on the take-up rate among those children who are identified as eligible;

- R10 monitor the progress of children who have been identified for the family programmes but who have not taken part, as well as those who have completed them;
- R11 ensure that joint strategic planning maximises the use of all resources, including venues;
- R12 include family programmes in CYPP plans; and
- R13 quality assure family programmes at a strategic level.

**Providers should:**

- R14 collect learner data by gender and develop a plan to address the shortfall of men participating in family programmes;
- R15 formally assess learners' needs on entry to all courses;
- R16 track the attainment and progression of adult learners on courses and use this data to plan at a strategic level; and
- R17 set targets for learner progression from taster/engagement short courses to long programmes.

## How well do providers target children and adult learners?

- 43 Nearly all family learning co-ordinators use an extensive range of information to identify those who would benefit from family learning provision. They use free school meals data and data from the lowest performing schools. They use information from Communities First and the Welsh index of multiple deprivation well to target specific communities. Most providers have a good understanding of the economic profile of the geographical areas where they work and they use their local knowledge well. Where appropriate, providers target schools with high numbers of pupils receiving EAL (English as an additional language) support or with high numbers of children on initiatives such as the 'Catch-Up' reading programme.
- 44 In most local authority areas the family learning co-ordinator selects nearly all the schools to be included in the family learning programmes in consultation and discussion with schools themselves. However, a few schools request courses directly where they feel pupils would benefit from the programmes.
- 45 At a strategic level most local authorities rely too heavily on the targets provided in the grant guidelines and many do not set recruitment targets from an analysis of the numbers of children and adults in their area who need to improve their skills and who would benefit from the provision. Family learning co-ordinators write the grant guideline targets into delivery plans and use these effectively for grant applications.
- 46 Around half of authorities clearly report targets from delivery plans in wider planning procedures. In the best cases these delivery plans inform wider basic skills plans, the authority education plan and the CYPP plan. Very few local authorities set family learning targets alongside and with reference to targets for other agencies working with parents and children in areas of deprivation, for example Flying Start.
- 47 Nearly all family learning co-ordinators track recruitment and retention targets effectively in partnership with the schools during termly meetings. Around half of local authorities have effective systems in place to track recruitment targets at strategic levels. A few of these are informal through project visits and informal feedback from schools. In the more effective provision, local authorities use a database, basic skills reports, course reports and end of year reports to effectively track progress against recruitment targets. However, most authorities do not evaluate and use the information they collect well enough to set challenging targets for future courses.

### **To what extent are participants from the agreed target groups?**

- 48 Nearly all participants in the family learning programmes are from the target groups specified in the Local Authority Early Years Grant Programme. However, the entry 3 maximum skills-level, for participants, as specified in the grant criteria, is too low and prevents adults who are above entry 3 but who are disengaged from participating in school life from joining the programme. This results in a few children, who would benefit from parental support, being excluded from the programmes.
- 49 Nearly all providers recruit adult participants from individuals, families and communities of need. They use an effective and extensive range of marketing strategies. The least effective strategies are those that are paper based such as leaflets, newsletters and flyers. Very few parents with low literacy skills respond positively to reading material.
- 50 The most effective form of initial contact is a targeted approach by the school to specific parents and carers. Schools use a range of teachers, teaching assistants and parent liaison co-ordinators to facilitate recruitment effectively. Providers and schools that feel the key is to use a facilitator who has credibility with the parents, who knows the family circumstances and can build a good relationship with them.

#### **Wrexham school makes very good use of local knowledge for recruitment.**

A school in the Wrexham Family Learning Programme makes very good use of a senior teaching assistant for recruitment. The teaching assistant uses knowledge of the area and local families very well to target those who would benefit from the family programmes. The teaching assistant approaches parents sensitively and takes into account family history, family circumstances and a knowledge of previous generations. This approach encourages course participation and has a positive impact on the numbers who take up courses and on the number who remain on course for the full programme.

- 51 Nearly all providers follow up the initial contact with parents with a half day or one day recruitment meeting. Providers use an innovative range of events to welcome parents to the school and to engage with them. These include intergenerational activities such as teddy bear's picnics, play days and family fun days. Activities aimed specifically at parents include launch incentives like free tea, coffee, bacon rolls, free raffles and games of bingo.
- 52 In the most effective provision, schools target parents after identifying the children who would benefit from family programmes. Schools have good strategies in place to identify the children to take part in programmes. They concentrate on those children who are falling behind with their work and who are unlikely to reach their full potential due to a lack of parental support or interest in their learning. A few local authorities monitor family programme take-up rates well and one authority has identified a take-up rate of between 50 and 75% of children identified for the programme. A minority of teachers follow up contact with the parents well to attempt to improve take-up figures. However, very few schools or family learning providers

record or follow up the children who are identified for support but who do not take part in the programmes. Data for the numbers involved and the impact this has on their learning is not available.

- 53 Nearly all family learning providers work effectively with a range of partners and other agencies in either a formal or informal context. This provides good opportunities for adults to benefit from a range of other services such as health care agencies. One provider has worked with over 41 other organisations, agencies or groups during the past four years to provide a varied programme of learning and to make best use of expertise. Regular partners include Communities First, 'language and play' and 'number and play', libraries, health visitors, social workers and educational psychologists. A very few providers work effectively within the adult community learning partnership to develop a joint delivery plan.

**Newport Children and Young People's Partnership are developing a joint planning log.**

The CYPP in Newport identified that parents may attend a number of inaugural meetings in the same week when a school is working with a number of initiatives. To address this they are producing a joint log of all partnership work. This will reduce duplication and improve the targeting of resources. Parents will have a clear view of all the options available to them and a better understanding of how they complement each other.

- 54 A minority of family learning providers run courses in partnership with other agencies to embed literacy and numeracy into courses such as healthy eating and first aid for children. They use these courses effectively to engage parents who might otherwise be reluctant to take up a literacy or numeracy specific course.
- 55 All providers are very aware of the barriers faced by many of the target parents. Most of these barriers come from negative memories of education that have led to a fear of schools and teachers. A few are more practical issues such as the cost of child-care or transport. Emotional barriers often mean that people have a negative response to taking part in any form of education, visiting schools, sitting assessments or tests or taking any part in school life. School teachers, family learning co-ordinators and family learning teachers use a range of strategies to overcome these barriers. They run courses during school hours and using school premises. Many providers meet and greet parents at the school gate to make it easier for them to access the school buildings. Creche facilities are offered whenever funding is available and for a few courses, where there is match funding, participants can reclaim travel costs.
- 56 However, in nearly all authorities there are a number of schools that need courses but cannot offer them due to a lack of suitable space in the school building. In many authorities there are no plans or strategies in place for family programmes to make use of alternative venues such as flying start centres and youth clubs. This results in many missed opportunities to maximise the use of resources between partners.

- 57 Very few men take part in family programmes. In 2010–2011, men made up just 10% of participants on short courses and 6.5% of participants on long courses. Most providers lack clear plans and targets for recruiting this specific group. This results in most providers missing opportunities to promote a good role model for engaging more boys in literacy learning. The family programmes grant application and claim forms do not ask providers to supply data by gender and most providers do not routinely collate this information.

### How good is provision?

- 58 Family programmes use an extensive range of models of delivery. The Grant Programme Guidelines from the Welsh Government do not give specific guidance for the models of delivery. This allows local authorities the scope to design programmes that are relevant to the needs of the communities, schools and parents.
- 59 However, this also means there is very little consistency in the delivery models between providers, particularly on the short course programmes. This prevents a detailed analysis of the effectiveness and impact of the programmes throughout Wales.
- 60 The Grant Programme Guidelines specify a cut off point of 12 hours for provision. Providers offering courses over 12 hours must take account of: school assessment data for the children taking part; an initial assessment of skills for the adults taking part; and individual targets for all participants.
- 61 Most providers offer a similar model for courses over 12 hours. Programmes are approximately 30 hours in total for either literacy or numeracy. Co-ordinators adapt the length of courses to accommodate school term dates. In nearly all of these courses parents work together with an adult specialist teacher for part of the time before they are joined by their children and a specialist school teacher for the remainder of the time. This model works well, providing opportunities for adults to achieve Agored Cymru Units of Credit and improve their literacy and numeracy alongside helping their children with the Foundation Phase.
- 62 Provision below 12 hours is less structured. The range of delivery models for short courses makes it more difficult to collect data than it is for the more structured longer courses. The grant does not require providers to carry out initial assessment or to have attainment outcomes for short courses. This means that grant providers are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes well enough or to track the progress of learners. Courses can vary from half day taster sessions to 12 hour workshops in two hour blocks of delivery. Nearly all of these courses are for parents and carers only and do not involve the children. Many providers use these taster sessions and workshops well to engage learners and to break down barriers to learning. Nearly all providers run these short courses around a theme, which is more appealing to the parents than specific literacy or numeracy would be. Examples include craft classes such as card making and scrap-booking, cookery and healthy eating classes or computer based learning. Teachers embed literacy and numeracy skills well into these courses. Most providers include advice and guidance for supporting children as part of the course objectives.

- 63 A majority of these courses work effectively to attract learners into longer programmes with more focused aims to develop literacy and numeracy skills. However, a few learners remain in these short courses for too long. They move from one short course to another and fail to progress to longer programmes or more structured courses to enable them to develop fully their literacy and numeracy skills.
- 64 Most teachers of family learning provision are well qualified and experienced. Most are qualified teachers who have additional qualifications in delivering or teaching basic skills. Most of these are at level 3, the level of qualification recommended by Basic Skills Cymru for teachers of adult basic skills, although a few teachers hold level 4 or level 5 qualifications. A majority of family learning teaching assistants hold level 2 qualifications in supporting adult basic skills learners. Nearly all staff attend a good number of ongoing training and development opportunities.
- 65 Nearly all family learning teachers differentiate their teaching well and address effectively the individual needs of learners. They deliver practical and active sessions, which are fun and engage the learners well. The pace of lessons is good, with short chunks of learning.
- 66 Most teaching focuses on how children learn and teaches adults the theories behind why their children are doing certain activities; for example, the importance of play. They explore the Foundation Phase and learn how to support their children with their spelling, reading, writing and numeracy. Nearly all literacy courses include the importance of sharing books with children and the value that reading to children can add to a child's progress.

**Millbrook Primary school in Newport runs a mask making transition project**

The family learning providers in Newport work well with the primary schools and feeder nursery schools every summer. They invite parents to join in with a series of mark-making sessions. These fun sessions demonstrate how children learn skills and allow parents good opportunities to become familiar with the school: building, staff, resources and ethos.

- 67 Family learning teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the financial constraints on many of the families within the programmes. Nearly all teachers demonstrate how adults can make their own resources for supporting their children with their school work and learning, often using recycled materials. Examples include making board games, making alphabet books with the children and making interactive games.
- 68 Most courses include a range of outside visits to demonstrate how children can learn from the communities around them. These include trips to museums and libraries, fire stations and forest schools.

## **To what extent are adults improving their literacy and numeracy skills?**

- 69 Nearly all providers use effective initial assessment tools to establish the skills of adults on longer, accredited courses. These include Basic and Key Skills Builder (BKSB) and Basic Skills Cymru assessment sheets. Most adults complete these assessments at the start of a course. However, a few providers delay the assessments until learners are more comfortable and settled in the group. This means that a minority of learners do not have relevant individual learning targets at the start of a course. For a few learners this impedes their initial progress.
- 70 A few providers assess adult learners' learning styles well and use this information effectively to plan programmes and to provide appropriate teaching strategies. They use this exercise well to demonstrate to parents the variety of methods that children may need and use to learn effectively.

### **Wrexham Family Programmes make good use of Memory Assessments.**

Family learning providers in Wrexham identified that a minority of adult learners have limited short term memory capacity and that this hinders the pace of their learning. They have adapted memory assessment sheets to use with adult learners and have introduced a very good range of games and fun activities effectively into their programmes to improve memory skills. This has had a significant impact on adult learner progress.

- 71 A majority of providers assess learners on taster or workshop short courses using a range of informal methods. Many use 'Can Do' and 'Where Am I Now?' sheets. These sheets list a series of skills such as, 'I can use capital letters correctly'. The learner ticks a box for 'yes', 'no' or 'partly'; or for 'can do', 'need practice' or 'need to learn'. However, these assessments are based on the learner's own opinion. They do not provide a consistent assessment and do not provide a suitable base-line for measuring progress.
- 72 Many family learning teachers are able to assess a learner's initial skills through experience when observing their responses to exercises like form filling and responding to literature from the school. These teachers target support effectively. However, the lack of formal written assessment means that tracking and recording learner progress is too inconsistent to enable the effectiveness of the classes at a whole programme level to be recorded.
- 73 Teachers track the progress of many learners on longer courses effectively against their individual learning plan (ILP) targets. Many teachers record this progress on useful whole class tracking sheets. However, teachers do not track, monitor and record the progress of learners on short taster or workshop courses consistently.
- 74 Most family learning providers do not have targets for the progression of learners from short courses to long courses or from long courses to other areas of study or into employment. A few providers have data which shows learners moving on to



courses in further education institutions and most have evidence of a few learners progressing to work within the schools in support roles. However, very few use formal means of tracking learner progression. Many providers work well with partners to identify and offer progression opportunities.

**Swansea family learning runs courses in partnership with the social services department**

Family learning providers in Swansea work very effectively with social services to target parents who would otherwise not be identified for the programmes. They have developed an Open College Network qualification for the Social Services Department Parenting Programme. This programme allows children on the 'at risk' register to have time, sometimes the only time, with their parents in a constructive learning environment.

- 75 Nearly all adult learners on long courses and a minority on short courses have good opportunities for taking relevant qualifications. These are mostly Agored Cymru units of credit for family learning programmes such as 'Help a child with Reading'.
- 76 In 2009-2010, Agored Cymru awarded approximately 1,600 credits through family programmes in Wales. Current data for 2010-2011 shows a small increase over the whole year, although exact numbers are not yet available.
- 77 The units for 2009-2010 range in levels from Entry 1 to Level 1 with the majority at Entry 3. As most of the units have a value of two or three credits, the number of complete units is around 500 for the year. However, there is no systematic method of collecting qualification attainment data from all providers. This means that there are no benchmarks to measure the standards of individual programmes.
- 78 Most adult learners provide good feedback to the family learning co-ordinators on the courses they follow. Learners participate in end of year reviews, complete evaluation sheets and questionnaires, have tutorial reviews with teachers and join in structured group discussions on course content and relevance. Many learners who are on longer courses complete standard feedback forms through the further education college providers. Nearly all teachers and programme co-ordinators use this information well to improve the provision they offer.
- 79 Most provision meets the needs of individual adult learners well. On longer programmes teachers produce useful and informative ILPs to meet individual needs. A minority of teachers use a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of the learner's skills to set targets on ILPs. Most family learning teachers are enthusiastic and established teachers who know their learners very well. They constantly change and adapt resources effectively to meet the personal and learning needs of their learners and to cope with the dynamics of their groups. They understand the needs of culturally diverse groups well and adapt their delivery skilfully to provide meaningful course content.

## What is the impact of the programmes on the children taking part?

- 80 Many schools assess the standards of children well using a range of standardised reading tests and classroom assessments. They use this information to identify the children who would benefit from family programmes. Many providers make good use of existing information for children who are already on intervention programmes.

### Cardiff Family Programmes use children's progress record sheets well.

Cardiff family programmes have designed a useful and informative record sheet for recording the targets and progress of the children. Children take a simple assessment at the start of the course which is then repeated at the end. The two scores are compared to measure progress. Areas for development, identified from the initial assessment, become the targets for the children's learning. Parents receive specific individual advice on how to support their child's individual learning targets.

- 81 Most providers ensure that family learning programmes are responsive to the individual needs of the children they work with. They liaise well with school teachers to design a programme of learning appropriate to the age and needs of the children. Most programmes encourage parents to use their children's areas of interest and hobbies to support their learning. For example, one parent produced an alphabet book based on transport for her child, who was keen on cars, trucks and tractors.
- 82 Most family learning teachers work well with classroom teachers to establish the needs of the children whilst on family learning programmes. Family learning teachers meet regularly with classroom teachers throughout the course to discuss the progress of the children. A few schools hold regular review meetings with parents to discuss the progress of their children.
- 83 Most family learning providers measure adequately the impact of the programmes on the children taking part in family programmes. Many use a variety of assessments specifically designed by the family learning course teams. A few of these record progress in standards against a pre-determined benchmark. However, many assessments do not measure progress in standards well enough. Most assessments report very well on the wider impact of the programmes on the child's wellbeing. Outcomes show that many children gain in confidence, increase their enthusiasm for learning and take more interest in lessons. Teachers report a positive impact on children's behaviour and school attendance. One provider uses the Rickter<sup>8</sup> scale approach effectively to measure and provide evidence of the softer outcomes and distance travelled.
- 84 However, methods of tracking and measuring the progress of children and evaluating the impact of the family programmes on the children taking part are inconsistent.

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<sup>8</sup> The Rickter Scale® is a complete assessment and action planning process based around a hand-held interactive board, which is designed specifically to measure soft indicators and distance travelled.

Too many providers rely on anecdotal evidence and focus too much on the softer outcomes. Very few schools and family programmes have effective systems in place to track the longer term impact on the standards achieved by children taking part in family programmes.

- 85 Nearly all children enjoy their time in family programmes and enjoy working alongside their parents or carers. They respond positively to the experience and will often tell their friends what they did in sessions, for example producing a puppet or playing a game.
- 86 Nearly all family learning teachers encourage parents effectively to take an interest in the progress and standards their children are achieving. A few family learning teachers encourage parents to complete a 'parent perception of child' questionnaire at the start of courses and then review these as the course progresses.

### **How good are procedures for monitoring the quality and impact of the provision?**

- 87 Most local authorities have a well developed strategic approach to Local Authority Early Years Grant Programmes. They incorporate family learning programmes into wider strategies for the delivery of 'language and play' and 'number and play'. In the best cases these programmes form part of a broader basic skills strategy within the Local Authority Education Plan. However, overall there is not enough focus on family learning programmes within higher level plans such as the CYPP plan and Ault Community Learning Partnership Plans. Only a very few family learning co-ordinators sit on sub groups of the CYPP. A majority of authorities do not include family learning well enough in other intervention strategies such as Flying Start. They do not plan effectively for information to be transferred between the various programmes. This means that there is little strategic planning for parents to move efficiently between the various support programmes from pre-school through to school support and intervention.
- 88 Many local authorities have effective links between the family programmes and adult community learning partnerships. These links ensure a good cohesion between the adult education providers and schools.
- 89 Scrutiny committees include family learning in the reviews they carry out into basic skills in only a few local authorities. This means that the majority of local authorities do not have a good enough understanding of the impact of family programmes.
- 90 Most local authorities include family learning programmes in their quality improvement arrangements at a co-ordination and delivery level. Family learning co-ordinators complete evaluative self assessment reports as part of the wider local authority evaluation processes. Most local authorities use these reports for claiming the relevant family learning grants. A majority of these self assessment reports link well to sections of the wider basic skills, school improvement or inclusion strategies.
- 91 Family learning co-ordinators use a good range of self-identified performance indicators and grant claim form questions to complete their programme

self-evaluations. They take information from internal and external verifier reports, learner attainment data, course completion data, adult learner feedback sheets, school course effectiveness reports and feedback from head teachers and college providers. Many family learning co-ordinators visit family learning classes and carry out classroom observations of family learning teachers. A majority of teachers who are employed by further education colleges take part in college quality assurance procedures for teaching and a few are part of peer observation processes.

- 92 A few family learning co-ordinators take responsibility for wider projects such as guiding family learning participants into setting up self-supporting groups or developing Professional Learning Communities in schools.
- 93 Most co-ordinators make good use of Estyn reports to identify good practice. A few use performance data well to monitor progress. Many publish programme outcomes as a useful family learning report for stakeholders at the end of academic years.
- 94 Many co-ordinators have established a support network for family learning providers across a broad geographical area such as North Wales and South East Wales. Members meet regularly to share best practice and to develop informal assessment sheets and resources. However, the wide variety of programme delivery models means they are not able to effectively develop benchmarking data.
- 95 Many providers use a range of methods to review their provision and to plan for improvements. They disseminate information at regular staff meetings including sharing best practice, discussing evaluation reports, and reviewing the dates, times and venues of courses. Only a very few providers have identified the need to develop a more effective assessment tool to measure the impact of the programmes on children's standards of literacy and numeracy.
- 96 Many co-ordinators use their review processes well to update self-evaluation reports, development plans and operational plans. However, many local authorities rely too much on co-ordinators' reports and do not systematically monitor and track the quality of family programmes well enough at a strategic level.
- 97 The tracking and monitoring of adult learners on short courses are not robust enough. Many learners remain in these courses for too long.
- 98 The short term progress of children on all programmes is monitored adequately by schools and family programmes. However, their progress is not measured against that of other children identified for the programmes but who have not taken part. There is no data tracking the impact of the programmes, on children, over the longer term.
- 99 It is not possible to make a value for money judgement due to the lack of data at a strategic and national level. There are no benchmarks to assess the standards of one family learning programme compared to another. However, individual learning plans show that adult learners on long courses are making good progress against literacy and numeracy targets. Many achieve a useful certificate that gives them the basis for moving into employment or onto other courses.

## Appendix 1 – Evidence base

This report draws on:

- evidence reported in the Estyn inspections of adult community-based learning between 2008 and 2011;
- visits to family learning provision in:
  - Caerphilly;
  - Cardiff;
  - Newport;
  - Swansea;
  - Denbighshire;
  - Conway;
  - Rhondda Cynon Taff; and
  - Wrexham;
- data from Agored Cymru; and
- grant claim information from the Department for Education and Skills (DFES).

## Appendix 2 – Glossary/references

Agored Cymru	An awarding organisation and charity working in Wales, offering credit awards and qualifications
Basic Skills Agency Cymru	An independent organisation set up by the Welsh Government to oversee the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales
Basic Skills Cymru	The Welsh Government strategy to help children and adults in Wales who have difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy through implementing 'Words Talk, Numbers Count'; the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales
Basic and Key Skills Builder (BKSB)	An online tool used by many educational providers for assessing and developing the skills of learners
Communities First	A Welsh Government programme to improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales
Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYPP)	A group of organisations working together within a county to improve the lives of children and young people
Flying Start	A Welsh Government programme in Wales targeted at 0 to 3-year-olds, working in the most disadvantaged communities to create positive outcomes in the medium to long term
Language and Play and Number and Play	Short focused programmes for parents and other carers to promote language and number skills through play

MAYTAS	A computer based system used by many education providers to record and store data
The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)	An organisation that aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills in England

### Appendix 3 – Bibliography

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## Appendix 4 – The remit author and survey team

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