



Family Links

transforming schools and families



Rt Hon MP Alan Johnson speaking at our annual conference in Leeds



Headlines by CEO Annette Mountford

Sponsoring our Future

Impetus Trust, the UK pioneer of venture philanthropy, and leading education charity **The Sutton Trust**

have chosen to invest in Family Links as part of their joint Early Years Initiative. We have been selected for our innovative, ambitious work with economically disadvantaged children aged 0-5 and their parents, to help bridge the gap in school readiness between those children and their better-off peers and improve their life chances in general.

Centre for Social Justice Award

Family Links was delighted to be chosen for this prestigious accolade in 2010. The judging panel commented in particular on our vision for breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. The CSJ was the inspiration of Iain Duncan-Smith and also Frank Field, both of whom have visited us.

Training Triumph

Due to popular request by parent support workers, the Children's Workforce Development Council offered more of their free government parent group leader training slots to Family Links than any other organisation in their second tranche of training. We see this as a great vote of confidence in the Nurturing Programme.

New Patrons

Alexander and Hannah Armstrong as well as Philip Pullman have agreed to become patrons. Actor and comedian Alexander fronted our BBC Lifeline appeal (see our website) while Hannah is full-time mother to their three boys. Philip is an ardent supporter of the importance of children's literacy. Family Links is delighted to have their enthusiasm and support for our work.

Positive Parenting - Changing Attitudes

Family Links long-held belief that **all** parents can benefit from extra skills and knowledge, supports the government's desire to encourage this concept as a positive national attitude towards parenting. This mindset will help shift parents' feelings from failure and stigmatisation at having to attend parenting classes to being proud that by doing so, they are helping their children get the best out of life. Family Links is pleased to have been included in government policy meetings that developed this thinking and we welcome the trial of parenting vouchers free to all parents in three trial areas.

Annette Mountford

How the Nurturing Programme impacts on families

During the past year 1,758 parenting support workers and school staff trained in the Nurturing Programme while 15,730 parents attended a parenting course. Some Parent Group Leaders are trained by Family Links to offer Open College Network accreditations. This enables parents to work towards a nationally recognised qualification that can improve their employment prospects.

“Stopped feeling guilty and alone like a bad mother. Stopped feeling depressed.”

Parent in Hull

“I've learnt how to be a much better Mum, but I've also realised that actually I was doing an awful lot right too!! Which sometimes I think all Mums forget in the face of screaming children.”

1 of the 12,000 parents doing Netmums online course

“In the safety of a secure Special Time I have seen isolated children blossom in a safe, inclusive and unthreatening circle.”

Head teacher in Oxfordshire

“I'm becoming more aware of how doing too much for R is holding back her development.”

Armed Services parent

From apprehension to praise - how the Nurturing Programme convinced a sceptic

“ Hull Youth for Christ runs a Breakfast Club in an area of considerable deprivation in Hull. With some apprehension we decided to deliver the Family Links parenting course. This was after looking at various parenting courses ranging from simply naff to brilliant-but-overly complex to downright scary!

The Family Links course sounded great in terms of content, but even after training as Parent Group Leaders we were not convinced it would “work” for us. It seemed to be far too prescriptive about the way it needed to be delivered and very middle class in its language and style. Moreover, most of our mums had opted out of their own schooling and were extremely unconfident about anything called a “course”. The accompanying Parenting Puzzle book was well designed and user-friendly, but we thought it too wordy and daunting in our context.

Happily, we were proved wrong! The quality of our relationships with the mums had a big part to play in the course’s success, but the supportive and encouraging pitch of Family Links, delivered in a relaxed atmosphere and in ordinary-speak, made really quite profound concepts accessible and the

Helping to break the cycle of violence - Barnardo’s Parent Support Worker case study

Lara and Simon (names have been changed) both grew up in violent abusive families, left home young and became involved in anti-social behaviour, including drug use. Simon was in prison four times. Lara had two children with an abusive partner and then two more with Simon. In March 2010, the children were placed in foster care due to injuries sustained by the two oldest. The local authority began an adoptive placement for all four children in 2011.

After intervention from Barnardo’s Hartlepool Services and MIND, time on the Mellow Parenting Programme for Lara, and a successful drug reduction programme for Simon, both parents began the Nurturing Programme with OCN accreditation. Their Barnardo’s caseworker wrote: *They did exceptionally well and are seeing things anew and trying to put their learning into practice. Both parents have actively demonstrated an increased insight into their previous life experiences of being parented and how that has impacted on the way they parent. Social Services said: “The parents have really benefited from this. The nurturing focused on boundaries, rules, discipline and guiding the children and using personal power; giving children choices but also showing them there are consequences.”*

Due to attending the parenting programmes and their willingness to change, the adoption order was rescinded. Simon and Lara have their 4 children back and recently helped develop a nationwide programme for other parents with drug problems.

mums’ growing confidence gave the course its own momentum and appeal.



Celebrating completing a course

We are running the course for a third time, as we have seen tangible and long-lasting results. The short film clip at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFOI4k9Dq8o> shows a couple of the mums talking about the difference it has made to their lives.”

Anna Hembury
Hull Youth for Christ

Research and evaluation

Training

Evaluation of the Nurturing Programme historically focused on programme content. As over 5000 Parent Group Leaders have now been trained by Family Links, we decided to assess the quality of our training and commissioned independent research organisation **Young People in Focus** to carry that out. 257 PGLs who had completed our 4-day training programme between January and March 2011 took part.

- 100% said it had met or exceeded expectations and it was variously described as life-changing, transforming and the best training ever attended.
- Participants' confidence in running the different aspects of the Nurturing Programme increased to over 80%, due to the breadth and depth of the knowledge and skills that were shared.
- The Nurturing Programme was compared favourably to other parenting courses because of the focus on family rather than individuals; the emphasis on understanding human behaviour, the focus on emotions and well-being of parents, carers and children and because it is evidence-based.
- Participants reported using the techniques and skills learned on the training in other areas of their work and personal lives.
- All the trainees said they would recommend our training to others working with parents.

The results are particularly gratifying given the experience and qualifications of the trainees. The majority had significant prior experience working with parents.

The full results are available on our website
www.familylinks.org.uk

Programme impact

Parent Group Leaders around the country have been giving parents before and after questionnaires to gain empirical evidence on the Nurturing Programme's efficacy. They include the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to measure child behaviour, and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to measure parental emotional wellbeing.

Over the summer Oxford University graduate student Sean Grant analysed the first set of WEMWBS data that was provided by 231 parents. Improvements were statistically significant. Using population scores from a Scottish national data set, in the period of time from starting to completing the parent group, these parents improved on average from scores better than 16% of the population to scores better than 43% of the population. Depending on the statistics used, this equates to a "medium to large effect."

We had usable SDQ data on 360 children. Improvements were again statistically significant. Using data from 5-10 year-old British children as a comparison, in the period of time from their parent/carer starting to completing the parent group, these children improved on average from scores better than 13% of the children to scores better than 19% of the children.

Depending on the statistics used, this equates to a "small to medium effect" and represents an average improvement from borderline behaviour (moderate risk) to normal behaviour (no risk).

As we get more completed questionnaires in, we are building up a more and more reliable data set, so we are grateful to all the parent group leaders who continue to send completed questionnaires to us. A full report of data analysed till now will be published soon - see our website for more details.

A joined-up approach - evaluating the Nurturing Programme in an early intervention project

Hertfordshire County Council uses the Nurturing Programme throughout its 82 children's centres as a central part of its early intervention project. The project was devised in 2009 to counter an increasing number of referrals into children's social care services by providing specialist support to parents. The council's multi-agency parenting strategy group considered the Nurturing Programme to be the most appropriate evidence-based parenting support programme. By March 2011, ninety nine parenting practitioners had been trained.

The project has been very successful. The percentage of children's centres with fewer than 10

referrals to social care per 1,000 0-4 year olds increased from 40% of children's centres in 2009 to 71% in 2011.

Service managers speak enthusiastically about their experience of delivering the Nurturing Programme, the good retention rates, the impact it has on the families and how well it is accessed by ethnic minority families. It has also hugely helped workforce development. One experienced children's centre manager wrote: "It made me completely rethink the way we were supporting parents and change the way we do things as a result."

Visit our website for a more detailed report

What's new at Family Links?

Schools update

In the past year we have reinvigorated our schools training to reflect their changing needs and priorities. In addition to our standard whole school 2-day training we now offer:

- Training workshops for individual teachers and support staff
- Training programmes for primary school student teachers and Teach First students

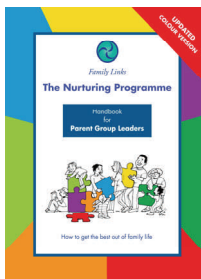
We also appointed Gail Allan as Director of Schools. She brings a wealth of experience and ideas to this newly created post.

“When planning, think about methods of teaching to meet emotional needs of all children.”

The message a Teach First student took away

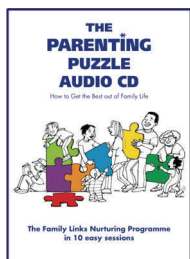
New resources

The Updated Parent Group Leader Handbook



- Colour-coded weeks with highlighted text for easy reference
- Revised introduction and appendix
- New Week Zero: establishing a parent group
- Extra options for parents of babies and toddlers
- Guidance on using new resources
- OCN Accreditation in groups

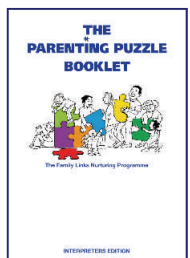
The Parenting Puzzle Audio CD



For parents who

- can't get to a group and want to feel part of one
- are visually-impaired
- struggle with written English
- prefer listening to reading
- enjoy relaxation exercises

The Parenting Puzzle Interpreters' Booklet



- a fantastic resource for those with English as a second language
- English one side, blank the other to translate into your own language

Visit www.familylinks.org.uk to find out more

“Intervening Early: Parents’ Lives and the impact on their children’s life chances” 2011 Conference Leeds

A roster of eloquent, cutting edge speakers spoke at Family Links Annual Conference. They included **Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP** for West Hull and Hessle, **Jeff Bailey**, Deputy Director, Centre for Social Justice, **Julia Gault**, Head of Family Strategy & Engagement Division, Department for Education **Karyn McClusky**, Violence Reduction Unit, Strathclyde Police **Lesley Dixon**, Action for Prisoners' Families



All offered vital insights into the importance of early intervention from their differing but related fields. Their presentations can be viewed at:
www.familylinks.org.uk/about/annual-conference-2011.html

**Stop Press: 2012 Annual Conference
Friday 6 July Oxford**

And finally a big thank you

to our funders in 2010-11 who include:

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Special thanks to our Marathon runners Richard Pring (London) and Kate and Steve Pearce (Paris)

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