

English – the Key to Integration in London

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Project co-financed by the
European Integration Fund

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Project title	Mothers Matter
Subject	ESOL, Family Learning, Parent Ambassador Initiative
Key Stage	Foundation Stage, KS1 and KS2
Grant awarded	£110,359

Introductory paragraph

Challenge:

High numbers of families from non-EU countries with very limited spoken and literacy skills in English. This impacts on engagement with schools, integration into the wider community and levels of confidence. Such parents are often isolated and disempowered.

Action:

ESOL provision; training of Family Learning Tutors; delivery of Family Learning sessions and Parent Ambassador initiative.

Project delivered in 8 Barnet schools.

Key points

ESOL

- **Effectiveness of a functional approach to language teaching.** A programme for parents with a very basic level of English that focused on a functional approach to language and vocabulary (family relationships, going to the doctors or library, healthy eating, meeting the child's teacher) has been very effective in developing knowledge, skills and confidence
- **Increase in learner confidence** 50% of ESOL learners were assessed as pre-entry, with little functional English, low literacy levels and no study skills. This affected the learners' previous confidence in using English outside the home. Impact assessment has shown a demonstrable rise in confidence in using spoken English

- **Wider social interaction.** ESOL learners have reported being able to go to the doctors on their own, to go shopping, to speak to neighbours, to meet with their child's teacher and to help others with translations.

Family Learning (FL)

- Impact captured through evaluation of training, visits to Family Learning Sessions and discussion with FL tutors, children, mothers and senior school staff.

One mother: "...done things just me....went to GP twice"

FL Tutor: "We've skilled lots of people. We've learnt a lot from the project"

Children learning with "mummy"

"Amazing," "Fun," "Really good."

- The expectation that 15 mothers would attend sessions with their children (as specified in the bid) was unrealistic given the interactive nature of activities undertaken and in some schools the room size. The tight time frame has been a challenge and some sessions have been interrupted by SATs. Nevertheless huge enthusiasm for family learning.

Parent Ambassador Initiative

- Fourteen trained and accredited through the Open College Network
"I found how to work within the school's values, policies and procedures."

Impact on mothers' English

Evidence on impact has come from a number of sources, including tutor assessment, the learner workbooks and Learner Voice feedback. The project has also piloted a new method of collecting quantitative data on impact assessment for individuals, focusing on confidence in using English. Many of the mothers lacked confidence in their English speaking skills in particular and relied on family members or friends for assisting with verbal communication outside of the home, even where they had been resident in the UK for 20 years.

Tutors have used a number of activities, eg story sack exercises, to encourage mothers to speak English outside of the classroom and learner feedback has shown that participants are more willing to engage in wider social interaction, like going to the doctor on their own and using vocabulary learnt on the course. One (Iranian) learner reported that she had started having conversations in English with a neighbour about their children's progress at school. Another became confident enough to support weaker learners in her class.

Learners are keen to continue with learning English and a number have stated they will enrol on a higher level programme at Barnet College in the new academic year. Job aspirations include school assistant, nurse, hairdresser, beautician.

"When I came in this course I didn't have confidence at myself. Now I am very happy that my writing and speaking is better. I go to the GP and I talk with my children's teacher" (Edgware School learner)

Impact on mothers' involvement with the school

At the start of the programme only 8 of the learners said they knew the name of their child's teacher and, as above, lack of confidence often hindered parent communication with the school. Many report they are now more confident and motivated to approach the school and also more able to help at home with children's homework or to read bedtime stories. Using a workbook and doing homework themselves has helped the mothers in understanding the importance of helping with their children's homework. Following a session on healthy lifestyle activities, one Iraqi learner created a cooking recipe book which she shared with her children.

"The course helped my family. Now I can help my daughter with homework and I can speak English with my daughter's teacher"(Colindale School learner)

Impact on pupils.

Tutors, school teachers and learners are completing baseline and progress questionnaires that includes questions on children's levels in English and Maths, behavior and standard of homework. The progress questionnaire is not yet available.

Family Learning Tutors and teachers have said the children are more confident after attending FL sessions.

Project delivery

The ESOL strand was delivered by a team of 6 sessional tutors, using a workbook designed for the project and covering functional topics that included basic study skills, vocabulary around healthy living and communicating with health professionals, speaking about the local community and how to enjoy family reading. IPADs were provided and tutors encouraged to use ILT to extend learning, including use of video clips, photos and audio files.

Speaking English with Confidence (SPEC) training to be delivered; a network of Parent Ambassadors to be established across the 8 schools; a Barnet conference to disseminate,

Further details

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