



Family Links

Transforming schools and families

Family Intervention Project (FIP) case study

Marie Donnelly is a Project Support Worker for Barnardos Family Intervention Project in Gateshead and explains here why she uses the Nurturing Programme in the course of her work.

“ We use Family Links’ Nurturing Programme in a FIP context as it we see the value of it. It is a well-structured, well-researched programme. More than any other programme, it makes the parents look at themselves. There is more self-reflection and analysis than in other programmes.

Parents really like the self-nurturing component of the Programme. The FIP parents have been through many services, often several times, so by the time they get to us, they are disillusioned. They are never really told about the importance of looking after themselves. This programme gets parents to realise that they have to be well to be able to look after their children. This gives them a deeper insight into the way their kids will behave. We reinforce that “if you feel better, think how much better your kids will feel.”

Parents can feel constantly blamed from above for not meeting standards of care, housing, school, etc. The message the system can send is that they’re not good enough. The Nurturing Programme is about dealing with underlying problems causing problem behaviours, not treating them solely as problems in themselves. They see the behaviour as a symptom and look for the reasons behind the behaviour. Parents appreciate that, and that it is not a blaming approach. Because it is no-blame, parents start to think positively about what they can do, rather than feel defensive about what they should have done. The Programme is focussed on enabling parents to change through a process of self-realisation.

Parents are not challenged by us when they come out with things because the material challenges later and parents get the message. It never says stop doing that, it just gives alternatives. For example, a parent mentioned breaking one of her children’s toys as a punishment. No-one challenged at the time, but later on when we looked at appropriate ways of dealing with behaviour in the penalties and rewards section, that was challenged in a roundabout way by the course materials, so the parent got the message but wasn’t singled out. Parents also learn that just because I was brought up a certain way, doesn’t mean I should bring my kids up that way, so it helps break the intergenerational patterns.

Parents come to us with such big, entrenched issues. We extend the session by half an hour in the style of a short coffee morning before so that we have time to listen to parents who really need to offload and deal with immediate problems as well as fit in all the course material. Because of that extra half hour we can do both. It is cathartic and important that stuff comes out. By the end of the course, we find that parents really appreciate this time, and have problem-solved with each other before they get to us on their way over to the group. Again that’s down to the course. ”